

FROM ANATOLIA TO THE NEW WORLD
LIFE STORIES OF THE FIRST
TURKISH IMMIGRANTS TO AMERICA

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RIFAT N. BALI



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TO THE NEW WORLD

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TRANSLATED FROM THE TURKISH BY
MICHAEL MCGAHA

BIOGRAPHY

RIFAT N. BALI was born in 1948 in İstanbul. He graduated from Sorbonne University Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in 2001. He is an independent scholar and the author of several scholarly articles and books which are listed in his website www.rifatbali.com.

***“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”***

Oft-quoted verse from Emma Lazarus's (1849-1887)
poem “The New Colossus,” published in 1883
and inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABCFM	: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
AJA	: American Jewish Archives
Alliance	: Alliance Israélite Universelle
HIAS	: Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society
IIT	: Illinois Institute of Technology
INS	: Immigration and Naturalisation Services
NARA	: National Archives and Records Administration
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
U.S.	: United States

FOREWORD

I have always had a fascination with those Ottoman and Turkish citizens who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were swept up in the excitement of “immigrating to the New World”—a far off country whose language they didn’t know, whose customs and lifestyle were unfamiliar, remote from the cultural milieu in which they had lived. While conducting research for an earlier book, I came across a series of articles by the famous journalist-traveler Hikmet Feridun Es (1909-1992) that included some of his conversations with the first generation of Turks—both Muslim and non-Muslim—who settled in America. Realizing that those articles could provide the nucleus of another book, I then undertook in-depth research on the subject. This book is the outcome of that research.

I wasn’t able to get hold of the stories of the first Ottoman and Turkish citizens to immigrate to America until recently. The publications on this subject consisted of a few encyclopedia articles and a book relating the life of Frank Ahmed’s father.¹ In fact

1 P. K., “Turks,” *Dictionary of American Immigration History*, ed. Francesco Cordasco (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1990), pp. 714-716; Barbara Bilge, “Turks,” in David Levinson & Melvin Ember, eds., *American Immigrant Cultures: Builders of a Nation* (New York: Macmillan, 1997); Donald Altschiller, “Turkish Americans,” in Judy Galens, Anna Sheets, Sharon Malinowski, Rudolph J. Vecoli, & Neil Schlager, eds., *Gale Encyclopaedia of Multicultural America* (Gale Group, 1995); Talat S. Halman, “Amerika Türkleri,” *Yeni Türkiye* 16 (July-August 1997), pp. 2130-2135; Sevgi Ertan, “A History of Turks in America,” in Hasan Celâl Güzel, Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, & Prof. Dr. Salim Koca, eds., *The Turks*, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002).

in an article he published on the subject in 1995, Prof. Kemal H. Karpat pointed out the paucity of material in this area, and stated that he had been the first person to do research on the subject.² Until recently, Muslim Turkish immigrants to the U.S. had not been the subject of any study comparable to what has been done on non-Muslim Ottoman or Turkish immigrants to America; this subject had been neglected, and no detailed analysis of it existed. In our day, thanks to the research project “The First Turkish Immigrants in America: Turkish Immigration to the U.S., 1860-1921” initiated by Sedat İşçi, an expert in Cultural Research at Ege University,³ and Prof. John J. Grabowski of Case Western Reserve University, in conjunction with Yeditepe University, the subject of “The first Turkish immigrants to America” has in recent years finally been added to the topics covered by the Turkish press.⁴ This wide-ranging and ambitious research project has another goal to that of identifying the first Turkish immigrants. According to an “Informational Note for Media/Participants” distributed at a symposium organized by Sedat İşçi at Yeditepe University, this project’s goals were “To rebuild the bridges connecting the American and Turkish grandchildren of grandparents in America, to

2 Kemal H. Karpat, “The Turks in America,” pp. 231-252 in T. H. Stephan, ed., *Turcs d’Europe...et d’Ailleurs, Les Annales de l’Autre Islam*, vol. 3 (Paris: INALCO-ERISM, 1995).

3 Currently a member of the Translation Department of Yeni Yüzyıl University’s Faculty of Arts and Translation.

4 Many news reports and interviews on the subject have come out in the press. The following can be considered a representative sample: Ayda Kayar, “ABD’deki ilk Türkler aranıyor,” *Hürriyet*, May 28, 2002; Bülent Günel, “Amerikalı Elazığlılar akrabalarını arıyor!,” *Sabah*, May 31, 2002; Bülent Günel, “Amerikalı Sam’in vasiyeti: Küllerimi Harput’a gömün,” *Sabah*, June 1, 2002; Bülent Günel, “Harputlular akrabalarına kavuşuyor,” *Sabah*, June 2, 2002; Esin Dalay, “Amerika’da bıyıklı Türkler,” *Star*, June 29, 2002; İsmail Saymaz, “Bir Amerikan rüyası,” *Radikal*, July 7, 2002; Şükran Pakkan, “Amerika’nın ilk Türkleri,” *Milliyet*, December 29, 2002; Cihat Mat, “ABD’ye göç eden Türkler aranıyor,” *Sabah*, January 5, 2003; “ABD’ye Göçen İlk Türklerin Hikâyesi,” September 1, 2003, www.ntvmsnbc.com.

strengthen Turkish identity in America, to enhance U.S.-Turkish relations on a healthier, more human intersocietal ground.”⁵ In another statement Sedat İşçi described the project as a way of “re-furbishing Turkey’s image.”⁶ For his part, State Minister Mehmet Aydın assessed the project’s importance in these words:

It is very important for the project to succeed, both from a historical and a current viewpoint. And, given that we don’t have a very effective lobby in America, this project is of great importance for building up relations between the two countries.⁷

In light of such unambiguous statements, the project’s underlying objectives are unmistakable. One of the project’s top priorities is to strengthen the ability of the relatively small American population of Turkish ancestry (136,498, according to the 2000 census)⁸ to more effectively respond to the anti-Turkish lobbying that Americans of Greek (according to the 2000 census, 1,153,307)⁹ and Armenian descent (according to the same census 385,488)¹⁰ have been conducting for years. Consequently, the aim is to find Americans of Turkish ancestry and make them more conscious (and, hopefully, proud) of their Turkish heritage, thereby creating an effective counterbalance to the Greek- and Armenian-American lobbies, to cultivate feelings of friendship and affection for the Turks and for Turkey, and to create a front-line of “friends of Turkey.” In comparison with such an ambitious research project, the goal I have set for myself is the more modest one of simply telling the story of this migration on the basis of the sources and life stories that I have been able to collect.

5 Informational note, dated January 4, 2003.

6 Esin Dalay, “Bıyıklı Türkler Geliyor!...”, *Star*, December 1, 2002.

7 Zafer Özcan, “ABD’li ilk Türklerin torunları akrabalarıyla buluşacak,” *Yeni Şafak*, April 28, 2003.

8 “The Turks in America,” www.euroamericans.net/turkish.htm.

9 “Greeks in America,” www.euroamericans.net/greek/htm.

10 “Armenians in America,” www.euroamericans.net/armenian.htm.

In preparing the book, the sources that I consulted on the immigration of non-Muslim Turks include archival documents and books published in America, while for the Muslims, I have largely consulted memoirs from the period and articles that appeared in the press at that time. I would like to acknowledge once again that it was the very important and valuable three series of articles published by the famous traveler-journalist Hikmet Feridun Es in the newspaper *Hürriyet* in 1948 (and from which I have quoted extensively) that first planted in my mind the idea of writing this book.

One of the main difficulties that I encountered during the research phase was the that of sources. It wasn't so hard to find written sources on the Sephardic Jewish immigrants to America because of the numerous scholarly articles on the subject, but finding oral history sources was much more difficult. The overwhelming majority of sources recounting the Armenian immigration were oral histories, giving voice to the horrendous genocide they experienced at the time of forced deportation. Since that subject is not the focus of this book, the abundance of sources on the matter were of little or no use for our story. A problem I came up against on the subject of the Greeks was that American sources discussing them do not differentiate between Greeks from Turkey (*Rum* in Turkish) and those from Greece, using the term "Greek" for both. Consequently, you can't tell from reading those sources whether they are referring to the Greeks from Istanbul and Anatolia or those from Greece. Hence, in order to be certain that the story being told is that of a Greek from Turkey, I was only use the few sources that were specific about place of origin. As for the Muslim Turkish immigrants, not a single interview with a Muslim Turk figures among those held in the National Park Service's Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island Oral History Archive. Furthermore, there is not a single scholarly publication on the subject. Hence, the only sources I could rely on turned out to be a few memoirs, newspaper stories,

and the aforementioned series by the reporter of *Hürriyet* newspaper Hikmet Feridun Es.

While researching and preparing this book, I received assistance from many individuals and institutions. My heartfelt thanks to the employees of the Beyazıt State Library, the Istanbul Journalists Association Press Museum Library, Istanbul University's Central Library, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Atatürk Library, the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper's Information and Documentation Center, the *Hürriyet* newspaper's Documentation Center, the National Park Service's Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island Oral History Archive and Library (New York), the Henry Ford Museum (Michigan), the American Jewish Archives (Cincinnati) and University of Minnesota Immigration History Research Center; Ömer Türkoğlu, Leon Taranto, and Rachel Amado Bortnick, who helped me obtain books and articles when I ran into difficulties; Dr. Murat Koraltürk, for giving me permission to use a photograph of the ship *Gülcehal* in his files; Hakan Akçaoğlu for giving me permission to use a postcard in his collection; Frank Ahmed, for giving permission to use photographs in his book; Filiz Özdem, editor of Yapı Kredi Publishers, for giving permission to use photographs appearing in Halûk Cansın's book *Unutmaya Kıyamadıklarım*; Bensiyon Pinto, for giving me a text distributed during a symposium organized on "The First Turks in America" at Yeditepe University on January 4, 2003; Mürşit Balabanlılar, editor at the Türkiye İş Bankası Cultural Publications, for giving permission to use photographs appearing in Dr. Fuad Umay's book; Dr. Erdal Açıkşes, for giving permission to use photographs appearing in his book and providing a copy of the magazine *Elazığ*; Sinan Kunalalp, for lending me a special issue of *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yıllığı* dealing with "Turkish-American Relations"; the Sharlot Hall Museum photo archive for sending me copies of photos pertaining to Hacı Ali; The life stories told here have not been retouched but have been faithfully preserved in the style reflecting the speakers' regional dialects.

This translation is slightly different from the original Turkish version published in 2004. It includes a few more life stories that were not included in the Turkish version and footnotes have been added for the terms requiring explanations for the foreign readers. I am grateful to my friends Prof. Michael McGaha who expertly translated it from Turkish and Paul Bessemer who edited the draft and prepared the index.

*Teşvikiye-Osmanbey,
October 2012*



INTRODUCTION



Nowadays in Turkey the word “America” conjures up many different images and concepts, some of which are political, others cultural and economic. The first thing it calls to mind is the permanent residence and work permit document for foreigners known as the “Green Card,” while the second, related association is of a “land of golden opportunities.” Of the 55,000 Green Cards the U.S. allocates each year by lottery, a quota of 3,000 is reserved for Turkish citizens; the number of people applying for those has risen astronomically in recent decades, reaching one-and-a-half million, according to some sources. It is worth noting that the hopelessness created by, until recently, Turkey’s persistent political and economic instability and people’s longing to build their future elsewhere have been major contributors to this increase. It is a sign of the “irresistible attraction” the green card has exerted upon the Turkish people that it has even found its way into the discourse of the political world. A good example of this is can be found in the speech given by First Army Commandant General Çetin Doğan, given upon his relinquishing his post. When, during his speech, the general mentioned the then-current debate about whether to send Turkish soldiers to Iraq, he made the following reference:

I was well aware that international law considered it permissible for a commander at the head of a unit in hot pursuit to penetrate hundreds of kilometers inside Iraq and to fight to defend our national interests, to use force beyond the border when necessary. Suffice it to say that our boys should not be like those who run breathlessly to U.S. forces in pursuit of a Green Card for their personal benefit. Let us merely state that when we go to a place that asks for our help, a people who feel that they need us, it should be a lawful administration.

General Doğan was referring to some newspaper columnists' insinuations that the underlying reason why some people supported American policies was that the American administration had rewarded them with a Green Card.¹¹

As symbols of "settling and living in America," the images "America" and the "Green Card" represent Turkish society's fascination with the U.S., which most people view both as a "land of opportunity" and the place which has attained the highest level of technology and education, embodying the progress of "Western civilization." Nevertheless, up to the 1980s the number of Turkish students studying in American universities was utterly inconsequential; that would change drastically, as during the nineties the number rose to the tens of thousands. Needless to say, some of those students dreamed of settling in America after completing their education and of becoming successful businessmen, executives, or scientists.

The societal outlook in the first years of the twenty-first century in Turkey seemed to corroborate the saying that "history repeats itself," since it was virtually identical to the outlook at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. In those years, due to the political, economic, and social upheavals wrought in the Ottoman State by the Balkan Wars and the run-up to the First World War, in order to avoid serving in the military and/or to seek a new future for themselves, Ottoman citizens had abandoned their families and loved ones to emigrate "to a land whose streets were paved with gold," plunging into an adventure of whose outcome they were hopeful but uncertain.

The vast majority of the immigrants to the New World would never return to their lands of origin, preferring to build their futures in their new countries. Most of the first generation of immigrants would be successful, thereby disproving Western

11 "Giderayak dokundurmalar," *Radikal*, August 21, 2003.

travelers' stereotypical descriptions of Turks as "shiftless," "lazy," "con men" or "terrible Turk, scimitar-wielding, mustachioed, and befezzed", and would emerge largely unscathed from their uncertain adventure. Just like the Turkish immigrants of Jewish origin who went to the State of Israel in 1948-49 without knowing a single word of Hebrew, or those who set out from Anatolia's villages and small towns for the totally foreign Federal Republic of Germany and established a successful foothold in German society without knowing a single word of German... Many of the names of the first-generation immigrants to America would become world famous. Moris Schinasi from Manisa, who founded a children's hospital bearing his name¹² in his hometown after making millions as a cigarette manufacturer; the famous film director from Germir, Elia Kazancıoğlu, alias Elia Kazan; the well-known short story writer William Saroyan, whose parents immigrated from Harput; the highly successful pop singer and composer Neil Sedaka, whose grandparents were from Istanbul; and the famous singer Eydie Gormé (née Edith Gormezano), whose mother's family came from Çanakkale, are just a few of the immigrants or children of immigrants who earned their fame through hard work, talent, and intelligence.

Wherever they end up, a common trait of first-generation immigrants throughout the world is their longing and nostalgia for the homeland where they were born and grew up and the friends and relatives they had to leave behind. Ottoman and Turkish immigrants to America were no different, and when they met a Turkish journalist, they would have a heyday speaking Turkish with him, asking him for "news from home," and finally, being overcome with the sweet melancholy of nostalgia. The first-generation immigrants to the New World tried hard to maintain their

12 Nowadays called the "Manisa Merkezefendi State Hospital's Moris Shinasi Children's and Maternity Clinic" (*Manisa Merkezefendi Devlet Hastanesi Moris Şinasi Çocuk Kliniği ve Doğum Kliniği*).

culture of coffeehouses, food, and music they had grown up with in Anatolia and the Balkans, but later generations became gradually Americanized and the cultural heritage eventually faded.

In its prosperity and freedom, America has long symbolized “a land of opportunity paved with gold”, not just for Turks but for people of all countries. Coming to the U.S., whether by legal or illegal means, and whether to dream of become a gas station or supermarket owner, or of attaining success as a high-ranking executive in banking and finance, is every young Turk’s dream. It is the same dream that tantalized Ottoman youth in the late 1800s and the first quarter of the twentieth century. For Ottoman youths the “New World” was a dreamland filled with stories of incredible success. Letters sent from America by expatriates were discussed among friends and relatives, and the success stories became almost legendary, transforming “Immigration to the New World” from an enduring fascination to an attainable dream. None of those who clung to that dream had anything to lose. In order to understand to what extent and under what circumstances that dream was realized, we must go back a century.

TURKISH PRONUNCIATION

The letters of the Turkish alphabet are pronounced approximately as in English, with the following exceptions:

- C** is pronounced like *j* in *jade*
 - Ç** is pronounced like *ch* in *cheek*
 - G** is always hard, as in *go*
 - Ğ** either lengthens the previous vowel or is pronounced like *y* in *yes*
 - H** is always aspirated (as in *happy*), never silent
 - I** is pronounced like *u* in *suck*
 - İ** is pronounced like *I* in *sit*
 - J** is pronounced like *j* in the French *jour*
 - Ö** is pronounced like the German *ö* in *König* (similar to *ur* in *urge*)
 - S** is pronounced like *s* in *sin* (not in *is*)
 - Ş** is pronounced like *sh* in *shout*
 - Ü** is pronounced like the German *ü* in *für* or the French *u* in *tu*
 - Y** is pronounced like *y* in *yet* (not in *merry*)
-



A WORD ABOUT FORMS OF ADDRESS

Traditionally, the polite way of addressing a man in Turkish is to add the word *Bey* after his first name, but the title *Bey* was customarily reserved for Muslim Turks. When addressing members of the minorities (Greeks, Armenians, Jews), *Efendi* (and sometimes *Monsieur*) was often used instead. Women—both married and single—were and are addressed as *Hanım*, also used after the first name. Occasionally, one finds the even more respectful titles *Beyefendi* and *Hanımfendi*.

CHAPTER ONE



THE IRRESISTIBLE ATTRACTION OF
"IMMIGRATING TO AMERICA"



1. Causes – America's Policy of Admitting Immigrants – Returnees

General Causes of Immigration and Those Peculiar to Turkey

In examining what motivated emigration, first from the Ottoman State and later from the Turkish Republic, two main causes stand out. The first was common to both European and Turkish immigrants, while the second was peculiar to the Turks.

The first and most important of the common causes was embodied in the immigrants' dream of America as "the land of opportunity whose streets were paved with gold" and the ongoing economic recession in Europe. Travel guidebooks, individual stories, advertisements, and the "Letters from America" the immigrants sent to friends they had left behind all contributed to popularizing that image. "Letters from America" were more reliable sources for explaining the New World than any of the guidebooks or the news items appearing in the press. Guidebooks to the New World and the accounts of those who had traveled around that continent provided practical tips for would-be immigrants to America and pointed out the opportunities there, while at the same time emphasizing the enormity, novelty, and relative emptiness of the continent. Two technological innovations were also important factors in accelerating immigration in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first of those was the replacement of sailing ships with steamships. While it took conventional sailing ships about a month to get to America, steamships could make the trip in one, or at most, two weeks. Furthermore, while the sailing ships departed only when they had commercial cargo

aboard, because of their immunity from the vagaries of the wind, steamships were able to operate according to a regular schedule. The second technological innovation was the telegraph. Starting in 1866, European news agencies, thanks to transatlantic telegraph service, were able to keep track of the latest developments in the American economy and to reflect public opinion at a moment's notice. For all these reasons, five million immigrants would come to America between 1820 and 1860, while between 1860 and the time when the quota system put an end to mass immigration in 1924, another thirty-one million immigrants would arrive.¹³

As for the causes of immigration/emigration peculiar to Turkey, these were mainly economic and political. The first cause was that the wages paid to unskilled laborers in America were between five and ten times higher than those in Turkey. So, if a Turkish worker spent ten, fifteen, or even twenty-five years working at the higher American wages and living the same humble lifestyle he had been accustomed to in Turkey, he could certainly save up several thousand dollars. When he went back to Turkey, the money he had saved up for years would constitute a small fortune and enable him to live comfortably. Hence, Turks had nothing to lose and everything to gain by "immigrating to America". The second cause peculiar to Turkey was political. In the tyrannous Ottoman State bribery was commonplace, and nepotism worked mostly to the disadvantage of the minorities. If indeed the proclamation of the Second Constitution in 1908 and the efforts to instill a spirit of "Ottomanism" among the different ethnic components living in Ottoman society briefly gave hope to the minorities, the nationalist and separatist movements that soon appeared among the same ethnic groups and the harsh defensive reaction by the new Ottoman rulers quickly stifled those hopes. The minorities also had to pay a price for the decision to instill the spirit of "Ottomanism":

13 John J. Grabowski, "Streets Paved with Gold: Immigration and the Image of America," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 9 (1999): 17-32.

while previously they had been exempt from military service, part of the new 'social contract' was that they were now subject to the draft. In increasing numbers, non-Muslims who didn't want to serve in the army began fleeing to America. The tax increase announced on account of the mobilization for the Balkan Wars, and the fact that future conditions looked even bleaker, were additional reasons why the pace of immigration accelerated.¹⁴

Along with all these reasons, in order to maximize their profits, the steamship companies themselves hired loan sharks and employment agents to encourage immigration to America, and also made other efforts to increase the number of Ottomans departing for the New World. Concessionaires buying tickets for the voyage to America from the companies, loan sharks lending money at high interest, employment agents seeking access to a cheap labor force--in a word, everyone who saw a way to increase their earnings by taking advantage of immigrants--painted an exaggerated picture of America as "a land of opportunity." Ottoman citizens, taken in by this colorful and exaggerated description of America, took steamships to Liverpool before boarding the transoceanic steamers carrying passengers to America. Unfortunately, after arriving, when they applied for visas at the American consulate, their applications were generally refused. The Ottoman Consulate in Liverpool was compelled to advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the wretched conditions in which those Ottoman nationals whose applications were refused found themselves.¹⁵ They encountered similar obstacles in other ports as well.¹⁶

14 Leland James Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey, 1830-1930*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), pp. 298-302.

15 Fahri Çoker, "80 Yıl Önce Amerikan Rüyası ABD'ye Göç Etmenin Çilesi," *Tarih ve Toplum* 64 (April 1989), pp. 41-43.

16 Vahdettin Engin, "Amerikan Rüyası Görüp Yola Çıkan Osmanlı Vatandaşları Yolda Kaldılar," *Hürriyet Tarih*, September 17, 2003, pp. 16-17.

America's Policy of Admitting Immigrants

Throughout the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, America would practice a relatively unrestricted policy of admitting immigrants, and that policy would begin to be questioned only toward the end of the 19th century. While America's national growth continued, immigrants were generally admitted to America without any constraints, but America didn't always view unrestricted immigration as a positive thing; from time to time, especially at times when economic conditions were bad, strong measures were taken to put a damper on the surge of immigration. As mass immigration went on, American officials decided to place restrictions on immigration. With this goal in mind, on March 2, 1819, the U.S. Congress passed the Steerage Act, obliging captains of ships carrying travelers to America to turn over lists of the passengers to the port authorities. These ship manifests containing personal data about immigrants were the first official records.

Between 1820 and 1840, most of those coming to America were German, Irish, and English. This group constituted seventy percent of the total. Between 1841 and 1860, the same groups—German, Irish, and English—were still the majority but now represented eighty percent of the total. Between 1860 and 1880, although Germany, Ireland, and England continued to maintain their special status as the nations sending the largest number of immigrants, the number of immigrants coming from Scandinavia, China, and South America was increasing.¹⁷

Some states passed laws concerning immigration after the Civil War, but in 1875 the Supreme Court ruled that immigration was a federal responsibility. Although the number of immigrants

17 U.S., Immigration & Naturalization Service, "An Immigrant Nation: United States Regulation of Immigration, 1798-1991," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Immigration & Naturalization Services, 1991), p. 4. Also available online: www.uscis.gov.

began to rise again in the 1880s, economic conditions worsened in some parts of the country, and the U.S. Congress started passing laws to control immigration. The commitment to control immigration by law was influenced by the demands of American workers, who were worried about competition from immigrants. On May 6, 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act forbade Chinese workers to immigrate to the U.S. for a period of ten years. The Alien Contract Labor Laws, passed on February 26, 1885 and February 23, 1887, forbade American employers from importing foreign workers. On August 3, 1882 a law of a more general nature, the Immigration Act, imposed a tax of fifty cents per head on all immigrants; it blocked the entry of the mentally ill, lunatics, convicts, and persons likely to become public charges (or denied admittance to immigrants included in those categories). With the passage of another Immigration Act in 1891, the U.S. federal government assumed the duty of examining all would-be immigrants for the purpose of deciding whether or not to allow them entry, and for this purpose the Act also established a Commissioner of Immigration. Placed within the structure of the Treasury Department, the Commissioner appointed U.S. immigration inspectors to oversee the officers assigned to each port. The Immigration Service's first duty was to compile lists of passengers arriving on ships. In 1890 the Immigration Services began administering national immigration policy. After the passage of this law, on January 1, 1892, a new Federal Immigration Station was opened on Ellis Island.¹⁸

A serious increase in the number of immigrants coming to the U.S. in the period from 1880 to the First World War gave rise to further discussion and debate; apart from sheer numbers, another cause for concern was that the immigrants were now increasingly coming from countries in southeastern Europe instead of north-

18 *ibid.*; Marian L. Smith, "Overview of INS History," in George T. Kurlan, ed., *A Historical Guide to the U.S. Government*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), at: www.uscis.gov.

western Europe. These “new” immigrants from Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Russia, Spain, Turkey, and Austria-Hungary, had fewer skills, less training, and often different religions than the “old” immigrants. Nevertheless, a rapidly industrializing and growing America attracted all manner of immigrants. The American-born population alone was no longer able to meet the demand for increased employment in manufacturing. Hence the number of immigrants continued to rise dramatically. Even with the four year pause due to the First World War, in that twenty-year period between 1900 and 1920 more than 14.5 million immigrants would come to America; during the first six years of that period, the number of immigrants would reach a million per year. Sixty percent of those immigrants would come from Italy, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Due to the fact that this massive increase partially coincided with a recession in the U.S. economy, public demands for effective methods of restricting immigration began to increase. When more than 1.2 million immigrants arrived in 1907, a federal commission headed by Senator William P. Dillingham was established to investigate the issue. The “Dillingham Commission Reports,” which came out in 1911, reached the conclusion that it was necessary to regulate and predetermine the number and type of immigrants the U.S. would accept. The adoption of the commission’s recommendations on February 5, 1917 thus further affected the Immigration Act. This law maintained all the former criteria, but added two new ones. First, in spite of President Wilson’s veto, it required that all immigrants admitted to the U.S. be able to read and write. Second, those coming from the so-called “Asiatic Barred Zone,” comprising most of Asia and the Pacific islands, would not be admitted. At the same time, this law defined and broadened the scope of officers’ authority to subject immigrants to inspection. The same law raised the poll tax on immigrants to eight dollars a head.¹⁹

19 “An Immigrant Nation: United States Regulation of Immigration, 1798-1991”, *loc. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

At the beginning of the First World War immigration saw a sudden decline. Between 1913 and 1918, the First World War played at least as big a role as the law in the drop in immigration. 100,000 immigrants arrived in 1918, the year the war ended. And this was the lowest number in over a century, but with part of Europe in ruins after the war ended, the number of immigrants would suddenly rise again. At the same time, however, the U.S. faced rising unemployment and a housing shortage. Hence, Americans were both disturbed by having to compete with foreign workers and worried about the threat to America's stability from the foreign ideologies--anarchism and communism, in particular--that were being "imported" along with the immigrants. Thus, Americans' attitudes toward immigration would change after 1918. With the slowdown in economic growth Americans no longer believed unconstrained and unrestricted immigration was healthy for their country, and the fear of a "Red Invasion" led Americans to take a more positive view of laws restricting immigration more severely than did the 1917 Act.²⁰

The passage of the Emergency Quota Act on May 19, 1921 was a direct result of those fears. This law imposed a temporary system of quotas for accepting immigrants based on the 1910 census, with each country being assigned a quota for new immigrants set at three percent of the number of people from that country in the U.S. population as of the year 1910. This system would change after three years. With the law passed on May 26, 1924, the temporary quota system was finalized and made permanent; its quotas were based on the 1890 census rather than that of 1910, and the rate used to determine the quotas was lowered from three percent to two percent. This restriction would officially remain in effect until June 30, 1927, although at that point it would be extended for another two years. The National Origins Quota System

20 *ibid.* p. 10.

would be enforced from the end of that period—i.e., July 1, 1929 until December 31, 1952. According to that quota system, the total number of immigrants from different countries that would be accepted to the U.S. per year was limited to 150,000. The number of immigrants from each country was determined on the basis of the 1920 American census results, and it calculated the number of people from each country living in the U.S. that year as a ratio of the total population. The quota of new immigrants that would be accepted from a particular country was then determined by applying that ratio to the total number of 150,000 immigrants that would be accepted to the U.S. from different countries. For example, in 1920 the total population of Turkish origin was 100,000, and the total American population was 106 million, so people of Turkish origin constituted .0094% of the population. As a ratio of 150,000, this came to 141, so that was the quota assigned to Turks.

A second difficulty that eventually arose was with the visa application. Starting from July 1, 1924, all foreigners who wished to enter the United States had to first obtain a visa from an American consulate, something that greatly reduced the number of potential immigrants and in practice brought the period of mass American immigration to an end. The establishment of the quota system served two purposes: (a) limiting the number of immigrants coming each year from countries in the Eastern hemisphere to about 150,000; (b) determining in advance the countries from which immigrants would be accepted. The Quota Law favored immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, who constituted the great majority of the American population that had come before 1890, during the “old” immigration. The quotas were less generous for those coming from Asia, Africa, and Australia. The law established two categories of immigrants not subject to quotas. First, those born in the Western hemisphere and their families, clergymen, and those who formerly or at present were American citizens and their families. The second category was foreigners

who were not immigrants. Needless to say, an unintended consequence of the quota system was that, beginning in 1923, there was a sharp increase in the number of illegal immigrants. Before the quotas were applied, European immigrants usually went to Canada or Mexico, countries bordering America, then entered the US illegally. An important industry grew up to provide such people illegal entry to America. So as to be able to cope with these waves of illegal immigrants, the inadequate force entrusted with the duty of securing the borders would be bolstered and 'professionalized' becoming the U.S. Border Patrol in 1926.²¹

Ottoman Subjects Who Returned Home After Becoming American Citizens

Among the Ottoman immigrants who went to America, some returned after becoming American citizens. Enjoying the protection of the U.S. government, these former Ottomans who were new Americans were exempt from paying taxes to the Ottoman State, were immune from conscription into Ottoman military service and could not be tried in Ottoman courts. Therefore immigration to America not only gave Ottoman subjects the opportunity to improve their financial circumstances but at the same time, thanks to their American citizenship, to vastly improve their political status and security when they eventually returned to the lands of their birth.²² According to Prof. Leland J. Gordon, in the first quarter of the twentieth century about 70,000 former Ottomans who had become American citizens returned to Turkey. This circumstance led to tensions between American and Ottoman officials. To put an end to those tensions, the U.S. government shifted to a new practice in 1900. Beginning in that year, the U.S. government started publishing explanations clarifying that it would not rec-

21 Leland James Gordon, (1932), p. 311; "An Immigrant Nation: United States Regulation of Immigration, 1798-1991," www.uscis.gov

22 Leland J. Gordon (1932), p. 302.

ognize the American citizenship or passports of former Ottoman subjects who had become citizens of another country without the permission of the Ottoman government, and could prohibit them from entering the country, or could arrest them if they did enter.²³ This practice was consistent with article five of the Empire's *Tabi'yet-i Osmaniye Kannunnâme-i Hümayyunu* (Imperial Law of Ottoman Citizenship), which was decreed into law on January 23, 1869. According to that article, if an Ottoman subject acquired foreign citizenship without permission from the Ottoman State, the State could choose to not accept that new citizenship, considering it null and void, and such persons would continue to be subject to the same practices as other Ottomans.²⁴

2. The Voyage: Ocean Travel and Ships Conditions

The greatest factor in the explosion of immigration numbers from continental Europe resulted from the replacement of sailing ships by steamships. Invented by an American engineer named Robert Fulton, the first steamship crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1819. By the second half of the century the journey that had taken eight weeks by sailing ship was reduced to only one to two weeks, thereby encouraging many Europeans who had been unwilling to

23 Leland J. Gordon, "The Turkish-American Controversy over Nationality," *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October 1911), pp. 658-669. On this matter see also Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Kökenleri*, (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 2001), pp. 226-234.

24 "Tabiyet-i Osmaniye Kannunnâme-i Hümayünu", *Takvim-i Vekâyii*, Kanunusani 11, 1284 (January 23, 1869), number 1044. Article 5 states: "Individuals receiving permission to change from subjects of the Ottoman State to foreign citizenship will be considered to hold the rights of that foreign citizenship as of the date when they changed their citizenship. If they do not receive permission to become foreign citizens, the new citizenship will be considered null and void, and they will receive the same treatment, and, as citizens of the Empire, the same laws will apply to them as before. A person who by any means relinquishes his Ottoman citizenship will be given a year to reconsider his decision."

risk the hardships and dangers of a lengthy, two-month trip to the New World now undertake the voyage. Thanks to the "Steamship Age," in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, sixty million people would abandon Europe for other lands, the majority to America.

The act of getting hundreds of thousands of people across the Atlantic now became a very big business. The millions wanting to immigrate would foster the birth of an "immigration industry," and that industry, in addition to facilitating this mass migration, would provide employment to tens of thousands of people. The men who sold tickets for the steamship companies, those who built hotels for the immigrants awaiting their ships in European port cities, ship employees, customs workers, those who received and registered the immigrants, the doctors and nurses who inspected them, those who fed the immigrants, those who sold them clothing, and finally, those who came up with all kinds of crooked ways to cheat the immigrants out of their money—these were the different actors in this new field of work. All of them earned their living from the "immigrant sector." The immigrants either made the trip with tickets sent by friends and relatives in America, bought their tickets from the salesmen who frequented the ports, or purchased them directly in the ports themselves. If they already had their tickets, they would be able to board the ships in a short while, but those who didn't have a ticket or for whom there was no room on board would often have to wait for the next available ship. That is why some steamship companies built layover accommodations in areas near the port to provide shelter for those awaiting their turn. Beginning in 1891, the American Immigration Act made the shipping companies responsible for vaccinating, disinfecting, and carrying out physical examinations of the immigrants they transported. A series of requirements would make them pay for shelters for the immigrants awaiting a more detailed examination on Ellis Island, just as they were required to take back

those immigrants who were refused entry at their own expense, but the shipping companies were rarely in full compliance with those rules. On the assumption that most of the immigrants they transported to America would be accepted—and, naturally, to maximize their profits, the companies preferred to transport the maximum number of passengers to America and gambled with their fates. If indeed the steamship companies accepted the immigrants after a physical examination, as specified, the companies would offer the indigent immigrants treatment, and after undergoing the treatment, they would come to America and would be able to be accepted as immigrants. But on account of the shipping companies' cavalier attitudes, they brought tens of thousands of sick immigrants to America, and, unable to pass the physical once there, they were turned back by Immigration Service officers. The shipping companies were required to give the American Immigration Service a list of their passengers. These lists contained every immigrant's basic identity data, along with his destination in America, his source of income, and information about his physical, political, and mental condition and marital status. But the companies usually filled out these lists quickly and carelessly. Hence the data in the passenger lists was often either incorrect or fabricated. This would cause a whole series of problems for the immigrants when they were interrogated by the immigration inspectors.²⁵

The steamships setting out from European ports would reach America within ten days. The price of a ticket for those sailing from England was fifteen dollars; those departing from other ports were usually charged a little more. The journey took place under difficult conditions.²⁶ There were three classes of passengers on the ships: first, second, and third class. The third-class passengers were housed in a small deck (steerage) between the fore and aft

25 David M. Brownstone, Irene M. Franck, & Douglass Brownstone, *Island of Hopes, Island of Tears*. (New York: Metro Books, 2000), pp. 106-108.

26 William Loren Katz, *The Great Migrations, 1880-1912*. (Austin: Raintree Steck-Vaughn Publishers, 1993), p. 6.

of the ship. The ship's personnel treated these passengers almost like cargo. Very few immigrants traveled first class. Knowing how hard it was to make the trip in steerage, some immigrants chose to travel second class. And one advantage of traveling second class was that the American immigration officials examined the immigrants on the ship rather than on Ellis Island. But because traveling second class was considerably more expensive, the overwhelming majority of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe chose to travel in steerage. Before the First World War, the price of a steerage (i.e., third-class) ticket was ten dollars. Occasionally this price went up to fifteen dollars, but it never exceeded thirty-five dollars. Since ticket prices went up during and after the war, the least expensive way to get to America would again be third class. The shipping companies made their greatest profits from third-class passengers. Therefore, some ships did their best to fit as many as two thousand passengers, including women and children, in third class. The places assigned to third-class travelers were cramped and extremely unhealthy, and even their food was unsanitary.²⁷ A typical third-class compartment was a place between two and two and a half meters high, with no porthole, no ventilation, no partition, with two or more upper berths furnished with simple mattresses. Male and female passengers were sometimes in the same decks, sometimes separated only by blankets hung in the middle of a compartment. Children usually stayed with their mothers. The toilets were insufficient in number and extremely unsanitary. The smells coming from the kitchen mingled with those of human feces to create an unbearable situation. The basic food given to the immigrants during the voyage was herring,²⁸ which was the only thing the Jewish immigrants who kept kosher could eat.²⁹ Even at the shortened period that steam travel allowed, crossing the Atlantic Ocean was still an ordeal and

27 *ibid.*.

28 Brownstone, et al, (2000), p. 126.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

a highly risky endeavor. a fact brought home to many when the so-called “unsinkable” *Titanic* struck an iceberg and sank in 1912, taking around 1,500 of its passengers with it. Apart from the fear of drowning if their ship went under, passengers setting out on a sea voyage also frequently feared seasickness,³⁰ a painful and dangerously dehydrating situation that often lasted for the entire voyage. When they arrived at Ellis Island, their eyes were often so red from continual weeping that the personnel responsible for inspecting the immigrants put them under quarantine, thinking they had trachoma.³¹ And on almost every ship there were the stowaways who didn’t have the money to buy a ticket. The ship’s personnel were experts at catching them. They turned them over to the Immigration Service for deportation.³²

Up to 1922, Turkish immigrants made the voyage on ships belonging to companies from other nations. Jorj Dedeoğlu, an Ottoman citizen of Greek ancestry, signed a contract to rent the *Gülcemal* from the Ottoman-American shipping company, and beginning in 1920 the ship made the Istanbul-New York crossing, transporting cargo. The *Gülcemal* began its first trip on October 9 and reached the port of New York on October 31, 1920. The 956 passengers on board the ship were mostly Armenian and Greek Ottoman subjects and Jewish refugees fleeing from Russia.³³ When it was on its way back to Istanbul in 1921, a Greek naval ship intercepted it off the coast at Bandırma, claiming that it was transporting weapons for the Turkish national resistance forces, but the charge turned out to be baseless.³⁴ After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, the *Gülcemal*, along with the other ships

30 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

32 *ibid.*, p. 128.

33 “Turkish Ship Lands 956; Many Refugees,” *The New York Times*, November 1, 1920, p. 28.

34 “Say Turks Shipped Munitions from Here,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 1921, p. 5; “Search Turkish Steamer,” *The New York Times*, August 13, 1921, p. 3.

in the Ottoman Ships Administration, would be turned over to the newly founded Turkish Maritime Administration. In this capacity it would continue to work the Black Sea line, eventually give up foreign service in 1938, and end up being sold to Italy for scrap in 1950.³⁵

3. Arrival at Ellis Island

As they neared the American shoreline after a long and difficult journey, the immigrants' first glimpse of the port of New York was the Statue of Liberty rising up before them. But even after such a difficult sea voyage was over, they had not yet reached the land of their dreams, for another painful trial awaited the immigrants: having to undergo, and successfully get through, examination and interrogation by the immigration officials. When the first ships pulled into lower New York harbor, they were placed under quarantine. The Immigration Service inspectors and nurses immediately boarded the quarantined ships and began inspecting the passengers. The doctors sometimes noticed that all the passengers on a ship were lice-infested or had contracted an epidemic disease. In such cases they disinfected the passengers, shaved their heads, and even hospitalized them right away. But such cases were few and far between. American citizens traveling in first and second class were usually given permission to disembark. A few first and second class passengers might be placed under quarantine for health or other reasons and would then be transferred from the ship to Ellis Island for observation. Ships released from quaran-

35 For further information on the *Gülcecal*, see John J. Grabowski, "Republican Perceptions - Time and *Gülcecal*", in *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yılığ* (*The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*), Ankara University, College of Political Science, XXXI, 2 (2000), pp. 31-49; Scott Alfassa Marks, "Gul Djemal: The Saga of a Turkish Ship from a Bygone Era," *Remote*, Spring 2001, pp. 8-10; Transcript of Orhan Kızıldemir's broadcast of June 6, 1985 on Istanbul Radio, published with the title "Efsane gemi *Gülcecal*." [Generally provided to me by Mr. Kızıldemir from his private archive].

tine later sailed into the Manhattan or New Jersey ports where they would cast anchor. The first and second class passengers who were American citizens and had made it successfully through the examination were then given permission to disembark. The immigrants in third class, who were the overwhelming majority, either stayed on board to be taken to Ellis Island the next day or boarded barges for immediate transfer to Ellis Island, with the number of the manifesto listing all the belongings they had brought with them being pinned to their coat collars.³⁶

4. Conditions on Ellis Island

In 1855 the official American agencies began using Castle Garden in New York's Battery Park as the first building to receive immigrants. But for various reasons, including corruption—such as the service charging immigrants exorbitant prices—Castle Garden's use as an immigrant reception center was discontinued on April 11, 1890, and as of October 1, 1892, Ellis Island became the service's immigrant receiving station.³⁷ The immigrant reception building on Ellis Island was a two-story wooden structure. Upon entering, the immigrants would leave their belongings on the first floor. The second floor was where the immigrants were inspected and interrogated. Additionally, space on that floor was set aside for booths selling train tickets, stands selling food, booths for changing money, and administrative offices. There were other buildings housing dormitories, a hospital, a bathhouse, and a restaurant for the immigrants being detained, and administrative offices for the service. Between the years 1892 and 1897, the entire facility would operate at full capacity, processing upwards of ten thousand immigrants per day. In the middle of the year 1890, on account of laws restricting the number of immigrants and the economic recession, the "old immigration" coming from Northern and Western

36 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 140-141.

37 Mary J. Shapiro, *Gateway to Liberty*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), pp. 103ff.

Europe slowed down. Its place was soon taken, however, by the "new immigration" from Southern and Eastern Europe, which was increasingly exponentially. No one had anticipated this mass immigration that would take place during the first twenty years of the twentieth century. The facilities on Ellis Island were inadequate to cope with receiving such a crowded mass of immigrants. A fire that broke out after midnight on June 14, 1897 reduced the wooden buildings to ashes. For the next three years the reception of immigrants once again took place in the temporary facilities set up in Battery Park. The new, fire-resistant Federal Immigration Building that opened on December 17, 1900 was similar to the earlier facilities but much larger. Construction of a hospital within the facilities was completed in 1902, and later, a second hospital would be added for epidemic diseases.³⁸

The immigrants brought to Ellis Island on barges would be subjected to a two-part health examination there. The doctors examined five thousand immigrants a day, attempting to diagnose abnormalities and contagious diseases. In addition to communicable diseases, the medical staff also tried to distinguish other medical ailments such as all manner of mental illness, extreme nearsightedness, blindness, dementia, deafness, and lameness from more serious diseases such as trachoma, ringworm, and tuberculosis; those suffering from the latter illnesses would be sent back home at once. Since the doctors had a maximum of two minutes to devote to examining each immigrant, the examinations were fairly superficial. As the immigrants approached, they examined their faces from a distance, then their hands, their throats and finally, performed a closer examination of their faces. They would write with chalk on the back or chest of those immigrants they suspected of being ill, or whom they felt they needed to examine more closely, the first letter of the English word for the

38 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 150-154.

disease or the diseased organ they suspected them of having.³⁹ For example, “Ct” for trachoma, “E” for eye, “F” for foot, “H” for heart, “K” for hernia, “Pg” for pregnancy, and “Sn” for senility. After the first doctor had examined him, the immigrant would be examined by a second doctor, who would turn his eyelids inside out with a hook to determine whether or not he or she had trachoma. This test was painful and frightening.⁴⁰

The immigrants who didn’t pass the inspection were taken into custody, and before being subjected to more extensive tests they would be taken away either to the hospitals or the dormitories, or else to special places where they would be disinfected and cleansed of their lice. Those who passed the examinations were taken in groups according to their numbers on the ship manifesto from the health examination area to the main inspection area. When their turn came, the immigrants were taken down long corridors to a high-ceilinged room like an imposing courtroom, where they were seated on benches to await their turn with an immigration inspector.⁴¹

With the assistance of a translator, the Immigration Service inspectors sometimes questioned the immigrants who had passed the health examination in their mother tongue. These questions were listed on a form:⁴²

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Married or single:

Does the person have a job:

Does the person know how to read and write:

39 Shapiro, (1986), p. 160.

40 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 157-160.

41 *ibid.*

42 *Ellis Island and Immigration: A Teaching Guide for Grades 5-8*. National Park Foundation, 1993, p. 12.

Nationality:

Last place of residence:

What is the person's final destination:

Does the person have a ticket to final destination:

Who paid for the ticket:

Does the person have at least \$25? If less, how much?

Will they be joining a relative or friend?...If so, name and complete address:

Has the person ever been confined in a prison, a poorhouse, or a mental hospital:

Is the person a polygamist:

Is the person an anarchist:

Is the person under contract to perform labor in the United States:

What is the state of the person's mental and physical health:

Is the person deformed or crippled:

The first question was extremely simple: "What is your name?" However, some immigrants who wanted to change their names answered with a different name, and thus acquired a new name as soon as they reached America. The names of thousands of immigrants were also incorrectly written on the passenger manifests due to their own error or to the misunderstanding or mispronunciation of the inspector, so they too acquired a new name. Since some immigrants didn't even realize what was happening, and others didn't think they could challenge the inspectors, no one objected to having their name "Americanized."⁴³ Even if they didn't want their new names, most immigrants were happy to be able to acquire an American identity and join the American melting pot. And they decided on their own to Americanize their names.⁴⁴ Another question the immigrants were asked was "Do you have a job?" This was one of the trickiest questions. If immigrants an-

43 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 177-178.

44 Marian L. Smith, "American Names Declaring Independence," www.uscis.gov.

swered “No”, they could be labeled “Liable to become a Public Charge” (LPC for short) and be sent back home. If they answered “Yes,” they could be sent back under the law forbidding employment contractors from hiring foreigners. For that reason the most appropriate answer to the question meaning “Do you have a way of finding work” was “I have contacts.” In a short time word spread among the immigrants that this was the appropriate answer.⁴⁵

The ship manifesto containing the data concerning the immigrants’ status was in front of the immigration inspector. If the immigrants got through the interrogation without a problem, they were free to join their relatives who were waiting for them; if there were no relatives, they would be taken in groups by numbers to the places where they would board the trains. If any problem occurred during the inspection, the immigrants would be held under observation on Ellis Island until their American sponsors came. Before the First World War, in the years when the number of immigrants peaked, an average of one million immigrants per year were processed at Ellis Island. During the First World War, the number of immigrants would decrease seriously, but after the war’s end, it would again climb back to its pre-war level. Nevertheless, once the U.S. Congress passed more restrictive laws that demanded closer examinations of each and every immigrant, the cursory examinations that had long characterized the Ellis Island facilities could not be continued. The law passed on February 5, 1917 for the first time required the inspectors to test the immigrants for literacy, and also called for a more extensive interrogation. For an inspector to process several hundred immigrants a day in fast-moving lines was now a thing of the past. Now only between two and three thousand immigrants could be processed in a day.⁴⁶

Among the problems still facing the immigrants was the “money issue.” To be more specific, for an immigrant to be accepted to America, he had to be able to correctly answer the so-called

45 *Ellis Island and Immigration*, (1993), p. 5.

46 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 157-160.

"twenty-five dollar question." Information about this "twenty-five dollar question" came from salesmen trying to sell tickets to potential immigrants, shipping companies, returning immigrants, articles appearing in the press, and letters sent to friends and relatives of immigrants. The message they conveyed was one that left no room for misunderstanding: for anyone who had twenty-five dollars to show upon entering Ellis Island, America was the land of the free, a home for the homeless.

At first glance, one might think that twenty-five dollars wasn't a lot of money, but in those years it was actually a significant amount. Wages for new immigrants often ranged between three and four dollars a week.⁴⁷ Even so, the "twenty-five dollar" rumor was only partially correct. Although it didn't say in the immigration laws that every immigrant had to bring twenty-five dollars with him, some Immigration Commissioners added that condition to deter poor immigrants from entering America, a practice that tended to discriminate against the relatively poorer immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. In 1904 Immigration Commissioner William Williams imposed the condition that immigrants going from Ellis Island to other states be in possession of ten dollars and their train tickets. In 1905 Williams's successor would abolish that condition, but when Williams was reappointed four years later, the condition would not only be reinstated, but the amount raised to twenty-five dollars. In response to protests from immigrants, those conditions would be officially suspended two years later, but they would nevertheless continue to be enforced until Williams left office in 1914. Even then, immigration inspectors continued to illegally ask the "twenty-five dollar" question.⁴⁸

One traumatic experience awaiting many people on Ellis Island led the immigrants to nickname it the "Island of Tears." As a result of the inspections, as many as twenty percent or more of the

47 *ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

48 David M. Reimers, *A Land of Immigrants*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996, p. 84.

immigrants were detained in order to be subjected to a detailed health examination, or until the time that they could produce evidence of being able to support themselves.

Nevertheless, the proportion of immigrants actually sent back to their point of origin was very low. Only about one percent of the immigrants were ultimately denied entry. And there were organizations of volunteers to help the immigrants. The most important of those lending a hand to Jewish immigrants was the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS for short). Two other leading organizations assisting Italian immigrants were the St. Raphael's Society and the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants.⁴⁹

Ida Mouradjian from Cilicia Remembers Escaping from the 1915 Armenian Genocide to Ellis Island

We were pushed around. Now with my knowledge of what a patronage job means, I can explain it. They were a bunch of patronage jobholders, who were ignorant. What's more, they didn't have hearts, they didn't have minds, they had no education. They were very crude. Many were foreigners, who delighted in the fact that they could lord it over the new entries, the new immigrants. They had accents as thick as molasses, every kind of accent, but they acted the way small people become because they had a little power. They pushed everybody around, actually, literally, pushed. You are afraid that maybe they can do you harm; therefore you close your mouth, until you can't close it any more. So one day I said, 'Look, if you can't read English, I can.' The sign said, 'Employees are required to be civil to immigrants. Employees are required to be helpful to immigrants.' Yes! Don't you see those signs? Didn't anybody ever photograph those signs?

I'm not saying that Ellis Island or the organization was responsible. It was the petty employees. Employees who sat behind desks and felt like Mr. Wilson, sitting behind the White House desk.

49 *ibid.*

When I was in Ellis Island, my English teacher was working for her Ph.D. at Columbia. She came to visit me and very defiantly I said to her, 'Miss Arkanian, is the language you taught us English—or is English the language spoken in this hell-hole?' Can I swear on tape? I did. Wipe it off if you don't want it.

She said, very sadly, 'Ida, what I taught you is Shakespeare's English, the king's language, not this brogue.'

And they pushed you around. They pushed you into showers—burning hot water, the cold water control was outside. They had to control the mixture. It was either too hot or too cold, they didn't care. So you got out and they pushed two blankets into your arms and they pushed you into a room, bare cots, one blanket under you, one blanket on top of you, and that was your bed. And maybe 150 in one dormitory.

I can't describe the food. It must have been inedible. I can't describe it because I don't think I ever ate it. Maybe a piece of bread. And I thought to myself, 'You know, cruelty is not the privilege of one nation or one group of people or another. God Almighty, it can happen here.' It happened there and I thought it was unique but it can happen here, given the same set of circumstances. It can happen here too.

One of my students was a sixteen-year-old boy, who had relatives in America. In the meantime he was traveling with me, on the same boat. And the poor boy was 'God damned' a hundred times a day. He came one day to me and said, 'What does "God damn" mean? It must be a good word because God is included in the sentence, and I thought this was a Christian world and the name of God is not supposed to be used in vain. What's going on here? "God damn, God damn"—all day long.' And I had the sad duty to tell my student, who was coming to America with big dreams, too, that that was the worst kind of swearing that one can wish upon somebody else.

I stayed at Ellis Island three and a half weeks. I was frightened to be sent back where I came from, where I did not have a job, I did not have a family. I did not have a home, I had spent every last

cent of my money. Before I left my job even, I was replaced, and where would I go?⁵⁰

(...)

Third-class passengers had to go to Ellis Island. Well, I thought, what's the difference? I am traveling by the express consent of the ambassador of America. I am a school teacher, therefore a professional person, which is not subject to the common rules and regulations of immigration laws. What a disillusionment! If you travel third class, nothing helps.

First of all the quota for the month was filled. I said, 'I'm not coming by quota, I am traveling as a professional.'

They said, 'No, no, school teachers aren't professionals.' First they had to find out whether school teachers were considered professionals or not. And they had to find out whether my diploma, the school I graduated from, was the equivalent of American schools. How could it be equivalent to American schools? They had killed every professor, every man of letters, and when I returned to school, it had been reduced to a common ordinary high school. I wasn't bragging that I was the equivalent of an American college graduate. Of course not. But still, in my own country, I was a school teacher.

"They actually threatened to send you back?"

Yes. Because the quota was full and you were not acceptable if you had not come through the regular channels. And if you did not have somebody here to back you financially, you could be a public charge. A healthy, educated twenty-two-year old, who spoke four languages, could be a public charge here in America. Well, tell me, is that possible? But they thought I could be a public charge and I was threatened to be sent back.

So finally I had to swallow my pride and send word to the family that ran the school where I had taught. I sent word that I was one of their school teachers and I regretted very much that I had to leave my job and that I was suffering difficulties here and would they help me out, and they did.

50 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 205-206.

If that family hadn't sent their lawyer to Washington to intercede for me, I would have been sent back. My oldest friend's parents were sent back, all the way to Greece where they had to again apply for re-entry and spend all that money, and the anxiety and the time to come back. They didn't hesitate to put you on a cattle boat and send you back. That was not becoming to a country like America.

When I left Ellis Island, it was one happy day.⁵¹

5. Working Conditions

Extremely difficult working and housing conditions awaited those immigrants who considered themselves fortunate to have set foot in America. Until the 1920s, twelve-hour days were standard in the steel industry. In spite of these long hours of work, the workers earned wages of two or three dollars. Shoeshine boys earned less than two hundred dollars a year. A study carried out in Pittsburgh, the center of the steel industry, in 1910 determined that a family needed an income of fifteen dollars a week in order to live above the poverty line. Nevertheless, only one third of the families living in Pittsburgh were earning enough to be living above that line. Other cities hosting a great number of immigrants offered similar prospects. But worker difficulties didn't end with low wages; they also included unsafe work places. Every year hundreds of workers were either disabled or lost their lives in work accidents without they or their families receiving any indemnity.⁵² The textile industry was the biggest employer of Jewish workers, and the principal city where they lived was New York. Before World War I, seventy percent of the workers in New York's textile sector were Jewish.⁵³ Employees in the textile sector worked long hours under unhealthful conditions for low wages. Since the pay was piece-

51 *ibid.*, pp. 213-214.

52 Reimers, (1996), pp. 93-94.

53 *ibid.* p. 97.

meal, workers often put in between fifteen- and eighteen-hour days in order to turn out more product. The average weekly wage for female workers was \$6.50, while males earned \$12.00.⁵⁴

6. The Number of Turkish Immigrants

The biggest problem facing researchers attempting to compile statistics on immigration from the Ottoman lands during the time of the Ottoman Empire is defining the category “Turkish.” According to American sources, a “Turk” was any person born in the Ottoman State before 1923 or in the Turkish Republic after that year, who was Muslim (or whose family was Muslim), and who considered himself a “Turk.” This definition excluded those coming from the Ottoman State or, later, the Turkish Republic, who considered themselves Greek, Armenian, or Jewish. The principal criteria in defining a “Turk” were ethnicity, language, and the Muslim religion.⁵⁵

Below is a table based on Dr. Berrak Kurtuluş’s research on immigrants from Ottoman lands to America between 1820 and 1920.⁵⁶

54 Katz, (1993), pp. 39-40.

55 Talat Sait Halman, “Turks,” *Harvard Encyclopaedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thornstorm, et al., Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 992-996.

56 U.S. Department of Justice, *1987 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1988, p. 2 and transposing from the continuation Dr. Berrak Kurtuluş, *Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’ne Türk Beyin Göçü* (Istanbul: Alfa Basın Yayın Dağıtım, 1999), p. 52.

Table 1

<i>Periods</i>	Number of Immigrants
1820	1
1821-1830	20
1831-1840	7
1841-1850	59
1851-1860	83
1861-1870	131
1871-1880	404
1881-1890	3,782
1891-1900	30,425
1901-1910	157,369
1911-1920	134,066
Total	326,347

In official U.S. statistics on immigration and immigrants, the immigrants coming from Ottoman lands are classified as “Turks,” “from Turkey,” “from European Turkey,” “from Asian Turkey,” “European Turkish” and “Asian Turkish.” But the same statistics classified the majority of immigrants coming from the Ottoman State as Armenians, based on their ethnic identity as “Armenians” rather than their nationality. On the basis of American statistics, Prof. Kemal H. Karpat—who did the first groundbreaking research in the field of Turkish immigration and is also an expert on the demography of the Ottoman period—determined that the number of immigrants to the U.S. between 1820 and 1931 was 415,793. But that figure included immigrants coming from the former Ottoman lands in the Balkans and the Middle East. In the same Karpat notes that American statistics for the same period specify that 65,756 of the immigrants were Armenians, and 18,848 were “Turks,” and that, additionally, some of the ethnic Turks coming from Harput, Elazığ, Akçadağ, Gaziantep, and Macedonia, who boarded ships in Beirut, Mersin, Izmir, Trabzon, and Salonica, identified themselves on their declarations as “Syrians” or “Armenians” in order to be able to come to America more easily.⁵⁷

57 Karpat (1995) pp. 232-233. In another article Prof. Karpat studies “Syrian” immigration. See Kemal H. Karpat, “The Ottoman Emigration to America,

For different view, Table 2 below shows the numbers of those who emigrated from Turkey to the U.S. between 1900 and 1923 as indicated in another study based on the Commissioner General of Immigration's annual reports.⁵⁸

As can be seen from Table 2, the period in which America's policy toward accepting immigrants was most liberal was between the years 1900-1914. The outbreak of the First World War and the Ottoman State's entry into the war as an ally of Germany brought a temporary hiatus in U.S. immigration from the Ottoman lands. After the war ended, immigration would pick up again for a relatively short time; in 1920 some American agents went to Elazığ and brought around ten thousand people of different ethnic backgrounds from the villages surrounding Elazığ and Harput to work in America.⁵⁹

1860-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17, 2 (May 1985), pp. 175-209. For other studies on the subject of emigration from the Ottoman State to America, see Ahmet Akgündüz, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve dış göçler, 1783-1922," *Toplum ve Bilim*, 80 (Spring 1999), pp. 144-170, (esp. pp. 144-146, 154-163); and Dr. Birol Akgün, "Osmanlı Türklerinin Amerika'ya Göçü," in Hasan Celâl Güzel, Kemal Çiçek, Salim Koca, eds., *Türkler*, vol. 20, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002, pp. 890-896.

58 Commissioner General of Immigration's annual reports, 1900-1923, analysed in Leland James Gordon, (1932), p. 305.

59 Karpat, (1995), pp. 232-233.

Table 2
Number of Emigrants from Turkey to the United States, by Years, 1900-1923 Inclusive

Year Ending June 30	From Turkey in Europe	From Turkey in Asia	Gross Total	Departed Immigrants		Total	Net total Emigration from Turkey to United States	Total United States Immigration	Percentage Turkish Immigration was of United States Total
				To Turkey in Europe	To Turkey in Asia				
1900	285	3,962	4,247					448,572	0.9
1901	387	5,782	6,169					487,918	1.3
1902	187	6,223	6,410					648,743	1.0
1903	1,529	7,118	8,647					857,046	1.0
1904	4,344	5,235	9,579					812,870	1.2
1905	4,542	6,157	10,699					1,026,499	1.0
1906	9,510	6,354	15,864					1,100,735	1.4
1907	20,767	8,053	28,820					1,285,349	2.2
1908	11,290	9,753	21,043	3,084	1,847	4,931	16,112	782,870	2.7
1909	9,015	7,506	16,521	1,267	1,650	2,917	13,604	751,786	2.2
1910	18,405	15,212	33,617	1,988	1,548	3,536	30,081	1,041,570	3.2
1911	14,438	10,229	24,667	4,688	1,905	6,593	18,074	878,587	2.8
1912	14,481	12,788	27,269	5,926	1,551	7,477	19,792	838,172	3.3
1913	14,128	23,955	38,083	4,809	1,313	6,122	31,961	1,197,892	3.2
1914	8,199	21,716	29,915	2,528	2,243	4,771	25,144	1,218,480	2.5
1915	1,008	3,543	4,551	164	593	757	3,794	326,700	1.4
1916	313	1,670	1,983	18	14	32	1,915	298,826	0.7
1917	152	393	545	24	8	32	513	295,403	0.2
1918	15	43	58	24	5	29	29	110,618	0.1
1919	10	19	29	47	26	73	44	141,132	0
1920	1,933	5,033	6,966	1,812	1,731	3,543	3,423	430,001	1.6
1921	6,391	11,735	18,126	405	2,534	2,939	15,187	805,228	2.3
1922	1,660	1,998	3,658	201	1,731	1,932	1,726	309,556	1.2
1923	3,743	2,183	5,926	125	773	898	5,028	522,919	1.1
Total	146,732	176,660	323,392	27,110	19,472	46,582	186,463	16,617,472	1.6
Average	6,114	7,361	13,475	1,694	1,217	2,911	11,654	692,365	

Table 3 compares the estimates of the numbers of Turkish immigrants to America in the studies by Dr. Berrak Kurtuluş, Prof. Kemal H. Karpat, and Prof. Leland James Gordon.

Table 3

				Leland James Gordon Net (after deducting)
<i>Period</i>	<i>Berrak Kurtuluş</i>	<i>Kemal Karpat</i>	<i>Gross</i>	<i>Returnees</i>
1820-1920	326,347	415,793	323,392	186,463

Taking these differences into account, one can say that the number of immigrants of Ottoman and Turkish nationality settling in the U.S.A. was between 200,000 and 300,000. The majority of these immigrants were non-Muslims; their ethno-religious identities shown in Table 4.⁶⁰

In Table 5 one can see a comparison of the distribution of immigrants according to the totals for each ethnic group appearing in Table 4.

60 Annual reports of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1900-1923, analysed by Gordon, (1932), p. 308.

Table 4:
Nationality of Emigrants from Turkey to the United States

Year Ending June 30	Turkish	Greek	Syrian	Armenian	Serbian, Bulgarian, Montenegran	Hebrew	Others	Total
1900	181	0	2,891	981	71	14	9	4,247
1901	125	6	3,984	1,855	9	154	36	6,169
1902	159	1	4,938	1,149	8	138	17	6,410
1903	395	268	5,407	1,755	540	211	71	8,647
1904	1,390	1,306	3,232	1,674	1,250	313	414	9,579
1905	1,930	1,333	4,161	1,584	1,349	173	169	10,699
1906	1,729	2,872	4,807	1,522	3,663	461	810	15,864
1907	1,507	8,413	5,105	1,740	9,499	918	1,638	28,820
1908	1,908	6,409	4,709	2,863	3,341	635	1,178	21,043
1909	718	5,458	3,023	2,906	2,408	690	1,318	16,521
1910	1,174	12,652	5,579	5,129	5,025	1,388	2,670	33,617
1911	791	9,878	4,499	2,710	3,118	1,177	2,494	24,667
1912	1,164	9,281	4,718	4,591	3,188	1,381	2,946	27,269
1913	1,688	14,566	8,272	7,811	1,627	2,053	2,066	38,083
1914*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29,915
1915*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,551
1916	15	1,508	30	140	0	258	32	1,983
1917	22	316	5	95	4	94	9	545
1918*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
1919*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
1920	76	824	2,332	2,255	6	1,319	154	6,966
1921	180	2,202	4,157	8,570	33	2,435	549	18,126
1922	23	330	754	1,711	11	528	301	3,658
1923	190	639	670	2,025	8	1,618	776	5,926
Total	15,365	78,262	73,273	53,066	35,158	16,058	17,657	323,392**

(*) Distribution by nationalities could not be given for these years.

(**) 288,839 classified by distribution into nationalities

Table 5

Religio-ethnic identity	Percentage
Greek	27
Armenian	18
Jewish	6
Serbian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian	12
Syrian	26
Turkish	5
Other	6

The largest ethnic group among the immigrants was the Greeks. Greek immigration was most intense between the years 1900 and 1913. It was the period of the most political turbulence and the rise of Turkish nationalism. Another striking aspect of this table is that the Turks had the lowest number of immigrants. According to Prof. Gordon, the only explanation for this is that, as the ruling class the Turks enjoyed the best situation, both in the bureaucracy and the army. As to the question of why the large class of villagers, whose economic situation was worse, did not emigrate, the answer would seem to be that they simply were not very enterprising.

According to Ahmet Akgündüz, another reason for the overwhelming majority of non-Muslim immigrants was that the West and the Ottoman Turks largely viewed each other as alien.⁶¹ This negative view of the “Turk” and of Muslims in general, vague but present among American public opinion, was greatly strengthened by the new non-Muslims. The Greek and Armenian immigrants in particular took every opportunity to bluntly express the negative feelings that emanated from the tragedies they had experienced at the hands of the Turks, thereby tarnishing the image of the latter.

As an example of this phenomenon, after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty on July 24, 1923, a Friendship and Com-

61 Ahmet Akgündüz, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Dış Göçler, 1783-1922,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 80 (Spring 1999), pp. 144-170, 160.

merce Treaty between Turkey and the U.S. came before the American Senate on August 6, 1923; the Senate rejected it as a result of successful lobbying by Americans of Greek and Armenian descent. It was probably in response to this rejection that the Turkish Mutual Assistance Society published a manifesto entitled *To the Leaders of the Country of the Free: A Brief from the Turks in America* in 1923. In this statement they denied the accusations of "brutality" and "carrying out massacres" that Greek- and Armenian-Americans had directed against the young Turkish Republic, and urged that the treaty be approved, re-establishing Turkish-American relations on the basis of mutual interests. Nevertheless, the influence of these two groups, was far greater than that of the Turks, and this doomed effort was also unsuccessful, so that the US Senate did not end up ratifying the treaty until 1927. At that time, Turkish-American diplomatic relations were re-established with a modus vivendi signed on February 17, 1927. Joseph C. Grew would begin serving as the first American Ambassador to the Turkish Republic on October 12, 1927. This, then can be seen as the first, and partially successful anti-Turkish lobbying effort in America.⁶²

62 Akgün, (2002) pp. 890-896., The accusations referred to the genocide of the Armenians during the 1915 Deportation and the Turco-Greek population exchange carried out as a result of the collaboration by some Ottoman subjects of Greek descent with the Greek forces during the Turkish War of Independence.



CHAPTER TWO



NON-MUSLIM TURKISH IMMIGRATION
JEWISH IMMIGRANTS



1. The 1893 World Columbian Exposition and the First Ottoman Immigrants

Ottoman businessmen would get to know America on the occasion of two international fairs, and following that introduction, some of them would end up moving there. The first fair was held in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of America, and the World Columbian Exposition opened to visitors on May 1 of that year. The Ottoman State's official pavilion was a Turkish Village erected in the Midway Pleasance entertainment area of the fairgrounds. Robert Levy, a partner in the Constantinople firm of Sadullah, Suhami & Cie. specializing in antiques and handmade Oriental products, set up forty shops reminiscent of Istanbul's Covered Bazaar in which traditional Turkish handicrafts were on display.⁶³

On Yom Kippur, September 19 and 20, Jews from the four corners of the world attending the fair would gather at the mosque

63 Gülsen Sevinç and Ayşe Fazloğlu, "Turkish Participation to 1893 Chicago Exposition," *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yıllığı (The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations)*, Ankara University, School of Political Science, vol. XXXI, 2 (2002), pp. 21-30. For other studies of this fair, see Prof. Haydar Kazgan, "Osmanlı Sanayiinin Dışa Açılması: 1893 Şikago Sergisinde Osmanlı Pavyonu," *Ekonomide Diyalog*, Year 2, number 9, pp. 63-65; Bülent Varlık, "ABD'nde İlk Türkçe Sürekli Yayın: Musavver Şikago Sergisi (1893)," *Kebikeç*, 1995, Year 1, number 1, pp. 35-42; Ahmet Turan Alkan, *Sıradışı Bir Jön Türk Ubeydullah Efendi'nin Amerika Hatıraları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997), pp. 172-220; Selim Deringil, *İktidarın Sembolleri ve İdeoloji II. Abdülhamid Dönemi (1876-1909)*, [transl. Gül Çağlı Güven] (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), pp. 161-167; Çağrı Erhan, "ABD'nin İlk Gövde Gösterisi," *Popüler Tarih* 37 (September 2003), pp. 26-31; Gültekin Yıldız, "Ottoman Participation in World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago 1893)," *Marmara Üniversitesi Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 9 (March, 2001), pp. 131-167.

in the Turkish Village and recite the *Kol Nidrei*.⁶⁴ Eighty percent of the merchants and workers manning the display stands in the Turkish village were Jewish. Regardless of how much they resembled Muslims in their appearance and dress, the businessmen, employees of companies, craftsmen, servants, musicians—even the belly dancers—were Jews. Since the stores in the Turkish Village were closed on Yom Kippur, and the surrounding area was silent, those people’s connection to the Jewish religion and worship was obvious. The reason why there were so many Jews in the Turkish Village was that Cyrus Adler, Professor of the History of Semitic Peoples and Assyrian Civilization at the University of Pennsylvania, was the administrator in charge of the Columbian World Exposition’s Turkish, Iranian, Egyptian, Tunisian, and Moroccan pavilions. After taking on this job, Adler would engage in discussions of the works to be displayed at the fair, going first to Constantinople and then to Egypt and Tunisia. While in Constantinople, Adler spoke with the Director of the Imperial Museum, Osman Hamdi Bey, and with the Minister of Public Works, Tefvik Pasha, about participation in the Columbian World Exposition. During this visit, Cyrus Adler also met Robert Levy, a young partner in the firm of Sadullah, Suhami & Cie.⁶⁵ This business with many partners dealing in antiques, rugs, and all kinds of Oriental merchandise was a rather old firm. One of the partners was Harry Mandil, an American citizen of Jewish origin born in Istanbul.⁶⁶

64 (Aramaic, “All Vows”). A medieval legal formula chanted in the synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur, by which the congregants declare themselves free of any vows they have made for themselves alone.

65 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Making a Place in the World: Jews and the Holy Land at World’s Fairs,” pp. 60-82, in Jeffrey Shandler and Beth S. Wenger, eds., *Encounters with the “Holy Land”: Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture*, (Philadelphia: National Museum of American Jewish History, 1997); Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered the Days* [2nd Ed.], (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), pp. 83-111.

66 The firm appeared in the *Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları* (*Oriental Business Year-*

Another was Cyrus Adler's acquaintance Robert Levy.⁶⁷

Levy's American wife, Adele Jackson, was a cousin of a family Adler knew in Baltimore. Another link between Levy and Cyrus Adler was that both men were Jewish. Adler quickly became good friends with the young merchant, and would describe Sadullah, Suhami & Cie., who held the franchise on the section "A Street Scene from Constantinople" in the Turkish Village, as "the greatest merchants in Constantinople's Bazaar." That is how Robert Levy would become both director and concessionaire of the Turkish Village, as well as director of the personnel working in the Near Eastern section of the Midway Pleasance area of the fair. Levy would go to Chicago with about two hundred people to work in the Turkish Village. The majority of them were Jews. Among those who came was an elderly Jew named Moïse (Moses) who worked for Sadullah, Suhami & Cie., and whom Mark Twain in his book *The Innocents Abroad* and John Murray in his famous travel handbooks would call "Faraway Moses."⁶⁸ This is how "Far-

books) as Sadullah, Moïse Faraway, and Şürekası. See *Indicateur Ottoman Illustré*, 4^{me} année, 1883, Istanbul, p. 324, and *Indicateur Oriental*, 1885-1886, p. 258; Mehmet Zeki, *Türkiye Teracimi Ahval Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: n.d., [1930-1932?]), p. 430.

- 67 See *Annuaire Oriental*, 1896, p. 463; *Annuaire Oriental* 1909, p. 690; *Annuaire Oriental*, 1921, p. 454.
- 68 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, (1997), pp. 60-82; Cyrus Adler, (1945), pp. 83-111. In John J. Wayne's article "Constantinople to Chicago: In the Footsteps of Far-Away Moses," *Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, 51, 1 (October 1992), pp. 14-21, he proposes that the man who became known by the nickname "Faraway Moses" was the same person as Harry R. Mandil, citing the article above as his source. But this suggestion is mistaken, because according to the *Türkiye Teracimi Ahval Ansiklopedisi*, Harry Mandil was born in 1874, so he would have been nineteen years old at the time of the Columbian Exposition. As can be seen in photographs, "Faraway Moses" was an old man with white hair and a beard. John J. Wayne's mistaken hypothesis derived from the fact that the word "Mösyö" (i.e., Monsieur) appears before Mandil's name in a contract bearing his signature; Wayne took this for Mandil's name, interpreting "Mösyö" as Moses.

away Moses” is described in the *Book of the Fair*:

But attracting more attention than anything else in the village, is a small, white-bearded man whom Mark Twain introduced to the world many years ago. It is related in *Innocents Abroad* how the author selected him for his guide through the narrow, tortuous streets of Constantinople. Although he could speak English, the man was rather of taciturn mood, and Twain was so much interested in what he had to say that he did not care to talk. Finally, after they had traveled together for a while, the latter asked the guide his name. “Moses,” was the reply. Now, having always lived in Constantinople, Moses was not specially interested in its sights, and while Twain would be standing before some gorgeous mosque or bazaar, as though rooted with the intensity of admiration, his guide would still keep plodding on. The humorist was so often distanced in this unequal contest that he dubbed him “far-away Moses,” and thus he was recognized by thousands who visited the plaisance.⁶⁹

The photo of the man nicknamed “Faraway Moses” appearing in the *Book of the Fair* was consistent with the established image in America of the Oriental Jew; it was a photo of a typical Sephardic or Oriental Jew. This photo would also serve as inspiration for one of the 33 carved ethnological head studies representing different ethnic groups that ornament the keystones of the windows on the first floor of the Library of Congress.⁷⁰ In the aforementioned fair book, the view confronting visitors to the Turkish Village was described as follows:

Adjacent to the Alpine panorama is the Turkish village, a typical exhibit of the Ottoman Empire, spread over a spacious area and arranged in attractive style by Robert Levy, its concessionaire, representing the firm of Saadullah, Suhami and Company, Constantinople. Here are no antique castles, no grim weapons or

69 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, (Chicago: The Bancroft Company, 1893), pp. 857-858. <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/bookfair/bftoc.html>.

70 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *loc. cit.*, in Schandler & Wenger (1997).

warriors, no peasants, or peasants' homes; instead are luxurious pavilions and bazaars, a miniature mosque, a theatre, with Turkish sedan bearers, and costly articles of furniture and decoration, all true to the life of Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia. At one corner of the village stands the mosque, with its gilded dome 60 feet high and its slender minaret rising to an equal height. It was erected by special permission of the Ottoman government and dedicated with much pomp and ceremony, as well it might be; for this was the first time that a Mohammedan temple had been consecrated outside the limits of the Mohammedan world.

On the appointed day the muezzin, from his perch in the tall white tower, summoned the faithful to prayers and to the dedication ceremonies. They came from all directions, advancing in long procession some 3,000 strong, headed by a military band. Though accompanied by native musicians sounding their shrill pipes and discordant drums, and by a contingent of Turks in gorgeous uniforms over whom floated the crimson banner of the Porte, the majority of the participants were of the Caucasian race. Attired in scarlet fezzes embroidered with the crescent, they were popularly known as the shriners, and officially as the "Ancient Arabic order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine,"⁷¹ an organization which flourished in Turkey many years before it gained a foothold in the United States, the majority of those who took part in the exercises being members of the Medina Tem-

71 Also known by the acronym A.A.O.N.M.S., or "Shriners" for short, this organization was a kind of Masonic lodge. Its founders were the Masons Dr. Walter M. Fleming and the actor William J. Florence. The organization's founding by-laws and rituals resembled those of Masonic societies. The 'Crescent' was the organization's symbol. Today the organization's symbol is a scimitar, with a crescent moon dangling from the scimitar, the head of a sphinx in the middle of the crescent, and a five-pointed star under the head of the sphinx. The organization's members greet each other by saying "Salaam aleykum" and replying "Aleykum salaam." Founded in 1872, the organization had its own charities. In 1922 it founded its first hospital for crippled children. Later, it opened centers for treating burn victims. Today these activities are carried on by a chain of children's hospitals. See "A Short History of the Shrine," www.alshamalshriners.org.

ple of Chicago. The procession wound through the village, the men entering the mosque in sandals or without substantial footwear, and soon all were at prayer. In his little square shrine, hung with rich tapestry, stood the high priest, and behind him a row of thirteen assistants. The ceremony was of the briefest - merely a recitation of passages from the ritual, in which the muezzin and his brethren were the prominent figures, the congregation responding with frequent prostrations, and devout exclamations of "Allah!" A banquet followed in an adjoining hall; a handsome Damascus blade was presented to the Medina Temple by the concessionaire, and the celebration was at an end.

Close to the mosque is the refreshment pavilion, with wide-arched veranda, its interior decorated with silken curtains and the finest of oriental fabrics. Here are served lemonades, sherbets and other Turkish drinks, with oranges, raisins, bananas, tamarinds, and pomegranates. To the south is a small structure enclosing a Persian tent, 160 years old, and formerly belonging to one of the shahs, who pitched it many a day in the hunting ground or the battlefield. It represents an immense amount of handwork, the interior being almost completely covered with figures embroidered in silver, gold, and silk. Here also is the sultan's silver bed of solid metal and most elaborately ornamented, both these priceless treasures being guarded day and night. Near it is a large building in which are exhibited the manufactured and other products of Turkey, this forming the educational portion of the display, while in the centre is its commercial feature, in the form of a grand bazaar with 40 booths. Among the articles offered for sale are tapestries, embroideries, rugs, carpets, silverware, filigree work peculiar to the Orient, brass-ware, precious stones and jewelry, ancient arms and relics, and in a word whatever is produced and found throughout the broad empire of the Porte. Restaurants are grouped in the neighborhood, the café proper supplying the genuine Mocha coffee, and offering the visitor a huge water pipe filled with native tobacco. While thus engaged, he listens to the native band, and later perhaps, visits the native theatre, where the favorite performance is "A Wedding in Damascus," in which, after all misunderstandings

have been settled and the wedding festivities are actually in progress, the women appear in a series of dances.

In front of the bazaar are reproductions of two ancient monuments, one, near the refreshment, of Cleopatra's needle, and the other near the café, representing the Serpentine column... In the rear of the bazaar are cottages in which men and women are engaged in the manufacture of rugs, laces, embroideries, brassware, and other industries pertaining to the country. The largest of these buildings is a candy factory and salesroom, the most popular of oriental sweets being known as Rahat-el-Lokoom; that is to say, comfort of the throat.⁷²

Fatma Yildiz, who worked as an interpreter at fairs organized in America, had this to say about the Columbian Exhibition in her memoirs:

A strange incident occurred at the Chicago fair. I was assigned to greet the merchants on their arrival. I saw an individual who had stopped in the middle of the fair, obviously puzzled and having a hard time because he didn't know the language. At first I took him for an Italian. No answer.

"What are you?" I asked.

"I'm a Turk."

Hearing that, I started speaking Turkish, and when I told him I was a translator, he was so surprised that he exclaimed:

"Nothing has thrilled me up to now, but now this has thrilled me...A female Turkish translator? In America?"

He was a merchant from southern Anatolia named Hüseyin Hüsnü. I showed him around the whole fair. And I helped him with his business.⁷³

About two hundred Ottoman Armenians who came to Chicago on the occasion of the Columbian World Exposition did not return home afterward, deciding instead to settled in the Windy City.⁷⁴

72 Bancroft, (1893), pp. 855-858.

73 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 5, 1948.

74 Nurdan Şafak, *Osmanlı-Amerikan İlişkileri*. Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2003, pp. 83-84.

2. The 1904 St. Louis World's Fair and Ottoman Immigrants

Eleven years after the Columbian World Exposition, another world's fair opened. This was the St. Louis World's Fair, held to celebrate the centennial of the April 30, 1803 Louisiana Purchase, the treaty by which France sold the Louisiana territory to the young United States government. The fair, which actually opened exactly one year after the centennial date, on April 30, 1904, remained open till December 1, 1904.⁷⁵ As before, a great number of Ottoman merchants would participate in this fair, and, also as before, many of them would settle in America after the closing of the fair. The Ottoman merchants displayed their products in "The Bazaars of Stamboul," located in the fair's entertainment and promenade area known as "The Pike."⁷⁶ The famous journalist Hikmet Feridun Es had the following to say about the merchants who came to the St. Louis World's Fair:

The St. Louis fair was one of the most important gifts Turkish immigrants gave to America. All of those who came to that fair settled there. All the Jews who got rich in America from the businesses of tobacco, carpets, etc., had come to that St. Louis fair. The Ashkenazis who made a legendary fortune from the world-famous "Murad" cigarettes and sent a million liras to Manisa for a hospital were all members of that group. They refer to the Turks who got rich in America as "the St. Louis Fair goers."⁷⁷

A large number of Ottoman Jewish merchants of Sephardic ancestry took part in the fair. According to Albert Amateau, a native of Milas, those merchants were the following: from Istanbul,

75 "The Louisiana Purchase: A Notable Anniversary," *American Review of Reviews* 27 (1903), http://www.boondocksnet.com/expos/wfe_1904_amrr_la_purchase.html.

76 John Brisben Walker, "The Pike," *Cosmopolitan* 37 (September 1904), http://www.boondocksnet.com/expos/wfe_1904_cosmo_pike.html.

77 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 3, 1948.

of the partners in the Sadullah, Suhami & Cie. firm: Robert Levy, the Sadullah brothers (Musa and Ibrahim), the Suhami brothers (Moris and Chaim), the Maiorcas brothers (Moris and David), the Maimon brothers (Albert, Leon, and his wife) and Regine Suhami Maimon; from Izmir, the Bengiyat brothers (David and Pasha), the Valency brothers (Edward and Lazar), the Abraham brothers (Eli and Moïse), the Benadrete brothers (Sam and Robert), the brothers Moïse and Chelebi Cardoso, the Amado brothers (Raphael and Moïse), the Kontente brothers (Eli and Salamon), their mother Rachel, and Eli Danon; from Manisa and Alexandria, the Schinasi brothers (Musa, Salamon, and Salamon's wife); from Turgutlu, the Valency brothers (Jacques, Benoît, and their sister, Dr. Pauline Valency); from Edirne, Jacques Benyakar; from Jerusalem, Salamon Emanuel; from Çanakkale, the halvah manufacturer Samuel Kohen; from Salonica, the Carasso brothers (David and Reuben). At the Sadullah brothers' stand two women sat on a bench weaving a carpet. The merchants participating in the fair sold carpets, kilims, halvah, Turkish delight, pudding, baklava, and savory pastries to the thousands of visitors. At a Turkish restaurant on the fairgrounds the visitors were served the best dishes of Turkish cuisine, such as *döner kebab* (gyros), stuffed grape leaves, bulgur pilaf, eggplant, and okra.⁷⁸ In front of Sadullah, Suhami & Cie.'s stand the Schinasi brothers displayed automatic cigarette rolling machines they had purchased from an American inventor, and they sold cigarettes made with those machines from shredded Turkish tobacco leaves. Sadullah, Suhami & Cie. saw how the Schinasi brothers' display attracted the attention of visitors to their stand and thus brought them more customers. In addition to the fact that the Schinasi brothers paid no rent to

78 Albert Amateau, "Turkish-Jewish Pioneers in the U.S.," *The Turkish Times*, March 1, 1991; American Jewish Archives, manuscript collection MS 604, box 1, file 5, Albert J. Amateau, *The Social, Political and Economic Causes for the Emigration of Levantine Sephardic Jews*, October 31, 1985.

Sadullah, Suhami & Cie., they also kept the income they got from selling the cigarette wrappers. In the years to come the Schinasi brothers would take this enterprise to New York, and their cigarette factory was the first step toward making them millions. At the end of the fair, the female rug weavers went back home, but with the help of a Moroccan Jewish lawyer affiliated with the fair, the merchants who participated applied to President Theodore Roosevelt for permission to settle in America. Since he was a cripple, Jacques Benyakar from Edirne presented the application walking with two crutches. Thanks to the impeccable social connections Benyakar had built up as a Mason, he had considerable political power and was a personal friend of President Roosevelt.⁷⁹ Roosevelt replied affirmatively to that request, and the merchants settled in New York. Among them Bengiyat, Mayorcas, Maymon, and the Suhami brothers imported and sold Oriental rugs.⁸⁰ Hikmet Feridun Es, a Turkish journalist, wrote the following about Pasha, one of the Bengiyat brothers:

A Jew from Izmir would spend many years traveling around America. That Jew Pasha was one of the first to do large-scale business in tobacco. He had come to different fairs in America with the Istanbul antique dealer Bengiyad, and they had exhibited and sold Turkish products and crafts at the fairs. They made a lot of money.⁸¹

The Çanakkale halvah manufacturer Samuel Kohen would continue to ply his trade in America, producing halvah, Turkish delight, and pastries. Abraham, Benadrete, and the Kontente brothers produced Turkish cigarettes, working at first as master

79 American Jewish Archives, Manuscript Collection MS 604, Albert J. Amateau, *Schinasi Brothers*, 1989, pp. 2-3. For the Schinasi brothers' biography, see pp.... of this book.

80 Albert J. Amateau, "Turkish-Jewish Pioneers in the U.S.," *The Turkish Times*, March 1, 1991.

81 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 20, 1948.

craftsmen and later as executives with the Schinasi brothers. The Carasso brothers devoted themselves to manufacturing cigarettes for rich Americans with their private label. Settling in Boston, the Sadullah brothers were occupied in the Oriental rug business. The Valency brothers began by operating shooting ranges, then switched to movie theaters. The brothers Moïse and Chelebi Cardoso imported food products from Turkey and Greece.⁸²

***The Story of Lahana Bey from Izmir,
Who Participated in the St. Louis World's Fair***

Still vigorous as a septuagenarian, he is tall. He is single, and says he gets as much joy and pleasure out of life as a twenty-five-year-old. He has lived for years in a Los Angeles hotel. That hotel is a place much favored by young, beautiful, rich widows.

They buttonhole Lahana Bey and warble to him in every language—mainly French, Spanish, and English—like nightingales. Lahana Bey has never been married so far. He says he was very handsome in his youth. If you ask him why he didn't get married, he laughs in a fatherly way: "I've never had the time, because I fell in love too many times and chased after business to earn some money," he says. His friends say he has had some very mouth-watering, colorful adventures more suitable for a young man, even a Casanova.

Here is what Lahana Bey told me in the hotel lobby about the story of his life:

"I was born and grew up in Karataş, in Izmir. My father was the well-known Yakob Lahana from Tire. I went to middle school and high school in Izmir. And I graduated from high school with high honors. I went to Istanbul to enter medical school[, but] I am very afraid of germs. The year I went to Istanbul, there was a big outbreak of cholera. I went to Paris. Since my wonderful dream of going to medical school had fallen through, I started a

82 Albert J. Amateau, "Turkish-Jewish Pioneers in the US," *The Turkish Times*, March 1, 1991.

business. When the cholera epidemic abated, I returned to Istanbul. At that time a large group of Jewish merchants were going to America's St. Louis [World F]air. That fair was how Turkish Jews discovered America.

Nobody in the Jewish group going there from Istanbul had much money. However, all the Jews who came in that group would get rich. That was the first group that went to America. To us, the little steamboat *North America* seemed practically full of Turkish Jews. In those days, for the Old World America was a more mysterious and obscure place than Tibet...

The trip was fun. All of us penniless young people were together. We thought we'd be able to conquer worlds. How we sang! How we played during that trip!... At last we got to New York. On the boat, in front of the Statue of Liberty, we all pledged at once: We're going to get rich!

That year—in 1904, that is—Turkey was represented at the St. Louis fair in an extremely lively, rich, and substantial way. For example, the “Istanbul Street” built at the fair was a great novelty. That very interesting, eye-catching street was just about one of the longest streets exhibited at the fair. Everyone was trampling each other to go through the “Istanbul Street.” In the Istanbul Street the Americans puffed away at the hookahs and ate lots of Middle Eastern-style food. The Americans tried shish kebabs for the first time and had their first taste of pilaf at the St. Louis fair. On either side of the Istanbul Street were models of the Mosque Yeni Djami and the Galata Tower. One of us Jews from Istanbul, Akoon, also built an “Asian Street” that was much admired. I was a salesman at the fair.

To tell the truth, our big dream of making lots of money from that fair didn't come true. When the fair was over, we went back to New York. Good heavens, we had never seen such a winter! Even the men wrapped up in furs from head to toe. Since all of us in our group were from Izmir and Istanbul!... The ones from Izmir would point out the snow in New York to the ones from Istanbul and ask, “Oh, Izmir! Where are you?” And the ones from

Istanbul would reply, "Oh, Istanbul!" We still couldn't decide what we were going to do. One day when we were all at the hotel, a Jew came and asked, "Do you have fifty dollars each?"

"We have!" we replied. He told us that with that money he could take us to America's other, Pacific coast, to the Portland fair. Was it a go? Yes, it was...Back then, going to the Pacific coast was a long trip, it took up to a month. That time we all filled up the train together. Five and a half days on the train!...From the Atlantic to the Pacific.

All the Turkish Jews who went to the Portland fair earned a bit of money.⁸³ From Portland we went to San Francisco. And we all cried at once: "This is where we want to live!" The combination of the hills and the sea were so much like Istanbul that this was the one place in all of America where we could live. I loved those hills so much that I decided right away to settle there. With the money I had on hand, I took a shop right away. And I found a partner. The mind-boggling revelry and debauchery of that old San Francisco before the great earthquake and fire was more attractive to us young people than anything else in that world. San Francisco was really leading a wild life in those days. My business ventures were going well. I can never forget April 17, 1906! That evening the famous tenor Caruso had come and was due to perform in *Carmen* at the San Francisco Opera. I was planning to attend. But some French and Italian winegrowers invited me to their vineyards far outside of town. I hadn't seen a vineyard since leaving Izmir. I really wanted to see some. I passed up the opera, and went to the vineyards far outside of town. I drank quite a bit of wine. I woke up in the morning to find quite a bit of excitement around me... I went out to the street. I glimpsed a newspaper. Just one page!...It was shocking...I looked over the newspaper... The names of four different big newspapers. The biggest newspapers had jointly brought out a single page. When I read it, I was

83 The fair was opened on June 1, 1905 in Portland, Oregon, by President Roosevelt and Vice-President Fairbanks. <http://www.boondicksnet.com/expos.wfe-lewisclark.html>.

horrified. The great San Francisco earthquake! The city was still on fire. I ran to get a ride. Flames could be seen coming from the Miller Hotel. Soldiers had closed off the city. They weren't letting anyone through. I wasn't able to get into the city till eighteen days later. The opera house I had wanted to attend that night was entirely in ruins. My shop was burned to the ground. All my earnings had been reduced to zero at one blow. I didn't have five dollars! But I wasn't worried. I said, "I'll start again!" I returned to New York. There was always plenty of work there. As I had said I would do, I started again. I earned more money. In 1920 I went to Istanbul and Izmir. A relative of mine met me. In two months I went through \$8,000. Back then, \$8,000 was a considerable fortune. They wanted to marry me off, but it didn't happen. Now I am a rug dealer. I haven't gotten as rich as I thought I would. But I am content...My only complaint about being single is this: If I had a wife, she would cook me Turkish food."

In fifty years he hasn't forgotten a word of Turkish. I haven't come across anyone in thirty years who remembered their Turkish so perfectly.

"In fifty long years, you haven't forgotten your Turkish," I said, as he stared at me with consternation.

"Forget Turkish? ...Forget the language of my homeland?... My mind can't grasp such an idea!"

He explained to me where the name "Lahana" came from.

"The name was originally Lehana... It's a small town in the vicinity of Madrid where my family lived centuries before coming to Turkey...But we really liked that word Lahana that we took as our name years ago."

Laughing, he adds: "Besides, it's a marvelous vegetable⁸⁴... Whether it's stuffed, in a stew, cooked with lamb, or in olive oil, or raw with oil, Turkish style or European style."

I thought the name was perfectly suitable for a Jewish businessman, and I consider it a souvenir of the world behind him.

84 "Lahana" means "cabbage" in Turkish.

Later, he adds in his familiar way, “Lahana, pickled pepper!” Now this sound rings in my ears like an old song!

So that is America’s famous “Lahana Bey.”⁸⁵

The Story of Ahmet Abdullah from Harput, Who Worked at the St. Louis Fair

During the last days of February 1900 it was raining cats and dogs in New York. A little steamboat coming from Istanbul was approaching one of the out-of-the-way places in Brooklyn. European and Asian immigrants were being allowed to leave the Ellis Island channel and go into the city. Each immigrant was leaving the paper that was stuck to his neck or his chest outside the wharf. One of them was a Turk: me, Ahmet Abdullah from Harput!... I had come with a group of Turkish Jewish settlers, and since the calendar year was 1900, I was setting foot in the New World quite a bit before the famous Saint Louis fair.

When I left the Brooklyn wharf, this is what I was wearing. A fez on my head. The rain made the dye in it run, and I had red streaks running down my cheeks. I had shalvar⁸⁶ trousers on my legs. On the dock was the rucksack I had brought from my country... A belt around my waist. Now some men were trying to take my rucksack, which had gotten very dirty and covered with mud from the trip. Shouldn’t I give it to them?... I did so right away... “What’s inside?” they asked curiously. But there was nothing but a shirt and a vest.

First, I went to Boston...There I found Turks. Although they had come there years before, they earned very low weekly wages. But I was burning with desire to make money. I had no money in my pocket, but a huge longing in my heart to make money. I wasn’t interested in paltry earnings, I wanted big money, a fortune!

My countrymen found me work, but I had to walk eight miles

85 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler”, *Hürriyet*, June 3, 1948.

86 Loose, pajama-like trousers traditionally worn by both men and women in rural Turkey.

in the morning and eight miles in the evening, sixteen miles altogether. My feet got swollen from walking. I was going to die saying, "I'm going to be a millionaire."

"You can't be a millionaire. Wealth is for the Jews," said my friends, trying to talk me out of my idea. But I always gave the same answer:

"How did a Jew coming from Turkey become a millionaire? ... Why are you saying I can't?"

At that time I was twenty years old. I went to work for a thread factory. They nicknamed me the "Handsome Turk." I was just extremely embarrassed. However, ninety percent of the workers in the thread factory were very beautiful young girls, young women. But who was bold enough to look them in the face? And they all teased [me]...

A day came. The girls were excited, they were preparing for something. Didn't one of them hug my neck? Apparently they had made a decision: "As soon as the shy Turk gets to the factory, let's all kiss him at once!" they said.

That event was why I left the thread factory. In 1902 I made friends with a captain who had run away from Abdülhamid.⁸⁷ We couldn't stand to be penniless any longer. We made a decision: we were going to the St. Louis fair. But we were just in New York, and when we pooled the money in our pockets, we didn't have a half dollar between us. Never mind the train fare all the way to St. Louis. The Captain found a solution:

"We can lie on top of the train." But our plan didn't work[, b] ecause they inspected the tops of the trains very rigorously. Hence, we made the journey under the wagons. That's how we got to St. Louis, we went to the fair grounds... Disaster! The entrance fee to the fairgrounds was a half dollar. A dollar for the two of us! Where would we get that kind of money?

The quickest way was to look for work. And we climbed over the wall of the St. Louis fairground.

87 Abdülhamid II, Ottoman Sultan from 1876 to 1909.

No one but a young man would think of scaling those high walls to get into the fair for free, even to earn a million and a half dollars, (that is: four and a half million liras). Not even me. Besides, we were so hungry our eyes couldn't see anything. As we checked out the eating places in the fair one by one, we filled our stomachs to excess. We picked up cigarette butts from the ground and smoked them with a holder. (...)

We spent the whole day hoofing it to look for jobs. Finally I found a job—a boatman on dry land!

The St. Louis fairgrounds were bordered by a river. And boats shaped like sleds had been placed on the river so that they would go downhill as if going over a waterfall. Boats taking thirty people first slid down the hill on oiled wooden tracks and quickly descended into the water, and I watched as the boatman sitting in front controlled all those maneuvers perfectly. They were looking for a boatman. I spoke up at once: "I'll do that job."

Apparently that was a job that entailed a bit of expertise, even a kind of acrobatics. They asked me:

"Will you be able to handle it? Have you ever done this?"

I replied:

"I am a master in that job!"

I took over the boat. That whole crowd of men and women all dressed up for the fair wanted to get on the boat of the man who was a "master of the profession." Thirty people sat down behind me. I went to the front of the boat...On my head they put a kind of steel bowl to keep me from banging my head into anything. Motioning, a man said:

"Of course, you know...You'll push that switch there!" He said it. If that was really what he said, I might even be able to do it.

As soon as I pushed the red switch, our boat slid right down from the track at the speed of lightning. Beside the red switch were a bunch of switches of different colors. Would I guess which one to push?... Anyway, there was no time. Because as soon as we plunged from that rail that was as high as a minaret into the

water, we started spinning. In a moment I found myself at the bottom of the water. And after five minutes, all of us, that is the thirty well-dressed people in the boat of the “master of the task,” were plucked soaking wet from the water. The women, with their pretty clothes clinging to their bodies, were hitting me with their fists.

The fair’s “entertainment management” not only pulled me out of that boatman escapade we had gotten into, he threw me out of the fairgrounds. Not just me; my friend who had stayed on the sidelines to watch how I handled that boat with thirty people behind me, suffered the same fate.⁸⁸

(...)

It was the second day of the St. Louis Fair. Once again, we were diligently looking for work. We came across four men with drums at a half-open door. They kept beating the drums with the drumsticks in their hands. The sounds reminded us of something from our homeland. We went over to them...They stopped beating the drums. One said to another in Turkish:

“Artin, brother...A drum without a horn is like a pilaf without turmeric. What do you say we look for a horn player?... If we did something like that, we’d earn a lot of money.” They appeared to be Armenians. They were proposing to play the drum and horn in the famous “Istanbul Street” at the fair. But, although they had four drummers, they didn’t have a single horn player. I used to play the clarinet a bit. I said to myself, “If you can play the clarinet, you can play the horn.”⁸⁹ I told the Armenians:

“I’ll come, but after four days. Because I have a contract to work for four days. I can’t get out of it.”

They agreed. My plan was to learn to play the horn in four days’ work!...

I got to work that very night. Four days later I went right to the

88 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 17, 1948.

89 The horn in question is a *zurna*, a double-reed instrument somewhat like an oboe.

administration of the “Istanbul Street.”

I introduced myself as “Ahmet Abdullah, Master of the Horn.”

And I demanded the highest salary: \$150.

“You may find a cheaper horn player, but it’s impossible to find anyone with a greater mastery of the horn,” I said.

Anyhow, where were they going to find another horn player? They agreed to \$150 a month. In those days \$150 was the salary of a senator! But I think the Armenian drummer was jealous of me. After a month, things got bad between us.

All the while he was playing the drum, he was blabbing at me, swearing at me, and since my mouth was occupied, I couldn’t retaliate... That’s how a drummer can drive a horn player crazy. But finally a moment came when I couldn’t take it any longer. I took the horn out of my mouth and hit him over the head with it. And then he attacked me with the drumstick. We kept going at each other—I with my horn, and he with his drumstick—and the passersby had a hard time getting out of our way. Anyhow, that day I got my first month’s pay. So I must have been playing for exactly a month.

“I’m not working anymore,” I said.

“Who’s going to hire you now?” he replied.

So that’s how I lost my good job. I said to myself,

“I’ve worked hard for a month. Let me relax a little and have a good time.”

How did I manage to blow that whole \$150 in one night? When I opened my eyes the next morning, I didn’t even have bus fare left in my pocket.

Very upset, I walked straight to the station. There I was going to meet my friend, the former Captain. One way or another—either under the train or on top of it—we were going back to New York. When I got to the station, what do you think I saw? The Armenian drummer!... He had his drumstick in his hand, and he had put his drum behind him. I said to myself,

“That guy’s waiting for me. He’s coming after me!” And he really did come after me. But it was to give me a hug:

“Don’t be like me...Come back to work...”

“What happened? What’s come over you? Remember how you acted yesterday? What’s different about today?” I asked him.

He explained. Apparently the director of the “Istanbul Street” amusement zone had told him: “Seeing that the horn player took off, I have no need for a drummer. If you want to work here, go convince the horn player to come back. You can’t work here if you’re going to be surly.”

The man said: “With an Armenian drummer, and a Turkish horn player, there’s bound to be trouble.”

The director replied: “That may very well be. I don’t know.”

Bowing his head, my Armenian colleague said: “If you go, they’ll get rid of me too.” I acted a bit coy. Finally I agreed, on condition that he would invite us to a feast. I worked for two more months. The Americans liked the horn so much that one day a group asked me: “We’d like you to teach us that beautiful instrument. Will you give us lessons?”

So I became a paid horn professor in America too.

(...)

After that, we taught horn playing. We began going from fair to fair. However, in some places there was no money to be made from playing the horn. Back then I was a big, strapping guy. An individual who saw my physique at the Portland fair asked me:

“Have you ever worked as a boxer?”

That question of his brought back a memory. One day in New York I had gone into a place that served snacks and lots of drinks. Back then, there weren’t establishments like that all over the place in America. The snacks were on the tables. It was a place where you could take a glass of beer and wander around the tables as you wished. When a fight broke out by chance in one of those places, I sent two or three people sprawling on the ground.

When I thought of that, I said: "I think I could handle it."

The man grew interested in me right away. So then, at the Portland fair I took part in rigged boxing matches. I wrestled. Finally, I thought of opening the first Turkish bath in America. I did it. And I was very successful. I made a lot of money."⁹⁰

3. The Causes of Emigration Compulsory Military Service

One of the most important factors accelerating immigration was the fact that, until the proclamation of the Second Constitution (1909) non-Muslim citizens had been able to gain exemption from military service by paying a fee, after that time became subject to compulsory conscription. The Reform Edict proclaimed on February 18, 1856, had required non-Muslims, who had not served in the army for centuries, to perform mandatory military service, but at the same time offered them the possibility of an exemption if they paid a fee in lieu of military service (*bedel-i askeriye*). Those who could pay the fee were exempted, but those who didn't have the money to do so had no choice but to go into the army. After the adoption of the Second Constitution on August 7, 1909, and the publication in the Ottoman Gazetteer *Takvim-i Vekayi* on August 11, 1909 of Law Number 113 abolishing the practice of paying the fee in lieu of military service, all non-Muslim citizens were now subject to compulsory military service, just as their Muslim fellow subjects. Jewish youths who didn't want to serve in the army were left with no recourse. Devout Jewish youths were especially aware that the army was a place where they wouldn't be able to observe the tenets of their religion, since they couldn't eat food that wasn't properly prepared according to the laws of *kashrut*. But whether they were religious or not, the only recourse open to Jewish youths who didn't want to go into the army, like

90 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 18, 1948. The story of the years Ahmet Abdullah spent managing a "Turkish bath" is found on pp. 354-357 below

other boys their age, was to sneak out of the country. One of the countries they went to was America.⁹¹ Particularly in August and September 1909, immediately after the passage of Law Number 113, there was a sharp increase in passport applications. Passports were easy to obtain on request. A group of agents mediated with American Consulate officials and were helpful to non-Muslims in this matter.⁹²

Originally from Milas, Albert Amateau was a twenty-one-year-old law student at Istanbul's Dâr-ül-Fûnûn university⁹³ at the time, and he would become one of those Jewish youths who ran away to America. While at the Law School on March 1, 1910, Amateau noticed an announcement posted on the door. In the announcement it was written that the Senate had made a change in the law concerning military service, lowering the age of conscription from twenty-one to eighteen, and canceling the exemption for teachers who were teaching Turkish to adult students. A few days after seeing that announcement, Amateau, who had started teaching Turkish to adult students in night school after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, received the following telegram from his father: The family is waiting. Wear the uniform of our fatherland with pride. Upon receiving that telegram, Amateau, without reporting to the barracks and without

91 Marc D. Angel, *La America*, (Philadelphia : The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), pp. 11-12; Joseph M. Papo, *Sephardim in Twentieth-Century America*, (Berkeley, Pélé Yoetz Books & the Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1987), p. 21; Michael Molho, "Radicación de los Exilados de España en Turquía y Emigración de los Sefardís de Oriente a América," pp. 65-72, in Jacob M. Hassan, ed., *Actas del Primer Simposio de Estudios Sefardies* (Madrid: Instituto Arias Montano, 1970). For information on non-Muslims' military service, see Ufuk Gülsoy, *Cizye'den Vatandaşlığa Osmanlının Gayrimüslim Askerleri*, (Istanbul: Timaş, 2010), and Sinan Kunalalp, "İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Gayrimüslimlerin Askerlik Meselesi (1908-1912)," *Toplumsal Tarih* 72 (December 1999), pp. 11-15.

92 Gülsoy, *ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

93 The university which later became Istanbul University.

seeing his parents in Milas, secretly met his sweetheart Rebeca in Izmir. When Albert showed Rebeca the telegram he had received from his father, the young girl's reaction was to laugh at this "ultra patriotism." Rebeca had traveled with eight Jewish and two Muslim soldiers returning from war; fighting on fronts in Thrace, Bulgaria, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and the Hijaz, the soldiers had lost one or two limbs and been left crippled. Telling Albert that conditions in the army were very bad, she begged him:

You are too logical a person to dismiss my factual report out of hand. I cannot believe that you will sacrifice your life and future – my life and future – out of a false sense of patriotism for a country that has done you an injustice and will waste your life in a useless war.

Emigrate instead! Go to America! I have heard of many immigrants to America who, despite their ignorance of the language and no skills in any craft, have gotten good paying jobs, and after a short time, are in business for themselves, sending large sums back to their families here. With your knowledge of English and other languages and your legal training, I am sure you will secure a good position and will prosper in no time. You owe it to me and to yourself.

I have been secretly saving the pocket money and monetary gifts given to me by my uncles and aunts in France. When you are ready, send me a telegram via Mathilda. I will join you in New York and [we'll] get married. And, if the country survives, and you wish to serve your motherland, you can always find ways to serve her, even from America.

Although broke and without baggage, Amateau was persuaded through his girlfriend's insistence and boarded a ship of the Messageries Maritimes Company at the port of Izmir that took him to Naples. There he worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant until he saved up enough money to go on to New York.⁹⁴

94 American Jewish Archives, Manuscript Collection, MS 604, box 3, file 2, A1-

America: The Land Where Dreams Come True

According to news items and commentaries appearing in the newspaper *La America*, which was published in New York and addressed to Sephardic immigrants, America was the “land of dollars,” offering unlimited opportunities. It kept them updated on the developments and crises occurring in industry and business. For instance, you couldn’t serve in the army unless you were a citizen, but while you were in the service, the state paid your salary. There were different factors that played a role in stimulating women’s immigration. Such as the money women were paid for their work in America and the fact that they didn’t have to pay a dowry to get married. Young girls could get an education, attend public meetings and go to parties. As one immigrant said, “For an Oriental father of many children, America is his salvation.”⁹⁵

Marc D. Angel, rabbi of the historic Shearith Israel Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue⁹⁶ in New York, claims that it was due to the French education given in the chain of schools founded by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (or *Alliance* for short) that Near Eastern Jewish communities, which had lived for centuries in a sort of isolation from the Western world, began to experience an intellectual revolution. The education they obtained in the *Alliance* schools familiarized them with Western culture, and the trades they learned there gave Sephardic young people the self-confidence to begin to believe they could build a new life for themselves and for their families. Young people left villages and cities that had promised them only poverty and manual labor, abandoning their respective homelands to build their futures in other cities and distant lands. Some of those ambitious young people immigrated to Europe, Palestine, Africa, and South America,

bert J. Amateau, *The Americanization of a Sephardic Turk: Autobiographical Notes*, pp. 2, 10, 13, 15-16.

95 Angel, (1982), pp. 12-13.

96 Founded in 1654.

and many to America. Some were already aware that they would never go back, while others hoped eventually to be able to return. The tickets, money, and letters praising American life that the young immigrants sent to the spouses, friends, and relatives they had left behind after they had settled in new lands and found work were a reason why immigration to America would increase.⁹⁷

Other Causes

Obviously, there were many more causes for immigration than merely these two main ones. One of them was the regularity with which steamship companies made the voyage between the Near East and the U.S. In order to be able to make their American journeys at full capacity, those businesses were looking for both passengers and commercial cargo. With that goal in mind, the agents they sent to the Near East did their best to persuade as many Ottoman Jews as possible to immigrate to America.

Another cause was the descriptions given by Sephardic Jewish merchants who had either visited international fairs or participated in those fairs, displaying Oriental rugs, antique furniture, raw materials, and Oriental objects. Upon their return home, these merchants proudly extolled America's blessings, telling tales about how life in the New World was made so much easier by electricity, communication, and machines, and thereby causing immigration to accelerate.⁹⁸

Still another reason was the misery resulting from natural disasters and the Balkan Wars. The great fire that broke out in Hasköy, an important Jewish residential area in Istanbul, on March 13, 1908,⁹⁹ and the earthquake that destroyed different ar-

97 Angel, (1982), pp. 10-11.

98 Mair José Benardete, *Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews*, New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982, p. 161.

99 For more detailed information on this subject, see Rıfat N. Bali, "Hasköy Yangını (13 Mart 1908)," *Tarih ve Toplum* 159 (March 1997), pp. 21-24.

eas in Thrace that were densely populated by Jews on August 6-7, 1912 devastated Jewish families.¹⁰⁰ During the Tripoli War and the Balkan Wars Istanbul was overrun by immigrants, as the cities of Monastir, Ioannina, Kavalla, and Edirne suffered heavy damage. Jews in Europe and America would be called upon to help their 200,000 coreligionists living in wretched conditions in Bulgaria, the Balkan countries, and Thrace.¹⁰¹ Things would get even worse after the conclusion of the Balkan Wars, with the outbreak of World War I. According to a report prepared in February 1920 by the Istanbul representative of the New York-based Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, there were hundreds of indigent Jews living in Istanbul and its environs, who had relatives in America. For that reason the HIAS representative requested help from headquarters.¹⁰²

4. The Number of Immigrants

There are marked discrepancies in the different sources reporting the number of Ottoman Jews immigrating to America. According to Marc D. Angel, between 1890 and 1910 more than a million Jews arrived at Ellis Island to begin a new life.¹⁰³ The number of Near Eastern Jews among them differs from one source to another. According to Angel, between 1890 and 1924, about

100 Kemal Gurulkan, "7.2'lik Marmara Depremi," *Tarih ve Düşünce* 5 (March 2000), pp. 38-53.

101 Angel, (1982), p. 12; Marc D. Angel, "Notes on the Early History of Seattle's Sephardic Community," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 7, 1 (October 1974), see: pp. 86-87; Papo, (1987), p. 21; David De Sola Pool, "The Levantine Jews in the United States," in Herbert Friedenwald and H. G. Friedman, ed., *The American Jewish Year Book 5674* (October 2, 1913 to September 20, 1914) (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913), pp. 207-220, pp. 209-210; "The Balkan Wars and the Jews," pp. 188-195, in *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 15 (1913-1914).

102 Angel, (1974), pp. 86-87.

103 Angel, (1982), p. 5.

30,000 Jews from Near Eastern countries came to America.¹⁰⁴ 2,738 of them came between 1890 and 1907.¹⁰⁵ The numbers given by the researcher David De Sola Pool are as follows:¹⁰⁶

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Year of Immigration from Ottoman Lands in Europe	Number of immigrants from Ottoman Lands in Asia	Number of immigrants
1899-1902	190	297
1903-1905	413	284
1906	252	209
1907	588	330
1908	379	256
1909	346	344
1910	953	435
1911	723	454
1912	760	621
1913	1,319	790
Total (15 years)	5,923	4,020

According to the researcher Louis M. Hacker, in 1926 about 40,000 Sephardic Jews were living in New York alone. In addition to that number, he estimates that there were about 50,000 to 60,000 Sephardim living in other cities in North America.¹⁰⁸

The immigrants setting out on ships to start a new life found plenty of time to think about the troubles awaiting them during the journey that lasted for days. They knew they would have to get through the examination by the inspectors on Ellis Island and answer their questions. They were aware that passengers with illnesses could not be accepted into America. An article that came

104 *ibid.*, p. 6.

105 *ibid.*, p. 11.

106 Pool, (1913) p. 208.

107 David de Sola Pool, "The Immigration of Levantine Jews into the United States," *Jewish Charities*, 11 (June 1914), vol. IV, pp. 12-27, p. 20.

108 Louis M. Hacker, "The Communal Life of the Sephardic Jews in New York City," *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly* III, 2 (December 1926), pp. 32-40.

out in the newspaper *La America*, addressed to immigrants of Sephardic and Turkish descent, discussed the difficulties facing Turkish Jews who set foot on Ellis Island without having enough information about American immigration laws. Since the immigrants didn't know what kind of answers were expected to the questions they were asked, they couldn't answer some of the questions correctly. Hence some immigrants remained on Ellis Island for months, and a small portion of them were sent back.

The immigrants' relatives and friends living in America often came to the island to help them, answering the questions the inspectors had asked the immigrants, often giving the immigrants bad or impertinent advice, and thus, rather than easing their problems, often made things more difficult for them. In order to remedy this situation, Moise Gadol (1874-1941), the owner of *La America*, published a Ladino translation of the immigration laws in his newspaper and advised his readership to refrain from going to Ellis Island.

The HIAS also assisted the immigrants. But the HIAS agents were Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi Jews and were familiar with Ashkenazi immigrants. It was not easy for them to recognize Sephardic immigrants, who didn't speak Yiddish, looked like Turks, Greeks or Italians, and didn't have the Jewish names or surnames to which they were accustomed. Discerning this situation, Moise Gadol spoke to the HIAS directors, advising them to found an HIAS Oriental Bureau to assist Sephardic Jews. Moise Gadol was the first secretary of the HIAS Oriental Bureau and began serving in the final months of 1911.¹⁰⁹ Albert Amateau from Milas, who we met earlier on, began working at the bureau in 1912.¹¹⁰ The HIAS Oriental Bureau would close for lack of funds shortly thereafter, in 1915, but would reopen again in August 1916.

109 Angel, (1982), pp. 13-14.

110 *ibid.*, p. 16.

Another organization serving immigrants was the Industrial Removal Office, founded with monetary support from the fund established by the famous philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch. This organization encouraged the removal of new immigrants from America's densely populated East Coast to less populated areas. In 1907 that organization sent Sephardic immigrants to cities in the American Midwest and West, such as Seattle, Gary, Cincinnati, Toledo, Columbus, and Cleveland.¹¹¹ English courses were started for Sephardic immigrants who knew no English. Language was not the only difficulty facing the immigrants. Other problems facing Sephardic immigrants included cultural differences and North America's harsh climate. Those reasons led some Sephardic immigrants to avoid the language problem by going to Cuba or South America, which, in addition to speaking Spanish, also had a warmer climate.¹¹² In 1919 the HIAS sent two hundred Ottoman Jewish immigrants who were having difficulty adapting to America to Cuba. Some of the Turkish Sephardim also settled in Cuba and South America when the quota law restricting the number of immigrants took effect in 1921. According to a report published in 1918, ninety percent of the thousand Jews living in Cuba at that time were from Silivri, Çorlu, Kırklareli, and Edirne, while the rest had come from the US.¹¹³

5. The Immigrants' First Months in the New World

The First Days

In the following lines from an article he published in *La America* in the summer of 1912, the Bulgarian Jack Farhi amply

111 *ibid.*

112 Mark Wishnitzer, *Visas to Freedom*, (Cleveland & New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), pp. 68-69.

113 Margalit Bejarano, "Sephardic Jews in Cuba," *Judaism*, Vol. 51, No. 1, Winter 2002, http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m0411/1_51/85068478/pl/print.jhtml.

clarified the seriousness of the situation in which the immigrants found themselves:

We live in New York! In an oven of fire, in the midst of dirt and filth. We live in dark and narrow dwellings that inspire disgust. We work from morning to night without giving ourselves even one day a week for rest. We sleep badly, eat badly, dress ourselves badly. Our economic condition is so bad that we cannot afford to spend several weeks in the country to get away from the oppressive heat of the New York summer. We are very frugal, saving our money to send to our relatives in the old country or just hoarding it away for a rainy day. We are losing the best days of our lives, the time of our youth..."¹¹⁴

Besides not knowing English, most of the immigrants had little work experience and no trade. Most of them earned low wages working at the most menial jobs in pastry shops, restaurants, and laundries. Some of them worked as watchmen at theaters and commercial centers, while others had the concession to run the cloakrooms in hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. Some worked at fruit and vegetable stands and in shoeshine parlors, women's clothing workshops, and battery factories, while others worked as peddlars or sold candy in theaters. The wages they earned were extremely low, with many earning as little as five or six dollars a week. The low wages sometimes led to social tensions. Four hundred of the 700 workers employed by the Interstate Electric Battery Company were Sephardic Turks who worked 54 hours a week for very low wages. Seeing that their American co-workers had obtained higher wages by going on strike, they began striking to demand higher wages from their employer. The cloakroom attendants saved their money until they had enough to buy the right to operate the cloakrooms where they worked as the bosses. Those who had come to America a few years earlier and learned

114 Angel, (1982), p. 19.

a little English sold postcards in shops or in stalls on the street.¹¹⁵ Immigrants newly arrived in America were easy marks for well-dressed, silver-tongued con men. These people would trick and cheat the immigrants, promising to find them a job or to create a well-paying job for them in exchange for payment. Sephardic immigrants bought used clothing because it was cheap, but since the clothes were often infected with germs, they caught contagious diseases, and many died as a result.¹¹⁶

The Language Barrier and Relations with Ashkenazim

Of the 1.5 million Jews living in New York in 1926, only 40,000 were Sephardim. Those 40,000 Turkish Sephardic immigrants often felt lost in a sea of Ashkenazim. Shut up inside themselves, the Sephardim felt just as foreign among their Ashkenazi coreligionists as black Americans felt among white Americans. The main reasons for this distance between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim were linguistic, cultural, and psychological differences. One observer of these differences with an orientalist bias could write that:

Coming from the Levant as they have, the Sephardim have brought a mode of life along with them that in many ways differs radically from Occidental manners and point of view. One may mention, in passing, their diets which have encouraged separate eating houses, the inferior status of their women folk which has made the café rather than the home the scene of social intercourse, and their general mental attitudes. The Levant has not yet become industrialized. As a result, the Sephardim are accustomed to a slower tempo of thought and action and

115 Albert J. Amateau, "The Sephardic Immigrant from Bulgaria: A Personal Profile of Moise Gadol," *Archives* 58-60 (Spring-Summer 1990), pp. 58-70; Victor D. Sauna, "A Study of the Adjustment of Sephardi Jews in the New York Metropolitan Area," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* IX, 1 (June 1967), pp. 25-33, 1, 25-26; Hacker, (1926), p. 38; Angel, (1982), p. 142.

116 Angel, (1982), pp. 20-22.

a characteristic way of life that is a compound of fatalism and inertia.¹¹⁷

The Sephardim did not feel comfortable with Ashkenazim and felt more at ease with Greeks and Turks on account of their common cultural heritage.¹¹⁸

Language was a major barrier facing Sephardic immigrants in their adaptation to New York. Since they didn't know the Yiddish language spoken by the Ashkenazim, the Sephardic immigrants began living together in groups based on their mother tongues (Ladino, along with French, Greek, Hebrew, or Arabic) and the cities where they had been born and lived in their homelands. When they came to America, they discovered that the French they had learned in the Alliance schools had no economic value. Many knew enough Hebrew to say their prayers, but didn't actually understand the language. Most of them knew Judeo-Spanish as their mother tongue but some couldn't read it if it was written with Rashi letters.¹¹⁹ Most of the immigrants were bachelors. Directed by the HIAS to New York's Lower East Side, they began living as boarders with families in cheap walk-up buildings or renting as part of a group. The Sephardim could buy kosher food from the many Romanian Jewish immigrants who lived in that area, while they could buy the foods they were used to—olive oil, olives, cheese, vegetables, and fruit from the Italian stores in "Little Italy." Like most of the new immigrants, the Sephardim worked twelve to fourteen hours a day, cooked their own food, washed their clothes, and cleaned their rooms. After doing all those things, there wasn't much time left for entertainment, social

117 Hacker, (1926), pp. 32-40.

118 William M. Kramer, "The Los Angeles Sephardic Experience," *Western States Jewish History* XXVIII, 4 (July 1996), pp. 313-325, 314.

119 A semi-cursive typeface for Hebrew which was traditionally used for printing Judeo-Spanish. It was named for the medieval commentator Rabbi Shelomo Yitzchaki, known by the acronym "Rashi."

or religious activities, or learning English. Since their Ashkenazi neighbors spoke Hebrew with a Yiddish accent, they didn't attend the religious and cultural activities organized by the centers and organizations in the neighborhood where they lived. Religious holidays would revive their ties to their former countrymen, and they would get together with immigrants from the same city to convert a rented hall into a synagogue, where they would worship and celebrate the holidays.¹²⁰ The lives led by the Sephardim were extremely different from those of the Ashkenazim. Those differences were so great that the Ashkenazim with whom they lived on New York's Lower East Side considered them Muslim Turks and wanted "the Turks among us"—in the words of the Mayor—to be forcibly evicted from the neighborhood. A news item about Jewish immigrants that appeared in a bulletin in 1916 nicely expresses this alienation:

"Who are these strangers who can be seen in the Ghetto of the East Side, sitting inside coffeehouses, smoking strange-looking water pipes, sipping a dark liquid from tiny cups and playing games of chess and dice, a game we are not familiar with?"¹²¹

While looking for an apartment to rent, Albert Amateau, a Sephardic Jew from Milas in Western Anatolia, would experience similar reactions; he would have great difficulty persuading the Ashkenazi proprietors of an apartment that he, too, was a Jew like them. In spite of Amateau's efforts, when he took the Ashkenazi owner, who believed he was a Christian, to the toilet and showed him that he was circumcized, he was still not convinced, continuing to believe that he was either a Muslim or of some other religion.¹²² In a letter from a reader published in the newspaper

120 Albert J. Amateau, "The Sephardic Immigrant from Bulgaria: A Personal Profile of Moise Gadol," *Archives*, Spring-Summer 1990, pp. 58-70, pp. 59-60.

121 Papo, (1987), pp. 43-44.

122 Rachel Amado Bortnick, ed. *One Century in the Life of Albert J. Amateau*,

La Boz del Pueblo in 1916, a young Ashkenazi girl asked, “Can a Sephardic person be a Jew, even if he doesn’t speak Jewish (i.e., Yiddish), looks like an Italian, and talks with his hands like an Italian?” The newspaper assured the young girl that such a person could indeed be a Jew, and it informed her that many marriages between Sephardim and Ashkenazim had turned out happily.¹²³ The Sephardim living in the various neighborhoods of New York often came face to face with another problem in the street, that is, street gangs. The Italians living on Christie Street intimidated their Sephardic neighbors, threw bombs in front of the buildings where they lived, threatened Sephardic tenants in anonymous letters, demanding that they leave their apartments, cursed them, and threw rubbish at Jews when they passed them on the street in the summer, and snowballs in the winter.¹²⁴

Coffeeshouses and Restaurants

Feeling lost among the majority Ashkenazi population in New York, the Turkish Jewish immigrants clung to their countrymen for social solidarity as if to a lifeline; seeking each other out, they formed small neighborhoods and communities in order to maintain the same sort of lifestyle they had known in Turkey. That lifestyle consisted of eating Turkish and Sephardic dishes, singing Turkish and Ladino songs, being regular customers of a coffeehouse, and speaking Ladino. For Ottoman Jews, the coffeehouses and restaurants set up by their countrymen served as a gathering place for Sephardim, a center for the flock, so to speak. The coffeehouses were not just places to pass the time, they were also places where discussions of politics and ideas occurred. Orators spoke, posters were put up on the walls. At the same time, the

1889-1989. The Americanization of a Sephardic Turk [oral history project]
Vista College, Berkeley, California 1989, p. 55.

123 Papo, (1987), p. 47.

124 Marc D. Angel, (1982), pp. 20-22.

coffeehouses were adopted as the haunts of the hopeless unemployed; gathering places for angry and impatient people, they were the places where fights usually broke out, and where the “dangerous plague” of gambling tended to break out as well. Women often complained about their husbands going to the coffeehouse.¹²⁵ Unaccustomed to card playing in such places, local officials often ordered the police to raid the cafés on real or imagined pretexts. Sometimes innocent immigrants who had not been caught doing anything illegal in these raids were still sentenced to more than a year in jail just for having gone to a café.¹²⁶ For recent immigrants to New York the coffeehouses had a practical function. It was thanks to those places that the newly-arrived could find a job, a place to stay, a way to find out where old friends and comrades were living, as well as a place to hear the latest gossip, have something to eat, play backgammon or cards, or just pass the time. But along with those advantages, the coffeehouses also had some drawbacks, such as encouraging idleness and creating tension between husbands and wives. When dinnertime came or a man was needed at home, the housewives usually sent a child to the coffeehouse to summon their husbands home. In these places one could eat traditional Turkish and Sephardic sweets and foods such as baklava, *kadayıf*,¹²⁷ *börek*,¹²⁸ *sahlep*,¹²⁹ milk pudding, rice pudding, and Turkish delight, and could drink *raki*¹³⁰ and Turkish coffee. Sometimes when the police raided the coffeehouses, the owners

125 Marc D. Angel, (1982).

126 Benardete, (1982), p. 167.

127 A dessert made from strands of fried dough resembling bundles of shredded wheat.

128 Pastries made from paper-thin phyllo dough and filled with meat or cheese.

129 A sweet milk drink made from the powdered orchid root.

130 An unsweetened anise-flavored hard alcoholic drink that is popular in Turkey and the Balkans. Known as Ouzo in Greek and ‘Arak in Arabic and Hebrew

could get them to go away by paying a bribe and then could rest easy until the next raid.¹³¹ The restaurants served dishes typical of Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine and ideally suited to the immigrants' taste. Since their customers were poor, the restaurant owners kept the prices low, and hence the quality of the food was sometimes criticized.¹³²

Connection to Turkey

Even in the New World, the Sephardic immigrants felt a loyalty and connection to the lands where they were born. They were concerned about improving the material conditions of Jews living in the Middle East. Therefore, when the First World War began, Moise Gadol, owner of the newspaper *La America*, believing that it was unjust for Sephardim of Turkish ancestry living in America to fight against Turkey, urged the American government not to draft them.¹³³ Similarly, Turkish Jewish immigrants responded positively when Dr. Fuad Umay, the Secretary of the Turkish Society for the Protection of Children, came to America seeking donations to help the orphans who had lost their mothers and/or fathers in the War of Independence. Among those whom Fuad Bey met in New York were the businessman Leon Taranto, Dr. Moris Amato, and immigrants named Valency, Farhi, and Halfon, representing twelve different Jewish organizations.¹³⁴

Fuad Bey wrote that the Turkish Jews living in New York were

131 Hank Halio, *Ladino Reveries*, (New York: Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies, 1996), p. 168.

132 Angel, (1982), pp. 20-22.

133 *ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

134 Dr. Fuad Mehmed [Umay], *Amerika'da Türkler ve Gördüklerim*. Istanbul: Vatan Matbaası, 1341, p. 14. There is a new edition summarizing the contents in contemporary Turkish: *Cumhuriyetin Kuruluş Yıllarında Bir Devrimci Doktorun Anıları* (trans. to contemporary Turkish by Cahit Kayra). Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003.

proud that more than a hundred people participated, and he described his impressions as follows:¹³⁵

Beginning the moment I left New York, the Jews around the country held many demonstrations to show their affection; they organized a meeting in a big hall and in order to show their affection, they invited Haim Nahum Efendi.¹³⁶

I went that day, even though I wasn't feeling very well. When I got to the hall, as befitted such a magnificent people, they applauded like mad.

Those assembled wanted me to describe the situation of the Turkish orphans. [The whole thing] had been arranged by their own leaders. No doubt, the orphans would have laughed if they could have seen that demonstration. I was a bit perplexed. I said, "I wonder, is my mind deceiving me?"

An orator got up and made a lovely speech. Another got up and discussed his connection to Turkey and the strength and sincerity of his affection with brilliant expressions.

The people beside me were saying that up till then they had never cheered Haim Nahum Efendi that much. Because I wasn't feeling well, I thanked them for their applause and gave the podium over to Sabiha [Sertel].¹³⁷ And Sabiha enthusiastically said some worthwhile things. But they were addressed to the Jews. Her nerves were strong enough to speak courageously. In order to avoid embarrassment, the leaders who organized the meeting had prepared the people, deciding that by doing so they would be able to raise more money from the meeting, and they applauded at the end!¹³⁸

135 Mehmed [Umay], (1341), p. 38.

136 (1872-1960), Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire from 1909 to 1923.

137 Born in Salonica, Sabiha Sertel (1895-1968) was Turkey's first professional female journalist and a pioneer feminist. Her surname appears in brackets, because the Turks did not adopt the use of surnames until 1937, as part of Atatürk's reforms.

138 Mehmed [Umay], (1341), p. 35.

When Fuad Bey got to Chicago, he would be met with the same enthusiasm by the Jews from Thrace:

There were quite a few Jews in Chicago who had come from Kırkkilise, Edirne, and other places in Thrace. Since it was impossible to take the program they had arranged to Chicago, they wanted to do a little something themselves to help our orphans. I went to an evening meeting they had organized. In the meeting they put on some musical performances. They showed their affection for the country. Most of those at the meeting were from Kırk Kilise and Edirne, and they had emotional feelings about the time they had spent in the country. By means of a committee they had organized from among themselves, they raised six hundred dollars for our orphans.¹³⁹

Since there were indications that both Greeks and Jews from Salonica would be uncomfortable about participating in this fund-raising campaign due to the Turkish Jews' connection to Fuad Bey, they felt obliged to reassure the Greek Consul. The Sephardic Jews' feelings of connectedness to the homelands they had left behind had not diminished with the passing of years. They would rush to the aid of their coreligionists, the Sephardim living in the Near East, organizing campaigns to assist the Salonica community during the devastation caused by the great fire of 1917 and to rescue the Izmir community from the great fire that occurred there during the Greek occupation;¹⁴⁰ they would found the American Sephardic Committee for Turkish Earthquakes Relief to raise donations when earthquakes occurred in Turkey in the 1940s.¹⁴¹ In his memoirs, Zekeriya Sertel,¹⁴² who was studying

139 *ibid.*, p. 150. For an analysis of this subject, see Veysi Aker, "Amerika'daki Türklerin Milli Mücadele Yetimlerine Yardımları," pp. 123-140, in Prof. Emine Gürsoy-Naskali and Aylin Koç, eds., *Savaş Çocukları Öksüzler ve Yetimler* (Istanbul: Umut Kağıtçılık, 2003).

140 Angel, (1982), pp. 43-44.

141 Papo, (1987), p. 126.

142 Born in Salonica, Zekeriya Sertel (1890-1980), became an important Turk-

at the Columbia University School of Journalism in 1920, comments on the homesickness and feelings of connectedness to their homeland he observed in the Turkish immigrants he encountered in America, and says the following about the businessman Leon Taranto, who was among those who welcomed Fuad Umay Bey:

I was prepared to enter the Columbia University School of Journalism in the 1920 school year. But my academic life was no obstacle to my other activities. On the contrary, propaganda activity by the national liberation movements had increased, and I had started contributing articles to magazines and other newspapers. I could no longer carry on such extensive activity from home. I needed a proper office. But I was in no condition to pay the expense of an office. I explained what I needed to a friend, a Turkish Jew named Leon Taranto who was then doing business in America. Without hesitating, he let me have a room in his office building in the busiest part of town. He gave me a typist for my use, and I could also use the mimeograph machine in the office. I had found everything I was looking for, now I would be able to carry on with my activities. That activity would go on until the day when the War of Liberation was won. With this help I gained many American friends and was able to state our nation's case to the Americans.

Speaking of which, I'd like to point out that the Turkish, Kurdish, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish immigrants all suffered from a profound longing for their homelands. They were all observing the War of Liberation from the sidelines, and they were eager to take part in that war in any way. The assistance Leon Taranto provided me came from that feeling of patriotism.¹⁴³

In another section of his memoirs, Sertel mentions an Istanbulite Jew's feelings of longing for the things he left behind in Turkey:

ish journalist, being one of the founders of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. He was the husband of Sabiha Sertel.

143 Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladılarım*, (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977) p. 103.

One of the main reasons why our countrymen who go to America cannot adjust there is their inability to break their ties to their homeland. Immigrants coming from other countries lose their identification with their homelands and countries within a generation. But regardless of how many generations go by, Turks remain Turkish. The longing for home is so deep and pervasive among them that it can't be expressed in words. Not just Turks and Kurds, but even those who have fled from Turkey—such as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews—harbor the same longing for home in their hearts.

One day one of our Jewish countrymen who had been living in America for twenty years and had gotten rich there and considered himself Americanized, summoned us to his home. He was an Istanbulite. He couldn't get Turkey out of his dreams and fantasies. He lived in a two-story house he had had built himself. As soon as we went through the door, we saw an unbelievable scene. From the downstairs to the bedrooms, all the walls were adorned from one end to the other with oil paintings of Istanbul. On one wall we saw a towering mosque with its minarets, on another wall the Bosphorus, on still another, the Islands, and on yet another, the bay of Yeniköy or Moda. The owner of the house proudly gave us the tour and showed us his pictures.

“What can I do?” he asked. “If I can't go to my country, I'll bring my country here.”

He really had brought Istanbul there, and he lived in the beauty of Istanbul.¹⁴⁴

Organizations

Among the Sephardic immigrants who settled in America, another thing that supported and enhanced their connections with their former countrymen was organizations. These organizations were formed on the basis of the cities where the immigrants had been born. The oldest and most prestigious organization was the

144 Zekeriya Sertel, (1977), pp. 107-108.

Union and Peace Society, founded in New York in 1899, which in 1912 had 200 members, most of whom came from Turkey. The Oriental Progressive Society, founded in 1904, had 60 members by 1912, of whom almost all were Turkish Ashkenazim.

In a *La America* article from 1912, immigrants from Tekirdağ and Çorlu were urged to form an organization. Three different organizations were started for those coming from Çanakkale. One of those organizations was Mekor Hayyim (Source of Life). Aiming to provide its members an atmosphere where they could comfortably assemble, this organization strictly forbade card playing. In 1913 it had 122 members. In 1914, 400 people from Çanakkale attended a Purim celebration it held. Two others were the Haskalah (Enlightenment) Society, founded in 1915, and the Çanakkale Progressive Society, founded in 1916.

People from Silivri would found the Ahim Mevorakhim (Blessed Brotherhood) organization in 1915. Two different organizations were founded for immigrants from Ankara; Louie Russo was president of one of them, the Angora Union Club, while another, Keter Zion of Angora (Ankara Crown of Zion Society), was founded in 1913 by 63 people from Ankara. Immigrants from Rhodes, Çorlu, Silivri, and Marmara Island banded together in 1913 to found the Ezrat Ahim (Brotherly Assistance) Society. But in 1915 that society split in three—Anshe Rodosto (Men of Rhodes), Ahim Amevorahim de Silivria (Blessed Brotherhood of Silivri), and Ezrat Ahim de Çorlu (Brotherly Assistance of Çorlu), only to reunite in 1925.¹⁴⁵

Places of Settlement

When the immigrants arrived in the New World, the first place they set foot after Ellis Island was New York. Hence, a large majority of Turkish Sephardic immigrants settled in New York. But a sizable Ottoman Jewish population could be found in many other cities be-

145 Papo, (1987), p. 306.

sides New York. New Brunswick (New Jersey) was one of them. In 1910 one third of that city's total Jewish population of 2,500 consisted of immigrants from Istanbul, Çanakkale, Izmir, Salonica, and other large Ottoman cities.¹⁴⁶ In 1913 a survey made in Cincinnati determined that there were a total of 249 Sephardic families living there.¹⁴⁷ According to a study published in 1913, Sephardic Jewish immigrants had settled in the following places in America:¹⁴⁸

Rochester	90	Monastir
Portland, Oregon	80	Rhodes, Çanakkale, Tekirdağ, Marmara Island
Cincinnati	70	Çanakkale
Chicago	70	Morocco and Anatolia
Los Angeles	75	---
Glenham, New York	70	Çanakkale, Salonica
Raritan, New Jersey	70	Çanakkale
Gary, Indiana	70	Rhodes, Marmara Island
Indianapolis	50	Monastir
Montgomery	50	Rhodes

Turkish Immigrants in Seattle

The first Sephardim to settle in Seattle were Solomon Calvo, Jacob Policar, and David Levy, all of whom came from Marmara Island. In 1903 these young men met a young Greek who was visiting Marmara Island--his birthplace, and when they heard of the considerable fortune he had made from fishing and the splendid opportunities for immigrants in America, they decided to immi-

146 *ibid.*, p. 270.

147 Papo, (1987), p. 279.

148 Pool, (1913), p. 212. The data on Atlanta were taken from: Yitzchak Kerem, "The Settlement of Rhodian and Other Sephardic Jews in Montgomery and Atlanta in the Twentieth Century," *American Jewish History* 85, 4 (1997), pp. 373-391. For a brief history of the Portland Jewish community, see Jonathan Singer, "History of Congregation Ahavath Achim," <http://www.ahavathachim.com/index.php/about-us/86-about-us/129-thesis-on-sephardic-history-in-portland>

grate. When the young Greek boarded the ship to return to Seattle, eighteen-year-old Solomon Calvo and Jacob Policar followed him. David Levy, who had just opened a new tailoring shop and had recently become engaged to Esther Adatto from Tekirdağ, waited a while so as to be able to save up the money for the ticket and be sure his fiancée would be able to come to America with him, went to Seattle in 1903. The first thing David Levy did when he got to Seattle was to go to the shore to breathe in the salt sea air. When he realized that the air he breathed in was exactly the same as the salt sea air at Marmara Island, he relaxed. Thanks to their Greek friends, Calvo and Policar had started working at the fishmarket. David Levy worked first in a tailor shop and later opened a fish store. The Jews of Ashkenazi descent who lived in Seattle didn't believe these young men from Marmara Island were Jewish; they thought they were Muslim Turks who were trying to trick them, but eventually they were persuaded. Four years after arriving in Seattle, Calvo and Policar brought their wives, and David Levy, his fiancée.¹⁴⁹ With these three young men as its foundation, the Seattle Jewish community grew and prospered over time. In 1906 there were eighteen Sephardic young men in Seattle, seventeen of whom were bachelors. Some of the bachelors would return home to get married, and some would bring the girls they had fallen in love with to Seattle. One of the immigrants was Dora Levy from Istanbul. Educated at the Scottish Missionary School in Istanbul where she had learned English, Dora decided to accompany her father, who was in the wholesale liquor business, on a business trip to America, and when her father fell ill and was unable to make the trip, she managed to convince her family to let her do it by herself. In 1906, Dora first came to New Haven, Connecticut

149 Papo, (1987), pp. 285-287; David Sitton, *Sephardi Communities Today*, (Jerusalem: Council of Sephardi and Oriental Communities, 1985), p. 356; Albert Adatto, *Sephardim and the Seattle Sephardic Community*. University of Washington. [unpublished M.A. thesis, 1939], pp. 184-193.

and, when she didn't find work there, she went to Seattle, where a friend of hers lived. Working in different businesses, Dora would help Sephardic women immigrants who came later and didn't know English.¹⁵⁰ In 1907 the number of Sephardim living in Seattle tripled. The immigrants came from Marmara Island, Rhodes, Istanbul, and Tekirdağ. Between 1904 and 1912, the number of Sephardim increased to 1,500. The scattered immigrants were brought together by different organizations. Those from Marmara Island started Congregation Bikur Holim, while the immigrants from Rhodes started the Bessaroth Congregation.¹⁵¹

This first generation of immigrants had difficulty adjusting to American life. They struggled to attain a balance between their dual identities and cultures— their traditions and the Ladino they spoke at home and Americanization and the English they went to school to learn. The newspaper *La America* encouraged the immigrants to learn English as soon as possible, to become citizens, and to not live in self-imposed ghettos, but Sephardic immigrants hesitated to acquire American citizenship.¹⁵² By 1912 only one of the six hundred Turkish Jews living in Seattle had become an American citizen. In 1921, the Ottoman State's last Chief Rabbi, Haim Nahum Efendi, visited Seattle to raise funds for the Alliance Israélite Universelle.¹⁵³ In time the Seattle Sephardic community would gradually become Americanized, and their Sephardic culture and traditions would decline. Here is how the famous newspaperman Hikmet Feridun Es found them in 1948:

A lot of the Jews who came from Turkey to America went to the city of Seattle on the Northwestern coast. It is the center of the

150 Adatto, (1939)p. 197-198.

151 Marc D. Angel, "Progress, Seattle's Sephardic Monthly, 1934-5," *American Sephardi*, 5 (1971), pp. 90-95.

152 Angel, (1974), pp. 22-30.

153 Adatto, (1939), p. 88.

fishing industry for all of America. Formerly, Japanese fishermen had more or less run things there. Today all of Seattle's fishermen are Turkish Jews. They worked extremely hard to take over the whole business. They have absorbed not only the business of catching and selling fish but the whole fishing industry, including the huge shrimp and lobster industries.

The Turkish Jews in Seattle have reached a point where no one can compete with them in this business. And in the south—in California, for example—they have taken over the flower business from the Japanese. They are in charge of the fishing and floral businesses.¹⁵⁴

(...)

Did you try speaking Turkish at the Seattle fishmarket?... You see a busy man looking right at you while holding up slices of those Pacific fish to weigh them. A little later, the same individual asks you, half in Turkish, half in English, how you came to those parts. He is either from Tekirdağ, or Çanakkale, or Izmir. If he's not from Istanbul, he must be from Salonica. Just Seattle?...

San Francisco's most bragged about, most scenic place to show tourists is what they call Fisherman's Wharf, the fishmarket. Travelers stream in and out of it every day.

They come there just to see the fishmarket, to eat fish, lobster, and shrimp there. And you'll also see a lot of our Jews at Fisherman's Wharf. There Avram Eskinazi, the best-known member of the Eskinazi family, sells the most beautiful lobster.

Avram Eskinazi points at the Pacific Ocean behind his store:

"If it were in my power, I'd jump in the sea and swim straight to the Seraglio Point," he says.

Avram Eskinazi is a fisherman, but he has a gorgeous, big, luxury car and a villa on a hill with a view of San Francisco Bay.¹⁵⁵

154 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 8, 1948.

155 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 15, 1948.

Turkish Immigrants in California:***The Story of Hollywood Rabbi Isaac Varon from Istanbul***

Born in Çanakkale in 1895, Rabbi Varon was a religious education teacher. He first studied in Edirne and then came to Istanbul, where he received a spiritual education. He served as an officer during the First World War and assisted Jewish refugees in Istanbul. Varon would later immigrate to New York and teach in a Talmud Torah. In 1928 Varon moved to Los Angeles and became the rabbi of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue in that city.¹⁵⁶ When he met Hikmet Feridun Es in 1948, he told him his story:

One evening in the grand home of one of California's best-known Jews, they said: "Now the Hollywood rabbi will be here. He's coming in five minutes." And in fact shortly afterwards a man wearing glasses, with a broadly smiling face, appeared in the doorway. He introduced himself to me in English, saying, "Rabbi Isaac Varon!"

But right away the Hollywood rabbi gave the Turkish translation in an extremely polite way:

"Haham¹⁵⁷ Isak, at your service," he said.

He was perhaps the most gentlemanly religious leader I have met. While talking with the elegant ladies in the drawing room, he made little jokes. He was completely lacking in backward fanaticism. When he came up beside me, the first thing he asked was:

"How is Mahmut Yesari?"¹⁵⁸

That was his question. When I gave him the sad news about Yesari, he was terribly sorry: "May God have mercy on him!" he said, and added:

"He was very far from the age to die. He was still young..." I couldn't stop wondering how the Hollywood rabbi would have met Mahmut Yesari. I asked with concern:

156 Beth Samuels and William M. Kramer, "Temple Tifereth Israel," *Western States Jewish History* 28, 4 (July 1996), pp. 417-441, 426.

157 *Haham* is the title used by Sephardic rabbis.

158 (1895-1945), Turkish novelist and short story writer.

“Where did you know Yesari from?”

“From Yakacık...The Yakacık army camp!...”

It was as if the rabbi were just trying to heighten my curiosity. I couldn't help asking a second question on the same topic:

“What business did you have in the Yakacık camp?”

“Yesari and I were doing our military service at the camp at the same time. I was an officer in the Turkish army!”

He looked me right in the face so as the better to enjoy my astonishment. And he added:

“I had prepared myself to teach in Jewish schools, but it didn't happen. The World War broke out. I went to the army. Many Istanbul intellectuals arrived at the army camp in the administration of the German expert “Rabe” Bey. Yesari and I wound up there together... At nightfall we would go to Kartal, and we would eat dinner at “Uncle” Osman the Cook's place.

He took an aperitif. “O for those days, O for Yesari!... I spent the whole World War as an officer. And at the front, in the line of fire!”

The Hollywood rabbi shook his head with laughter:

“I am an officer who fought in front of Allenby!... When I was discharged after the Great War, I spent a long time looking for work. I had a lot of acquaintances in America. I was fluent in Hebrew and Jewish.¹⁵⁹ At that time the Turkish Jews who had come here wanted their children to learn their own languages. They were going to open a Jewish school. They sent for me. I upped and came here. Later I got involved in a few business dealings here. And finally I left it all behind and entered the religious profession. I was appointed the Hollywood rabbi...¹⁶⁰

According to Isaac Varon's research, the Sephardic Jews who live in California began settling in America in 1903. The Sephardim were living in both San Diego and San Francisco, but they weren't very numerous. The Sephardim had come from Turkey,

159 i.e., Ladino.

160 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 22, 1948.

the Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece), the North African countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt), the Aegean islands, Syria, and Palestine. The people from Rhodes constituted an important population among the Sephardim, and they were well organized. After opening a new synagogue in 1933, they took the name La Comunidad Sefardi de Los Angeles (The Los Angeles Sephardic Community). According to Rabbi Varon, as of 1947 there were no very rich Sephardim in Los Angeles. They were a small number of businessmen and industrialists. The ones who had taken risks during the war years had prospered.¹⁶¹ Originally from Salonica, Ovadya E. Haim, who came to Los Angeles from New York in 1905, recalled that back then the population of Los Angeles was 150,000, of whom a handful were Sephardim. The first immigrants were Abraham Caraso and the Tavils from Bursa; the Levis, Hatems, and Frescos from Istanbul; Isaac Raphael and Ovadya Haim from Salonica; the Paralıs from Çanakkale; the Meshullams from Monastir; the Tarıcas and Notricas from Rhodes; and the Manuels from Jerusalem. In time the population of the community would grow and would get organized. In 1946 it consisted of three different communities: (a) La Comunidad Sefardi de Los Angeles, the synagogue Isaac Varon served as rabbi, with 215 members; (b) the Sephardic Hebrew Center, founded by people from Rhodes, with 300 members; and (c) the Sephardic Brotherhood, with 75 members who had immigrated from different places.¹⁶²

Turkish Jews in Hollywood

Some of the Turkish Jews who settled in California lived in the world-famous Hollywood area. Among them, Eli Levi deserves to be treated separately.

161 Isaac M. Varon, "Lettre de Los Angeles," *Les Cahiers Sefardis*, September 30, 1947, pp. 329-332.

162 O. E. Haim, "Les Sefardis des États-Unis," *Les Cahiers Sefardis*, November 5, 1946, pp. 43-45.

As will be seen from his life story, which will be told further on in this book, a noteworthy trait of Izmir native Eli Levi, Columbia Studios Public Relations Director, was that he entertained Turkish journalists who visited Hollywood very lavishly. He did not neglect to get his journalist guests together with Jews from Istanbul and Izmir who had settled in the environs of Hollywood. In 1938 he invited a Turkish newspaperman he had come across to his house for dinner.

Describing this invitation, the newspaperman wrote these lines: "From pastrami to tzatziki, everything you needed for an evening of drinking was there. The snacks were in fact so mouth-watering that even a choice seat in one of the taverns in Istanbul's Fish Bazaar would pale by comparison." They said that what Levi liked best was Kulüp rakı, sesame seed halvah, and tzatziki. Later, Levi would invite his countrymen from Istanbul and Izmir who lived nearby to become acquainted with the journalist. Those acquaintances included the brother of Moris Schinasi from Manisa, owner of the cigarette factory, the daughter of David Fresco, Turkish Jewish owner of the press that published the important newspaper *El Tıempo* between 1871 and 1930, and the sister of the well-known doctor Samuel Abravaya. Here is how the journalist described the get-together:

Ms. Abravaya hadn't seen her brother, Dr. Abravaya, since they were young. She kept asking:

"Is he still as youthful as ever?"

Ms. Fresco was in love with Kadıköy...Question after question:

"How is Kadıköy? How is Haydarpaşa?"

After that, she asked about her acquaintances in Kadıköy.

"Did Dr. Ihsan Şükrü¹⁶³ become famous? Apparently, Süreyya Paşa was building a "theater...How is Mr. Salah Cimcoz¹⁶⁴, and is Mahmut Ata back in Kadıköy?"

163 (1889-1957), well-known Turkish psychiatrist.

164 Salah Cimcoz (1877-1947), editor of the humoristic journal *Kalem* and art collector.

The film executive [Eli Levi] in an aside:

“Oh, where is Mr. Hatem? Don’t let him see you...He would take you off our hands right away,” he said.

A little later, Mr. Hatem came in. A very fat, jolly guy... He was reading couplets from Fuzuli.¹⁶⁵ This Mr. Hatem is apparently a millionaire; he founded the big “Markem” stores in America. He says he started out selling tomatoes in the street.

Today he has millions...A regular, down-to-earth guy from Kuzguncuk... (..)

The gathering really warmed up when a precious oud inlaid with mother-of-pearl was taken down off the wall.

Mr. Levi took the oud in his hands. Mr. Hatem sat down beside him. The elegant film executive plays the lute so well... What songs, what old songs he had inside him that I certainly didn’t know... Things like “Al yanakda çifte de benleri var.” Like “Felekte bana neler etti”... what things. Only between the songs and the *gazels*,¹⁶⁶ he must have forgotten some of the words, and he put in English words instead. And English sounded really weird in a *gazel*.

But what they were most curious about was the new songs in Turkey.

Everyone begged at once:

“What new songs have come out? Please sing at least one...”

If it were possible, and if I knew enough, they’d make me go on singing till morning. After finishing the oud program, Mr. Levi ordered his servant:

“Pull down the screen.”

In a corner of the wall, he pulled down a little white screen, and he darkened the room. And let me see, Istanbul on the little screen...

165 An Ottoman poet.

166 In classical Turkish music a *gazel* is a poem sung to an instrumental improvisation.

Nine years ago, a Turkish film director had apparently informed an American moviemaker about a film of views of Istanbul and Izmir by telegraph. Now one copy of that film was in his own home, and another in Mr. Hatem's home. Mr. Hatem had bought that reel from the film company for \$750.¹⁶⁷

(...)

Mr. Levi and Mr. Hatem said:

"We'd be devastated if it weren't for that film...Every week we get the film out and watch it to our heart's content."

As the scenes in the film changed, they nudged each other:

"Kuzguncuk...Just look at Kuzguncuk... The bridge, the bridge... Oh, dear, the bridge... Kadıköy... Mühürdar Avenue..."

After the film ended, I said:

"I have a new album of Turkey...In my apartment..." Right away Mr. Hatem jumped in his car and raced to my apartment. He brought back the official album of Turkey that the General Press Directorate had sent me.¹⁶⁸

As they turned the pages of the album's "Cities" section, they sang a song about each city. For example, when they came to Adana, they sang in unison the song "Aman Adanalı...Yavrum Adanalı," and when Sivas came up, they sang the song "Sivaslıyım." There were no old songs they didn't know.

After midnight it was decided that we should go to the Çanak-kale restaurant and bar that a Jew from Çanakkale had opened in Hollywood. We took to the road in three cars. I got to ride in Mr. Hatem's very luxurious car. I was sitting beside him. As Mr. Hatem was driving that luxurious automobile down the famous Hollywood Boulevard, he started singing a gazel.¹⁶⁹ I thought I'd

167 "11 yıl önce yapılan bir röportaj," *Halkın Sesi*, July 23, 1949.

168 The book referred to here is *Fotoğraflarla Türkiye*, published for the General Press Directorate (Matbuat Umum Müdürlüğü) by F. Bruckmann AG, Munich. Photographs by Othmal Pferschy.

169 Gazel is a form of Turkish music that has almost died out.

heard everything. But it hadn't occurred to me that one day I'd be hearing a Turkish gazel while cruising down Hollywood Boulevard in a luxury car. Mr. Hatem got so excited that now and then he started keeping time to the gazel with his hands. I said, "For goodness sake, Mr. Hatem...You're going to crash this luxury car into something."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Let the damn thing crash. Just now I was remembering my country."¹⁷⁰

Levi invited Halûk Durukal of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* to a dinner similar to one attended by Halûk Cansın of the newspaper *İzmir*. Here is Halûk Durukal's account of that dinner:

There are more than two hundred Jews from Istanbul and Izmir in Hollywood. "Since you are coming from Istanbul, we'll expect you for dinner on Wednesday evening. Afterwards, we'll drink coffee," said the invitation they sent me. We met at the home of Izmir native David Nahum. We were quite a crowd! Robert Nahum from Izmir's Irgat Bazaar was there, and so were Bohito Amato from Dikilitaş, Salamon from Asmalımescit, and Fresco from Tepebaşı...¹⁷¹ The huge living room was full of people. I had realized it was going to be crowded when I saw the many cars parked in front of this gorgeous villa. They wished me "Hoş geldiniz!" ("Welcome!") in perfect Turkish. The immigrants' children and grandchildren no longer speak Turkish. But there's one word everybody knows: "Cheater!" Those around me bombarded me with questions. "Do they sell simit¹⁷² now? We miss simit." Country halvah, sahlepe, Silivri yoghurt, Yakacık spring water—there was no taste of home, no drink or food my friendly interlocutors failed to recall with a sigh. "What can we do, we miss all that stuff, but on the other hand, we've all made a home here. And we are so comfortable! Anyhow, even if we wanted to go back

170 "11 yıl önce yapılan bir röportaj," *Halkın Sesi*, July 25, 1949.

171 These are all neighborhoods in Istanbul.

172 A crisp bread similar to a pretzel but baked in a circular shape which is sold on the streets in Turkey.

to Turkey, they wouldn't give us a visa!" Later on, they gave me detailed information about the accomplishments of our soldiers in Korea, which have had incredible repercussions in America. The oldest of those I was speaking with, Kuledibi native Salamon, was trying to remember old Turkish songs. Just imagine that in this famous capital of the movie industry 15,000 kilometers from Istanbul, these respectable people who left our country many years ago had tears in their eyes as all together they started singing the song: "Hani ya da benim elli dirhem pastırmam" ("So where's my fifty drachmas worth of pastrami?"). A lot of them mentioned a title and asked me, "Do you know this one? Do you know that one?" They asked me a whole slew of questions about Hasköy, Asmalımescit, Tepebaşı, Kuledibi, Şişhane and Balat. It must have been midnight when they were hanging on my every word. Sometimes they glanced at each other and said in a low voice, "look, that's a word I didn't remember." In a week they reacquainted me with Turkish foods I had forgotten about, "but we can't manage to capture the old taste, in Istanbul it was quite different," they confessed. They wanted me to convey their greetings to Istanbul and Izmir and gave me a piece of advice; it was the advice of friends with experience. Please explain this well to those at home: "The days when you could make a million quickly are over. In order to make money here, you need to have some professional expertise. Lots of people are roughing it on the streets and asking, 'How can I make a living?' Please make this very clear to friends over there."¹⁷³

In his memoirs Halûk Cansin describes the same party as follows:

One day Levi said: "This Wednesday evening you'll come to our house. You'll have dinner with our friends who came from Turkey years ago." And he added, "it won't be as much fun as you'd have on the pier at Karataş, but with the help of a bottle of rakı brought from Istanbul plus one or two Turkish snacks,

173 Halûk Durukal, "À Hollywood, Parmi 200 Israélites d'Istanbul et d'Izmir," *La République*, December 7, 1951.

you'll have a good time." Naturally, we were happy to accept the invitation. And we asked whether there were very many Turks living in Hollywood. "Not too many," he replied. "I know ten or twelve Jewish families. And a few more Armenian families! They all moved here twenty-five or thirty years ago. Most of the Jews are from Izmir. The Armenians are from Istanbul. Now and then we get together and reminisce about old times.

On Wednesday evening, you'll get together with some of them... The Armenians were not yet holding a grudge against the Turks. Nowadays, I don't know whether I could comfortably accept getting together with them for a dinner party. But at that time I didn't have the slightest problem with it.

On Wednesday evening we bought our flowers and set out from the hotel in Levi's car. The house was a bit outside of Hollywood. As soon as we got through the door, we saw a big crowd of men and women facing us. All with smiling faces. They were happy to see us, since we brought them a whiff of the "old country." Not just happy, but it seemed that they were really moved.

If you want to talk about the table, it was piled high. It was filled with every kind of Turkish snack you could find... Fava beans, humus, shrimp, white cheese, and canteloupe... Unlike Levi, rather than missing Karataş, the former denizens of Izmir talked about their nostalgia for the Konak Square, Punta,¹⁷⁴ and Buca.¹⁷⁵ As for the former Istanbulites, they were burning with longing for the Bosphorus.

As the bottle of raki, in addition to bottles of wine and whisky, were passing from hand to hand, one of the ladies got carried away and said in very bad Turkish (perhaps abominable Turkish would be more accurate), which most of the guests at the Levis had forgotten: "Come on, my dear. A little song, a Turkish folk song...All together now!"

174 A historic district of Izmir, nowadays known as Alsancak.

175 A district of Izmir which was formerly home to many rich Levantines.

Not neglecting to keep time by beating on the table, they started singing in a chorus: “The poplars of Izmir/ Shed their leaves/ Speaking to us of Çakıcı¹⁷⁶/ We invoke the mansions...”

And Durukal and I joined in that chorus as much as we could. We looked and saw that the eyes of almost everyone around us were filled with tears. Slowly they breathed sighs that came from deep inside them. And we hadn’t heard most of the other songs till then. We didn’t join in, we just moved our lips; what else could we do? But our “former compatriots” had reached such a peak of nostalgia that it was enough.

We left the house well after midnight. Those we were leaving behind were just as melancholy as if they were leaving Turkey again for the first time. They told us they hoped we would come back for another party in the future, but in fact both they and we knew that it was unlikely for that to happen.

When our program in Hollywood was over and we were about to set out for New Orleans, as I was saying goodbye to Levi, whom I had suspected of deception in the first moments when I got acquainted with him, my heart was full of thanks to this sweet man, and my suitcase was overflowing with the materials for a wonderful article.

In later years an item in the newspaper about that very same Levi’s having entertained a governor of Izmir who happened to be in Hollywood caught my eye. There was more: A while later, I learned that he had come to Izmir himself for a few days. But unfortunately at that time I had moved to Istanbul and was living there. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to hear from his own lips how he felt when he saw that Karataş that he had yearned for for so many years.

Let’s say that he is still alive. If he has passed on to eternity, I am sending up prayers that his spirit may be at peace... And right

176 Çakıcı was the nickname of Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe (1872-1911), a popular bandit/hero in the Aegean coast of Turkey, sort of Robin Hood, who robbed the rich and distributed the looting to the poor.

away I can't help humming the Turkish folk song "The poplars of Izmir..."¹⁷⁷

Turkish Jews in New York

At the time of his visit to New York, Hikmet Feridun Es observed that most of the people working in the vegetable and fish business were Jewish immigrants from Salonica, and he described them as follows:

Most of them had come here 40-45 years ago. They had practically forgotten their Turkish. But they all had just one saying in common, which they hadn't forgotten. When you asked them whether or not they knew Turkish, they answered right away:

"He who doesn't know Turkish doesn't fear God." But that's it, then they start speaking English. It's odd. You don't expect to run across Jews who don't know Turkish saying "He who doesn't know Turkish doesn't fear God."

You can run across very many Turkish Jews in other situations. Especially selling yard goods and cotton in the markets they've started just as they do at the Wednesday and Thursday markets in Turkey. The markets you find in New York even have the same peculiar smell.

The dried fruits are similar to those in Istanbul. If you're not mistaken, that's Turkish you're hearing right beside and behind you:

If you say, "That pig!...He's giving us the rotten ones," sometimes the salesman will laugh and then reply in Turkish: "I don't handle rotten stuff." You are a witness to what he said.¹⁷⁸

And a bureaucrat who happened to be in New York had this to say about the Turkish Jews he encountered:

177 Halûk Cansın, *Unutmaya Kıyamadıklarım*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), pp. 93-100.

178 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerika Kazan Ben Kepçe," *Hürriyet*, November 5, 1948.

In a shop on the corner of 48th street, almost in Times Square, a milkman curses another guy, saying:

“God damn you, you aren’t an infidel, are you?”

The man doing the cursing was a Jew from Gallipoli.

As soon as you explain that you’re a Turk, he embraces you with great longing. He takes out some of his good, fresh milk and treats you to it. He cleans your glass.

“You mean you’re a Turk?”

Yes, at last, after so many years, he’s finally seen a Turk.

Regardless of how much you insist, he won’t take your money.

If you keep insisting, he’ll get mad like a Turk.

“Won’t you take it, for my sake?” he says, and he feels bad.

Then he tells you where he’s from: It’s Turkey.

His eyes fill with tears. He’d give anything to detain you a little longer.

Then he shows you some pictures of his wife and children.

Yes, it is for them that he works.

He worked night and day. But in spite of wearing himself out with all that work, he didn’t make any money. Continuously scraping by, this terrific guy there was one in a million.

I can’t tell you how upset this Jew gets when he has a hard time getting chicken for his child (...)

And one day in a completely different part of New York, I saw an exhausted, worn-out man who had grown old before his time, his hair almost gray, enter a shop with shoelaces in his hand. After wiping his forehead with a filthy handkerchief, he leaned like a heap against the wall.

“Whew,” he moaned.

And this too was a Jew from Istanbul. He had run away from Turkey just to get out of doing his military service, but he had nothing to sell but shoestrings. As soon as I told him I was Turkish, he stared at me, his eyes moist with pain. In that gaze

a whole spirit was bleeding. Aching inside, I gave him a few cents.¹⁷⁹

Turkish Jews in Cincinnati

According to research by Kuzguncuk native Dr. Isaac Yerushalmi, who is a member of the faculty of the Hebrew Union College, the first Sephardim to settle in Cincinnati came from Çanakkale in 1906. According to oral testimonies, the first settlers were nicknamed “Piroshki” Avram and “Cotton” Nisim Gracian. Later on, Shlomo Telvi, Rafael Varol, and the Cassuto, Sedaka, Molinas, Levi, Halio, Gormezano, and Russo families would join them.¹⁸⁰ The Gormezano family would later move to New York; their daughter Edith (b. 1931) would go on to become the famous jazz singer known as Eydie Gormé. In 1907 Isaac Sevilla and his mother “Madame” Eugénie Sevilla came. Later on, their nephew Victor Saadia Sevilla would join them, and Albert Akrish from Çorlu would also be affiliated with them. In 1909 Jews from Salonica settled in Cincinnati. Finally, in 1914 Rabbi Abraham Gargir came from Izmir with his wife, Loya. Eventually, the Turkish Jews living in Cincinnati got organized; on October 29, 1920, they bought a plot of land to use as a cemetery, and the Cincinnati Sephardim founded the Spanish Hebrew Society on October 1, 1921. A synagogue was opened in 1933.¹⁸¹

6. Life Stories

The Story of Milas Native Albert Amateau

The life story of Albert Amateau, who ran away and emigrated from Izmir to America so as not to go in the army, is extremely

179 Fuad Gedik, *Amerika*, (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaasi, 1948), pp. 208-209.

180 Isaac Yerushalmi, 1976, p. 3.

181 *ibid.*, pp. 3-10.

interesting. While speaking with Hikmet Feridun Es in 1948, Albert Amateau, who passed away on February 9, 1996 at the age of 107, told the story of his life as follows:¹⁸²

I am from Milas. My name is Avram Amateau. But in my family and at school, I was known as Ibrahim Amateau. My whole childhood was spent in a little town of 4-5 thousand people. We shared a house with the camel driver Süleyman Efendi. The camel driver Süleyman's mother was my wet nurse. As a matter of fact, my own mother nursed Süleyman. So the camel driver Süleyman and I were "milk brothers." Basically, in our little town the Jews and the Turks were very close. For example, we kids joined together in rock-throwing fights with other neighborhoods.

When I was a bit grown up, I went from Milas to Izmir. There I first finished middle school, then Izmir High School. I graduated with high honors. I still have my diploma. From there I decided to enter the civil service. However, something happened to change my mind. My uncle had written an article in the *Hizmet* newspaper in Izmir. In it he said that: "Our sheep give wool. We shear them, we get red dye from our most beautiful fields. The Europeans buy this. They spin thread and weave it into rugs for us. They order us: this is what you shall do. This is not right for a country like ours." Wasn't he right? When the government put my uncle in jail to punish him for writing that article, I decided to run away to America. I had gone to an American college. I studied there for three years. At that time an ad in the *Köylü (Villager)* newspaper caught my eye. Exams were being held for a teaching certificate. I signed up right away. I was successful. At the beginning of 1908, I was sent to Milas as a Turkish teacher. They were opening a school for Jews there. And I gave classes to

182 For his obituaries, see Rachel Amado Bortnick, "Milaslı Türk Albert Jean Amateau 107 yaşında vefat etti," *The Turkish Times*, February 15, 1996; Tefik Güngör, "Milaslı Türk Albert 107 yaşında ABD'de öldü," *Dünya*, March 6, 1996; Mahmut Esat Ozan, "A Lasting Tribute to a Living Monument," *the Turkish Times*, April 1, 1995. And after this interview, he published the story of his life on another occasion. See Albert J. Amateau, "The 1910 Immigrant from Turkey," *The Turkish Times*, February 1 and 15, 1992.

both sides. However, all of a sudden I got terribly sick. I went to Istanbul for treatment. From there, I went on to France. From Marseilles I embarked on the Atlantic with a third-class ticket on a ramshackle boat named *Santa Ana*. It was an extremely filthy ship. The food was awful. There were enormous cockroaches. No matter what, I wouldn't dare undertake such an adventure today. That's youth for you... And in 1908—that is, exactly forty years ago—with four dollars in my pocket, I was about to start a new life for myself in another world. I had a strange friend beside me. My beloved oud carefully ensconced in its red cover. I had learned to play the oud at a dervish lodge in Izmir.

I couldn't have managed without it. We had gone to France together. In New York the crowd of immigrants on Ellis Island asked what that gadget was. All the immigrants waited their turn in line. It was a long procedure for the immigrants. The individual in front of me didn't know a word of English. The officials got angry. I started translating. Then the officials said:

“You speak English so well. You've been to America before, haven't you?”

I couldn't make a sound. I didn't deny it. Then the officials said: “Since you've come before, what are you waiting for? Get out...”

And I can say without lying that that's how I practically broke a record on Ellis Island... I didn't even spend half an hour there.

I set foot in New York. When I looked around me, I almost felt dizzy. I had four dollars in my pocket and my oud in its red cover on my arm, and on Broadway a rose-colored twilight was giving way to a hot summer night. It was the middle of August.

I had a strange feeling inside. I had no friend but my oud. I had left a sweetheart—you could say we were semi-engaged—behind with promises far away. I had left my Rebeca on the other side of the Atlantic. Rebeca Nahum, who is now my wife. Niece of the famous Chief Rabbi [Haim] Nahum.

By then the city lights had come on. I didn't know where I was going to spend the night. A crowd of people was passing hur-

riedly by me. My oud was banging against my shoulder. My clothes were incredibly wrinkled after the bad situations I had been through during that frightening trip, sometimes not even getting undressed for weeks. And I was wearing my spare outfit... Those who saw what shape I was in advised me to go to the world's strangest hotel. The Hotel Milles!...

There were hotels by that name in many cities, but none quite like that one. The man named Milles who eventually earned millions had started out as a tramp. For years, he couldn't find a place to sleep... He slept in parks and stations. After becoming a millionaire, he made his last will: "Open hotels everywhere under the name Milles. In them let adventurous, penniless people sleep for twenty-five cents..." His will was put into effect. Now there is a big Milles Hotel in New York. I was amazed when I went inside. You really needed to be brave to spend a night there. I was right in front of the hotel. I sat down on the steps. It was getting late. I said to myself:

"I didn't appreciate how comfortable I was. I wish I had gone into the civil service; by now I'd be a bureaucrat!" Just then someone passed in front of me. After looking at my strange outfit, he asked, "Haven't you come from Europe?"

"Yes...Today"

"What languages do you know?"

"Turkish, Spanish, French, German, English, Greek..."

"Enough, enough, man," he said, and added, after waving his hand:

"Just Turkish will suffice. You do know Turkish, don't you?... But don't lie to me."

"Of course...Like my mother tongue..."

"Excellent. In that case, do you want to work?"

"Definitely."

"Come tomorrow, look me up in the amusement park at Coney Island."

That odd stroke of luck encouraged me, so that I was no longer afraid of the hotel. I went back inside and rented a bed. I wondered what kind of work I would do in New York that involved Turkish... Worrying about that, I couldn't get to sleep for a while. But I would find out what kind of dreadful job was awaiting me the next day.¹⁸³

(...)

The man who was going to give me a job had told me to come to the famous Coney Island amusement park. I hadn't even known such a place existed till then...

The man had said: "You'll see...It's a very crowded place." He said when I got there, I should ask where Fatima's wedding was. They'll bring you to me," he said.

Fatima's wedding!... I didn't have a chance to wonder what sort of job he was going to give me. What could I do at a wedding?... How was I going to earn a living with Turkish in New York?

I dashed out of the hotel to face the morning. The sun rose on the road. I found Coney Island. I asked the first man I ran into: "Where is Fatima's wedding?" He shrugged his shoulders and went by...He didn't know. I asked another one. He looked me in the face with surprise:

"Which Fatima?" he asked.

Finally someone showed me a tent. Right across from Luna Park. And what would I see there?

In front of the tent were two camels. A veiled young woman only part of whose body was covered with a veil. And afterwards I realized that that young woman was very pretty. However, her outfit was ridiculous. Chest exposed, slender waist exposed, face veiled...

The man from the day before met me.

"This group came from Morocco. Now the imam will come and officiate at Fatima's wedding... And you will play an Arab or Turkish song on the oud..."

183 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 1, 1948.

I couldn't take my eyes off the business. A little later the imam, a well-dressed man, came. When he started the prayers, I was overcome with astonishment. Because the imam was shouting in Jewish. I had never seen an imam perform a Jewish wedding. I was all ears. The man was grinding out and stringing together the Jewish words, but anyone who knew the language could understand what he was saying and the weirdness of this business.

Here's what he was saying:

"Oh, crowd! God willing, those of you who know Jewish will rescue us. They kidnapped us. They are treating us like slaves. We need your help."

In fact, forty years before, gangsters had done that sort of thing, but I didn't think it was possible. We continued that wedding show till nightfall. And it was Coney Island's most amusing and highest earning show. Except for me, the whole crew had been brought from Morocco, and they didn't know the language or anyone. At nightfall I went back to the hotel deep in thought. After talking to the hotel manager, I said I was going to go to the police. He replied: "Hold on, I'll telephone the head of the general Jewish organization here." Then he called me to the telephone. And that's how that day I first met the world famous Jewish leader, Dr. Judah Magnes.¹⁸⁴ When I told him the story, he said: "Tomorrow at opening time we'll send two plain clothes police officers to you. As soon as the imam starts that Jewish prayer, point him out. That will do."

The next day I went to work very excited...Fatima came out for the wedding, as she did every day, and waited for the imam. Finally, as soon as the imam started the prayer consisting of the same Jewish words, I pointed him out. The police immediately arrested the owner of the tent. Apparently the man had practically brought those people from Morocco as slaves...He

184 Judah Magnes (1877-1948), American rabbi and community leader. Rector and first president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. See Lloyd P. Gartner, Daniel Efron, "Judah Leon Magnes," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 11, pp. 716-718.

was a slave trader the New York police had been looking for for years...All the newspapers wrote about this case. The man was sentenced to fifteen years. And we sent the Jews back to their countries.

However, I had lost my first job, my first earnings. I was unemployed again. That day, as I was reading the newspaper *The World*, one section caught my eye: the help wanted columns... Ten dollars for bank manager, fourteen dollars for an office manager, twenty-five dollars for a chauffeur... I was amazed. In those days driving was a marvelous job, it was viewed as something like engineering. When I arrived, there were 250 automobiles in all of New York. Anyway I had been amazed when, for the first time in my life, I saw a self-propelled carriage, that is, an automobile, in New York. I looked. As soon as I saw another ad—"Learn to drive for fifty dollars"—I took off. They welcomed me with a lot of flattery. I smiled:

"I only have a dollar and half in my pocket, but I know six languages. First, you teach me how to drive. Then I'll teach foreign immigrants in six languages. And you can publish big ads for your company saying, "Driving taught in six languages. There are a lot of people coming from Europe now who don't know the language..."

They thought it was a great idea. "Agreed," they said. Then I shook my head.

"You haven't heard my whole proposal...I'm living on First Street, you are on Sixty-second Street. I can't go back and forth every day. I'll sleep here."

They were amazed:

"But you'll be well paid. You'll do a job in exchange for that. Instead of paying rent for your room, you'll wash and clean those four practice cars over there." I agreed.

I would teach driving for nothing. I was provided a place to sleep. And food? Back then, tons of immigrants were coming. I decided to teach them English. I telephoned the Turkish consulate and

asked where I could find the Turkish immigrants. They gave me the address of a café on Rivington Street. I went. A mob of Jews. And none of them knew English.

“Why don’t you go to night school?” I asked.

They worked at movie theaters. In those days the movies were only open at night.

“I’ll give you lessons during the day,” I said. They were getting good wages. Each student would pay me ten dollars a month, so with twelve students, I’d make \$120... Thank God. The next day I taught a lesson behind the café. Just on wooden crates... We started the lesson. I prepared them to the point where they could go to day schools.

Let me specify how some of those Jewish students of mine who worked at the movie theaters are doing now. One of them was Dr. Moris Amado, who had come to New York from Turkey and is remembered as a well-known doctor. When I met him, he was shining shoes. Another was Dr. Moris Turiel, and still another was Antalya native Dr. Henri Sheyhon, who became an expert in breathing apparatuses and a university professor. They are all people who got their first English lesson from me behind the café. In addition, I was giving driving lessons to twenty-one French, Italian, and Greek Jewish students.

However while I was having a hard time, I had contracted to serve a man for free in exchange for private driving lessons. I had learned to drive, and now I couldn’t get out of it.

In the end they behaved fairly. The company recommended me to the very rich Dr. Wandenhaind, who was looking for a chauffeur. I was his secretary at the same time. However, I didn’t want to be at someone’s beck and call. I quit. One winter day I was sitting in the café. Five trucks went by right behind it. I asked:

“What are those?”

“Machine-made bread...Now they’re making bread mechanically...In factories,” they said.

Mass-produced bread. That was the first I’d heard of it. I made

a decision. I'd become a bread salesman. I'd sell bread on the streets of New York...¹⁸⁵

(...)

I went to the first bread factory that Rockefeller had opened in America.

"I want to become a bread salesman. Assign me one of those trucks you see," I said.

They replied:

"So do you know the bread business? Have you ever sold bread? It's a very big business."

"In that case, take me on as a driver. Let me drive your truck..."

"We don't need a driver, we need a bread man...If we find a bread man, we'll teach him to drive."

You see how insistent those men were about an expert in the profession of selling bread. Then I asked:

"Do you have someone to teach your bread men how to drive?"

They didn't have any such teachers. When I explained that I had taught for years in a driving and auto mechanics school, they hired me. That time I had 250 bread men as students. I gave them all driving lessons. Don't ask about the recession that came to America in those times. Everyone was flat broke. The students I taught how to drive drove around every neighborhood and street in New York; I closely observed how they worked. Finally, I had taught exactly 250 bread men how to drive. Now they no longer needed me. When the director called me in to thank me and let me go, I said:

"By myself I've taught 250 bread men. I've accompanied them to every place where they sell bread. I've learned the secrets of the bread business. They learned from one teacher. I've taken lessons in the bread business from 250 teachers. Give me a job as a bread man."

185 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 2, 1948.

A little exam. I passed with flying colors. There they had never found the time to examine the goals of bread salesmanship and the purpose of bread. All the salesmen drove their own trucks. They wore white shirts, white pants, and white gloves on their hands, and they put a shirt like that on me too. On my chest it said "Bread Man Number 143!"...

And they assigned me a territory. But we never worked in Jewish neighborhoods. Because we had butter and milk in our breads, and this was against what those Jews called *kashrut*.¹⁸⁶ They only wanted bread with salt and water. Therefore, neither their homes nor their shops bought our bread. I only sold to a few Christian people. However, making a lot of sales played a big role on top of a salesman's individual earnings. One morning I again went to work at dawn. A man asked me the way: "Just a second...I just have to deliver this bread to that house, and I'll be right back," I said. And that's what I did. I gave the man the directions he needed. As if in response, the man looked at my hands with a sarcastic smile. He laughed uproariously and said:

"What's the point of those white gloves in this weather? What a show-off you are!"

I swallowed. The salesman's only motto in America was "the customer is always right." Naturally I didn't say anything bad. Only: "It's not for looks, sir. Our factory's rule is: No hand will touch the bread. So we wear gloves even when it's hot."

"Just now I saw some of your colleagues. None of them had those things on his hands. You take the factory's rule personally... Aren't your colleagues bread salesmen too?"

"If they are not wearing their gloves, they are at fault. It means that they don't understand the rule, the spirit of the job. They think it's just for looks. That's how I explain it."

The man left with a cold smile. I was just angry. The next day there was an announcement at the factory: "The general manager of the factories has come from Chicago, he is visiting all the cit-

186 Because bread containing dairy products cannot be eaten with meat.

ies one by one, and he will give you his impressions. There is a meeting tomorrow.”

We held the meeting. And didn’t the general manager turn out to be the man who had made fun of me? Woe is me!

The man said:

“I’ve conferred one by one with all the bread salesmen in your city. I’ve gotten a very bad impression.” I hadn’t even thought of slinking away while he was speaking. The general manager continued his speech:

None of the bread salesmen had understood the rule, “No hand shall touch the bread till it reaches the customer.” Only one had rightly appreciated the spirit of the job. “Will colleague number 143 please stand up...”

I stood up. He said:

“You will receive a prize of \$500. And you will be assigned a private office. Your job will consist of getting your colleagues to understand the job as you did. You are now a superintendent!”

And around that time, with the encouragement of Dr. [Judah] Magnes, I formed an association of Turkish Jews. After that, I went to work in the office of the building they called the Student Union. Since I had become superintendent of the bread salesmen, I had been going to law school at night. I had come to the last class. The Student Union was a huge building. Many rooms and halls were open for meetings. I had received my law degree. I had successfully completed my internship. One day a chance encounter occurred that changed my whole life. Every day when I went down the street I saw a group of young people making strange signs to each other. I thought they must be deaf mutes. I went up to them. I wanted to see their movements up close. One of them took a pen and paper out of his pocket. And he wrote: “It’s not nice to be so curious. What’s so surprising about us?” And I instantly replied, “My interest is to be helpful. Don’t you have an organization? It must be very hard to meet on the street. Let me show you a room in the Student Union. You can

meet there whenever you like.” I reserved two rooms for them. They came and held meetings there now and then. And I started working hard to learn sign language. One thing I did was to give their association priority over all my own organizations. I prepared their constitution. Furthermore, I wrote the Board of Education about opening a big school for the deaf. And we founded an organization. A favorable response came from the Board of Education regarding the school. And I became fluent in sign language. I learned that language so well that I even spoke sign language at home. I can say that I learned this from a deaf person. They brought the famous expert Newborger to be director of the school, and they made me his assistant. And there were many other specialists in the establishment.

We would all write what we thought was needed most in the form of a report. In my report I singled out this point. The school prepared students to work in four different branches of industry. The deaf students who left the school competed with each other. Then we put them in those industrial branches they requested alongside hearing workers. How many deaf workers would we finally be able to give to a particular industry? We needed to increase the number of industrial branches taught in the school. That was my thesis. It was accepted. That time when the director died, they appointed me. I managed the New York schools for the deaf for thirteen years. During that time, my fiancée wrote: “Now they want me to get married. What do you think?” I took a very short leave from the school. But I could go as far as Paris. And she came there. We began the arrangements to get married. They said our paperwork would take four weeks. I immediately rushed to Halim Bey, our consul in Paris. He married us at the [American] consulate in a quarter of an hour. After that, I practiced law and did business in America. We had a son. He married the famous artist Coleen Gray. Now you see my situation. Life goes by before you know it.¹⁸⁷

187 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, July 3, 1948. Es conducted another interview with Amateau’s wife. See Hikmet Feridun Es, “Bir

The Story of Istanbul Native Albert Morin, a Character Actor in the Films *Gone with the Wind* and *Casablanca*

My father and brothers were gunsmiths in the Istanbul Grand Bazaar. Our first shop was in Bahçekapı. Twenty-seven years ago. I first started working in the store when I was twelve. We lived on a hill in Şişhane. We would walk to the shop, gazing out at the view from the bridge. Gunsmithing was my father's trade. It was assumed that I would carry on that job, which had been passed down from my grandfather. My father enrolled me in Robert College, saying that I should learn the language. While I was going to school, I would go to the shop in the evenings and holidays and work selling guns. From a very early age, I was able to speak English very well. Sometimes I performed in shows at Robert College. My dad used to say:

“Work hard on your lessons instead of acting. You are going to be a gunsmith, not an actor.” On an agreed-upon day I met two friends at our shop in the bazaar—number 75 behind the Valide Han¹⁸⁸—and ran away to Italy to become an actor. I entered a drama school in Florence, and after spending a while there, I went to England, since I could speak the language. There I worked for seventeen years on different stages as a theater actor. I went from village to village with little troupes. Finally I came to America with a theater group. I played a leading role in the play *Tobacco Road*. After my first performance in New York, they took me to Hollywood right away.”

I asked Albert Morin, who was extraordinarily good at playing characters ranging from a thug to a very proper person:

“The dreams and fantasies of your childhood and youth came true. Are you happy to have settled here and been successful in Hollywood?”

Manisalı ile evlendim,” *Yedigün*, 16, 40 (December 18, 1948), pp. 14–16, 23.

188 Built by Kösem Sultan (d. 1651), mother of Sultans Murad IV and Ibrahim, the Valide Han is a large, two-story building with two courtyards and contains workshops of many artisans as well as shops selling clothing and other items.

He smiled.

“I’ve asked myself that same question many times. However, you know there is no dream in the world that turns out to be everything you hoped for, in every way. Although it appears to be everything I hoped for, what things I am missing!...”

“For example?”

Smiling, he answered:

“For example, if I were a gunsmith at the store in Bahçekapı, I could go to a pudding shop and get some of that bread *kadayıf* with cream¹⁸⁹ that I loved so much in my stomach. It’s been twenty years, and my mouth still waters when I think of it. I wish I were selling guns again in Bahçekapı instead of being an actor in Hollywood.”

“Just so you could eat a bread *kadayıf*? Aren’t there other things you’d look for?”

“What things wouldn’t I look for, did I forget Taşdelen spring water? What’s that water? ...That fresh, fresh Istanbul fish; I’ve wandered the world from Shanghai to Capetown. But I’ve never come across anyplace that could equal Istanbul...”

If the Turks could come and see the Jews in America, they’d realize that there’s no truth to the charge that the Jews think only of material things and have no romantic side.

In fact what’s much more evident is their romantic longing for the land of their birth.

When the mention of Istanbul came up, Albert Morin was so beside himself that he even forgot his role in a film.

Lana Turner and Clark Gable yelled, as they passed by him in a car:

“Head bandit...Come, cut us off at the pass...”

I asked the former gunsmith and current Hollywood star:

189 A dessert made from bread dough baked in sugar syrup and filled with the rich cream called *kaymak*.

“I’m going to Istanbul, is there anything you want?”

“Yes, there is...,” he replied, with tears in his eyes.

Then he added:

“Go and eat a bread kadayıf with cream for me...And wash it down with a glass of Taşdelen!”¹⁹⁰

The Story of Oud Virtuoso Sadaka Efendi

Sadaka Efendi, who says he spells his name “Sadacca,” is an oud artist who is very famous among the Jews in California. At the present time Sadaka Efendi has relatives in Turkey in Istanbul, Izmir, and Manisa. He became famous for his unbelievably beautiful oud improvisations.

There is no gathering of Jews in California to which they don’t invite Sadaka Efendi with his oud. He is a person who is sought after for every wedding ceremony. He basically supports himself with his oud. For example, at the beginning of 1948, a young woman coming from China to California, who would be going on to Turkey, stopped off in Los Angeles. She had a beautiful voice. And the Jews invited Sadaka. Furthermore, they had an indescribably rollicking time in a government building...

Sadaka Efendi said:

“I haven’t made any money, which proves that not every Jew who comes to America becomes a millionaire. Anyway, when you say ‘artist,’ you mean someone who doesn’t make money. I haven’t done any business, I’ve fed myself with my oud.”¹⁹¹

The Story of Tekirdağ Native Leon Moscatel, the California Flower King

According to Sam Levy, who spent many years in the flower business in Los Angeles, the brothers Leon and George Moscatel came to America while still very young, went into the wholesale

190 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, May 31, 1948.

191 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 26, 1948.

flower business, and made a great fortune. Leon was a guy who knew how to get things done. He would get up in the wee hours and drive his car through the night to San Francisco, where he would buy and sell the best and freshest flowers. Later, George and Leon Moscatel would open a big supermarket in the Los Angeles area in partnership with Sam Appelbaum.¹⁹² While he was in America in 1948, Hikmet Feridun Es met Leon Moscatel. Here is his story, as told by Leon Moscatel and written by Hikmet Feridun Es:

My name was “Misketoğlu.” Here I changed it to Moscatel. I am from Tekirdağ and spent my whole life there. And my sister lives in Istanbul, in Galata, at number 10, Yüksek Minare Street in the Emekyemez neighborhood.

I was a paperboy in Tekirdağ. As soon as the ferryboat docked, I’d grab the Istanbul newspapers and run up the hill before anyone else. I’d run around shouting:

“The Istanbul mail is here, the Istanbul newspapers!” Then I’d go to Istanbul. In the streets I’d sell everything from bobbins to hairpins. At nightfall I’d stay in the doorway of the [Galata] Tower. I made good money. And I worked at learning French and English. I attended an Alliance school for a while.

Then I don’t know what happened. I found myself here. I sold flowers in the street. Gradually, I bought a shop, went into what they call wholesale, organized the California flower business, bought lots of nurseries, a fleet of trucks...And it turned out as you see it today.

Today Moscatel owns many flower nurseries. They produce very beautiful carnations. They propagate Turkish tulips. He brings the flowers from these nurseries to the cities with his own vehicles. He even transports flowers by airplane. He really shows that he deserves the nickname “Flower King.” He gave his own name, “Moscatel flower,” to one of the tulip bulbs he brought from Tur-

192 Eliezer Kapuya’s article quoting Sam Levy, May 14, 2003.

key. Moscatel has brought about a small revolution, which he explains as follows:

“We Jews loved Turkish music--especially me!... I have an uncle here, ‘Kaston Mordochai,’ who is as good a singer as you’ll find anywhere. But those who don’t know will find it strange that when our people have saz¹⁹³ parties, they close all the windows in the house tightly. And he did that very slowly... With the most muffled curtain... One evening my uncle came home. There was a gathering. The whole group was there.

“Come on, let’s get started.”

I watched as he closed the windows tight.

I asked, “Why do you do that?”

They were surprised:

“Doesn’t everyone do that when they play, my dear?”

“But why?”

“The neighbors will hear...”

“So what. We have nothing to be ashamed of, we’re doing something we’re proud of. I can’t enjoy myself that way. If you open the windows...”

“Don’t do it, Moscatel...”

“I’m not listening...Open the windows!...”

And that was really the first time Moscatel played the saz with the windows open. The neighbors hadn’t heard that strange melody till then, but afterwards they grew to like it. And after that whenever there was singing with instrumental accompaniment in a Jewish home, they no longer closed the windows tightly, as they used to do; on the contrary, they opened them as wide as they could.”¹⁹⁴

193 A Turco-Iranian stringed instrument similar to the lute in some ways, but with three double strings and one resonator string and fretted and tuned intonationally, not to regular western tonal intervals.

194 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, July 16, 1948.

The Story of Isidore Hattem, Millionaire from Kuzguncuk

Isidore Hattem, or Israel Moise Hatem, as he was known in Istanbul, was born in Kuzguncuk on March 15, 1894. At the age of 17, Isidore—who already knew Turkish, French, Greek, and Hebrew—first left Istanbul for Paris, where he worked for several months in a dry goods store. Later, he would emigrate to Buenos Aires and go into the spice business. In 1913, when Hattem got sick while in Argentina, on his friends' recommendation, "with fifty cents in one pocket and a handful of dreams in the other," he emigrated to Los Angeles, which had a temperate climate. Not knowing English, Hattem started working at his first job with a fellow Jew in a fruit stand. The first English words he learned were "bread," "soup," and "beans." After filling his stomach by articulating only those words for a year, he bought the little fruit stand with three hundred dollars he had saved up. That's how Hattem took the first step toward becoming a fruit and vegetable dealer. By the time four years had gone by, he had become a respected name in the retail fruit business, and when the Grand Central People's Market opened in 1917, he was assured of obtaining his own stall. Now a successful businessman, in 1920 Isadore went back to his parents' home to retrieve his family to join him. Terribly saddened to learn that his mother had passed away, he returned to Los Angeles with his father. In the coming years, his business expanded, and on December 15, 1927, Hattem's Day and Night Market—the world's first supermarket—opened for business. The idea came from the Grand Bazaar.¹⁹⁵ When Hikmet Feridun Es met Isidore Hattem, he wrote this success story as follows:

If you were to see him chatting with businessmen in the general management office of his stores, which he expanded to Wall

195 His son Benson Hattem's articles dated March 10 and 11, 2003; Maurice I. Hattem, "I. M. Hattem and His Los Angeles Supermarket," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* XI, 3 (April 1979), pp. 243-251. The Grand Bazaar (Kapalıçarşı) in İstanbul in one of the largest covered markets in the world.

Street starting five years ago, you would think he was an American businessman, an American millionaire to the core. Speaking English—or rather, American—as he smokes his cigar, he never speaks in single digits. His numbers always have lots of zeros after them.

But when the businessmen leave, he starts chatting about Kuzguncuk, Üsküdar, Çamlıca, or Kağıthane. So that hard-boiled Wall Street guy, that American millionaire with the cigar in his mouth comes out from among his secretaries, he locks his office door and does a kind of folk dance for you. You can't believe what you're seeing. "Is this the same glum, filthy rich individual, who was just talking about big, important business matters with lots of zeros?" you ask yourself.

When he invited me to his home in Rossmore, where the California millionaires live, he said:

"My wife is also an accomplished folk dancer."

I was astonished.

Because I had met his wife ten years before. She, too, was from Turkey, but unfortunately she had died ten years ago.

When I asked Hattem from Kuzguncuk whether his new wife also knew how to folk dance, he replied:

"What are you saying? Do you think I'd marry someone who didn't know how to folk dance? I went to where my new wife is from, I found her in Mexico," he said.

That night we went to Rossmore, the neighborhood of millionaires, and admired his new home. It was really a little palace. And an architectural masterpiece. Even movie stars didn't live in such mansions. He led the way into a room that was exactly like an American bar. He pushed some buttons to open the cupboard doors. Endless rows of bottles emerged. Hattem asked:

"Rakı, whisky, wine, ouzo, cognac?"

Hattem and his young wife didn't know how to entertain. To remind us of Istanbul this genuine millionaire had tied an apron in front and yelled to his American wife who was making coffee:

“One with sugar...And make it large!...”

Of course he gave his instructions to the American in English, and, like an old-fashioned bride, Mrs. Hattem held out the coffee tray to us and then withdrew.

To honor us, that evening get-together turned out to be as Turkish and as ultra-rich Jew as could be. Among the guests were the Eskinazis from Manisa, who had sent a million liras for the Manisa Hospital.

He hadn't neglected to install a little private movie theater in the house.

“I know what I used to go through in my childhood to get into the ‘picture show’ in Üsküdar without a ticket. Now I’ve taken the pain out of it,” he said.

It was not for nothing that the Turkish Jews in Los Angeles had told me:

“Go to Hattem’s new house, see Hattem’s palace.”

In this setting he told me about the big dream that had swept him from Kuzguncuk to the Pacific coast:

“I was born in a wooden house in Kuzguncuk, right on the corner of Simitçi Street. I spent my whole childhood there. My teacher, ‘Irfan Bey from Beylerbey,’ used to ask all the children, ‘What are you going to be?’ They used to answer, ‘A general, a clerk, an engineer, a chemist, a policeman, etc.’ Then he asked me, ‘What are you going to be, Hattem?’

I answered:

‘A millionaire.’

My teacher yelled:

‘My dear boy, you don’t know Turkish!... Being a millionaire is not a profession. When I asked you what you were going to be, I meant what profession you would enter,’ he said.

‘Teacher, sir, I’ll make being a millionaire my profession,’ I said.

However, my family was barely making it. Nevertheless, the kids at school nicknamed me ‘millionaire.’ I did everything I could

to make that come true. My father was not in favor of my going to America. However, one summer vacation, when I made more money than he did by selling envelopes, paper, biscuits, and candy on the Galata Bridge, he told me:

‘Go, Isiadore. You go to America...You have what it takes...Okay!’ I was seventeen when I set out. First I went to France. Then, South America. After wandering around the world, I came to Los Angeles...because I had a brother here.

In my suitcase in Paris I had five suits of clothes!... But only two dollars in my pocket... Flat broke but a real dandy!... When I saw that my brother, whom I had thought was a big businessman, was in fact a vegetable salesman, I really blew my top. He offered me an apprenticeship. To come all the way from Turkey, from Paris to America with such dreams, only to be a vegetable salesman!... Weigh leeks? Chop cabbage? ‘No way!’ I said. Telling my brother, ‘If you’re going to do that, you might as well go back to Kuzguncuk,’ I decided to earn my living on my own. First, I became a dishwasher for a restaurateur named Murphy. Back then there were no dishwashing machines. My hands were totally shot. I got some wooden brushes from an Armenian. I was able to wash the dishes so quickly and so well with them that they gave me a raise. If my teacher Irfan Bey could see me now! After saying I was going to be a millionaire, I had become a dishwasher!... At last I was gradually coming around to the things my brother had said. First I bought a sack of raisins. I sold them on a corner on Los Angeles’s famous Hill Street. That corner was my first and smallest market. Later on, I would found the first so-called ‘Supermarket’ in America.”

In fact it was this Istanbul Jew, Hattem Efendi from Kuzguncuk, who was destined to come up with the idea for the first of the hundreds of thousands of places in America that are known today as supermarkets.

“What gave you the idea of creating a store that would sell all kinds of food?”

“The Grand Bazaar. It was having seen the way they sold food there that inspired our stores. By putting coffee counters and soda fountains in them, I increased our business. These Americans divide their businesses up a lot. Because a man’s time is limited. Did you go somewhere? There you’d find everything from powder and rouge to liver and milk, you needn’t go anywhere else.

In this modern market, in keeping with the saying ‘Help Yourself,’ everybody chooses the products they want, puts them in a basket, and when they get to the checkout counter, they give them the bill and take their money. (...)

“After I got rich, I was only able to go to Kuzguncuk once. I spent money like there was no tomorrow. I went through the neighborhood where I was born and grew up. Then I heard the voice of the roasted chickpea vendor... We used to sell off old stuff we had around the house to be able to buy a little, and we used to chase the chickpea vendor from one neighborhood to another. This time I called him and asked, “How much for that bag, all the chickpeas you have?” The man was shocked. “Five liras,” he said. I took out ten liras and gave them to him. The children behind the chickpea vendor surrounded me. Saying, ‘Take some, all of you,’ I opened the top of the bag. The kids didn’t believe it... When they figured out what was going on, they grabbed them. Then I went to the barbershop I used to go to. My original barber was dead. The son of the old barber used to shave me too. He was amazed. ‘Come, give me a shave,’ I said. When he finished, I gave him five liras. I always used to haggle with him over the money. This time he was so shocked he couldn’t speak. When I gave him the money, I said, “keep the change,” that Jewish barber was about to faint from shock. He tried to polish my shoes. I took out one lira, and gave it to him... I’ll never forget that week I spent in Kuzguncuk. During that week, I really was a millionaire in Kuzguncuk. But what good was it, since my teacher Irfan from Beylerbey had passed away? He couldn’t see me...¹⁹⁶

196 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 2, 1948.

In 1930 Isidore Hattem divorced his first wife, whom he had married in 1918, and two years later, he married Sara Faraci. When his second wife died in 1945, he married Rita Cohen from Izmir.¹⁹⁷

Izmir Native Rita Cohen's Story

"I was born in Izmir...I went to high school in Izmir. I know Turkish like my mother tongue. While I was at school, I dreamed of only two things. I wanted to be a teacher, or else run away to Hollywood to be an actress! But that second possibility seemed like an impossible dream even when I was a young girl.

Finally I decided to become a teacher. I was very young when the Greeks invaded Izmir. In those complicated days we viewed the Turks very favorably. Later, the Turkish army entered Izmir. On the day when the Gazi¹⁹⁸ came, our whole school went to welcome him. As the newspapers mentioned, I was the little Jewish girl giving the Gazi a bunch of red and white flowers!... Rita Cohen as she was then!..."

Izmir native Mrs. Rita Hattem looks at my face, into my eyes, so as better to discern the effect her words have had upon me.

"I'll never forget that day... I was so embarrassed, I blushed bright red. The Gazi's words—"Thank you, my girl"—are still ringing in my ears."

The young Jewess falls silent.

"I was in Mexico when I heard the news of his death. Even in faraway Mexico City, I shed tears for him."

Then she went on with her life story as follows:

"After that, I worked very hard in Izmir to become a teacher. However, I couldn't get them to hire me. In those times a lot of Jews were going to South America in groups. Since they had no hope of earning a living in the United States, they went south.

197 Hattem, (1979), pp. 243-251.

198 Title given to Atatürk, meaning "victorious fighter for Islam."

South America was more accessible to the Turkish Jews than North America, because the language was easy. However, I wanted to go to North America. In the end, I decided to go to Mexico, a place in between the two. That way, I would be very close to the United States, but in a Spanish-speaking milieu. As a matter of fact, I had relatives there too. One day I bade farewell to Izmir, as I had dreamt of doing throughout my childhood. I embarked on an Italian boat. After a long, seven-week voyage, we finally came to Mexico.”

When she came to this point in her life story, her cheeks were dimpled in a smile:

“I thought I wouldn’t have a chance to marry a Turk once I was in Mexico... However, while still in Izmir, I had gone to the famous ‘Fortune teller with the pot’... She withdrew three stones from that pot and told me:

‘You will marry a man of your own kind, from your own country...’

I laughed at her and replied:

‘I’m going to Mexico. To the other end of the world... How can what you said happen?’

The fortune teller with the pot insisted:

‘Make a note of what I said... And this is not just any ordinary man... He’s very, very rich...’ She repeated what she had said.

When I thought of this in Mexico, I used to say, ‘The fortune teller with the pot turned out to be a liar!’ And at the same time, I was thinking of ways to get to North America. How could I have predicted that four or five months later, a rich Turk would come and find me in Mexico?

Three or four years ago, when Hattem proposed to me, I couldn’t help saying:

‘The fortune teller with the pot was right!’

My husband Hattem was left a widower when his wife died around then. When he heard that I was keen on Turkish music and dance, he said:

‘We were made for each other!...’

We got married in Mexico City. Then we went to the United States. And that had been the story of my life. I suppose the most important thing that young girl had done in her life was to go to the other end of the world by herself. Now tell me you don’t believe in what they call *kismet*.¹⁹⁹ My husband had come to America once about forty years ago. He got married, his wife died. I came to Mexico at the time of the Republic. His wife died. He went from the United States to Mexico. Coincidences brought us together. And I found my *kismet* not in Izmir but in Mexico City. And my *kismet* was Turkish!...”

“Rita”—she liked to be called by her first name—got up.

She put a record on the phonograph. And the strains of a Turkish *gazel* echoed through the living room of this typical millionaire house, repeating the words “Aman!” (Have mercy!) “İmdat!” (“Have mercy!”) and “Yasha!” (“Hurrah!”)

Izmir’s Jewish beauty shook her head, looking me over with her clever eyes.

The *gazel* seemed to be affecting her too much.

After a pause, she said:

“Sometimes I weep while it’s playing...”

Later, like a proper hostess, she asked:

“A *rakı*?...Let me fill your glass...What harm will it do?... Just a teeny bit?” she pleaded.

When she thought of Izmir, all of a sudden she said:

“I’ll go... I want to go next month...” From this palace that is just steps away from Hollywood, she was showing her longing for her country.

She wouldn’t hear anything against Izmir.

“The women of Izmir are the most beautiful women in the world, aren’t they?” she asked, and you could hear how proud she was to be from Izmir.

199 Turkish word meaning destiny.

As she took her jewels from their boxes, she held them out, saying: "Look at the bracelet on my wrist. It's made of old Turkish gold quarter-liras on a chain!"

Rita is still Rita from Izmir.²⁰⁰

The Story of Izmir Native Eli Levi, Director of Public Relations, Columbia Studios

When Eli Levi, who had emigrated to America in 1911, met a Turkish journalist in 1938, he told him, "I came to America twenty-seven years ago. But in twenty-seven years, I haven't changed a bit. I've made money. I've gained status, etc...But I'm still just Levi from Izmir."²⁰¹ Many years later, when he met with Hikmet Feridun Es and *Cumhuriyet* reporter Halûk Durukal, he would give this more detailed version of his life story:

"In Izmir we lived in the Asansör neighborhood by the Armenian pier. My father, who had become famous for the number of students he taught, was the well-known rabbi Levi Efendi. In those days my only goal was to register at the military academy after finishing Izmir high school, and to become an officer. In the evenings I would go to the Castle, lie down there, and gaze at the port. What excited me was this: the view of the sea from the top of the Castle. Ships came and went. They disappeared from sight... I made a decision. I would go too. If it were now, I would never plunge into such an adventure with an idea like that in mind. But back then my way of thinking was completely different. I would go where those ships were disappearing!... In those days, I was studying at Izmir's Alliance school. In class I raised silkworms and sold them to the children, deducting my own expenses. One day the principal caught me. I figured I was going to be expelled from school. But when I explained the business to him, he said: "Excellent... If you will give the children a lecture on how to raise silkworms, I'll pardon you. And I'll give you a big box for the worms." I gave a better talk than he had hoped for.

200 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 14, 1948.

201 "11 yıl önce yapılan bir röportaj," *Halkın Sesi*, July 21, 1949.

During the holidays I cleaned offices, and I earned one *mecidiye*²⁰² a week. I saved my money. One day in the synagogue I bade farewell to my mother, father, and siblings and took an Italian boat. Straight to Marseilles... We were twenty Jews on the boat. And there were some young girls among us. They were going to marry Jews in America. We were all penniless. After paying for the ticket, I had three dollars left. They took us off the boat in Marseilles. The ship that was going to sail the next day couldn't take many passengers. We would have to wait twenty-four days. We were all flat broke. I went to the company on behalf of all the Jews. I demanded compensation for this delay, which was not our fault. I made a lot of noise. They gave us all 180 francs per day. We got that money for twenty-four days.

So we had 180 francs for hotel and food. However, we twenty Turkish Jews rented just one room. We all slept together, just cooked stew, and ate as if we were in an army mess. We made out like bandits.

With the money they gave us for twenty-four days, we had a hundred francs left after paying the price of the ticket. And that's how we twenty Jews got to America for nothing!

When we boarded the ship in Marseilles, they put the men on the deck and the women and girls in the hold. Since we were in fourth class, we traveled to America on deck. It was a rough voyage. It only took us fifteen days to cross the Atlantic, and it rained constantly, night and day, for the whole fifteen days. The deck where we spread out to sleep was practically flooded!... Furthermore, I only had an old, thin coat... An eighteen-year-old Jewish boy, skin and bones, with a deathly pale complexion, going to America to make himself a fortune and a future!"

At this point the executive who has made his life here pauses a bit to think about those days:

"One night I got so wet that my bones ached. A young girl who was part of our group and was going to America to get married was sleeping in the hold.

202 A silver coin issued in the time of Sultan Abdülmecit (1839-1861).

I was in such bad shape that she secretly took me to sleep there. Warm hay! A roof!.. Walls!... A night without rain!... I couldn't believe my eyes.

So we got to America in a frightful condition. There was nothing to eat on the boat!"²⁰³

(...)

"When I came to America from Izmir, I had twenty-four dollars in my pocket! Since there was no fourth class back then, I was traveling in third class with another passenger from Izmir. He didn't even have twenty-four dollars. He started crying: 'They won't accept me into America without money.' I asked him: 'Why are you despairing? I have twenty-four dollars. I'll count them out and give them to you. You'll show them to whoever you're supposed to and then give them back to me. And when my turn comes, I'll show them to the person in charge. Once we get ashore, with God's help we'll manage!'"²⁰⁴

(...)

"Since I was very young, I practically sneaked off to New York. Right away, I set about looking for work. What didn't I do... If I told you about all the jobs I worked at one by one, it would fill a ten-volume book. Finally, I started buying old films and taking them to distant cities to sell them. That's how I got into the movie business. At first I did jobs for a movie company in New York. Then I came to Hollywood. I've been in Hollywood twenty years."

Levi seeks out opportunities to speak Turkish. He has forgotten a lot of words. One day he wandered over to me in the studio.

Showing me the dressing rooms for the female extras, he said in Turkish:

"These are for the ladies!" Then we went to the men's section. "And these are for us, specially for the asses!" Shocked, I asked him:

203 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 5, 1948.

204 Halûk Durukal, "À Hollywood, parmi 200 Israélites d'Istanbul et d'Izmir" *La République*, December 7, 1951.

“What?” And he answered quite naturally, “These here are the dressing rooms for us asses.”

I realized that he had forgotten the word “male,” and had mistaken the word “ass” for it.²⁰⁵

The Americans of course love the beauty of Hollywood and its mountains very much. If an American asked Levi, “Isn’t Hollywood gorgeous?” he would answer immediately, “Hollywood is a very beautiful city. If you could put these mountains and this boulevard right next to the sea, it would look like Izmir. The city where I was born. Hollywood is an Izmir without a sea.”

The Izmir rabbi’s son mixes up Hollywood and Izmir. He calls one of the mountains—the hilltop where the famous Griffith Park Observatory is located—the “Castle,” as if it were Izmir’s Kadifekale (“Velvet Castle”).

Though he’s been driving for years, and almost everyone he knows has been fined by the tough California police, he has never gotten a ticket.”

His friends ask him, “How come you never get tickets?”

“I just don’t!”

“What’s your reason?”

“Look here, I am from Izmir,” he replies.

He is longing for Izmir’s “Hook” pears (I’m not sure what those are) in California, where they have the most delicious fruit and the most extraordinary pears.

“What a fruit that was... Maybe back then they didn’t taste that luscious. But I’ll never forget that taste.”

His wife, Matilda Levi is a marvelous housewife. She has three grown daughters. And she brought her father and mother to America. Her father died recently. Her mother speaks only Turkish. She doesn’t go out of the house. She is dying to speak with someone from Turkey. And she can go on about Izmir for days. She prepares Turkish coffee.

205 In Turkish the words for “male” (*erkek*) and “ass” (*eşek*) are somewhat similar.

Levi explains his greatest desire like this:

“I want to go to Izmir again. Let me gaze at the port from the top of that same old Castle. Let me walk down the roads where I spent my childhood. Let me get to our neighborhood. There once again let me glug down some water from the basin of the broken fountain, as I did thirty-five years ago. I used to play with marbles there... Let me say how the owner of the orchard chased us when we threw rocks at his nettle tree. Let me pick a hook pear. And let me stroll through my memories. This desire just tugs at me, and surely when I do this I’ll run into someone from our stone school. He won’t recognize me. Because everyone knows Levi’s in America. I’ll go up to that friend I’ve seen and ask him what school he went to. He’ll say:

‘The Stone school,’ and I’ll answer right away:

‘Oh! Is that so? ...I’m from the Stone school too.’

Then I’ll ask for information about our mutual friends, and finally I’ll ask about myself, saying:

‘There was a guy named Levi...What ever happened to him?’ And when the guy across from me says, ‘Him? He’s in America,’ I’ll affirm, ‘No, sir... He’s in Turkey..’

Maybe there’ll be a little argument:

‘He’s in America. I heard it from a reliable source..’

‘He’s in Turkey. I know better.’

At last, I’ll tell him:

‘I am he... And here I am in Izmir!’

My friend will hug me...”

Here Levi breaks off and asks in English:

“Isn’t that a sweet dream?... But one day it will come true. I am sure of it...”²⁰⁶

When Halük Durukal, reporter for the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, and Halük Cansın, reporter for the newspaper *Izmir* were touring

206 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 5, 1948.

America at the invitation of the U.S. State Department and came to Hollywood, Eli Levi gave them a warm welcome. In his memoirs Cansın gives a colorful account of his meeting with Eli Levi:

Now we had the letter of recommendation from the Washington center to the Film-makers Union in Hollywood. At the end of a day's journey on an extremely luxurious train, we arrived at our hotel, which was in a modern architectural style, in Hollywood. We rolled up our sleeves the next morning to get to work and retreated to our rooms with the idea of writing confidentially to our newspapers about what we had seen and experienced during the last few days.

The next morning before 8:30 I was awakened by the ringing of the telephone...

Who could be calling me at that hour? Of course, it must be Halûk Durukal. Or else the reception desk with some little message. I picked up the phone. A voice that sounded like Laurel and Hardy in Turkish: "How are you? This is Levi from Izmir!"

Obviously, Durukal was playing a joke from his room. Not batting an eyelid, I decided to play along: "And this is Levi from Istanbul..." A pause on the other end... Then again with an American accent: "Welcome. I'm in the hotel. Downstairs. At the reception desk! I wanted to see you."

No, I guess that wasn't Durukal... Was it one of those crooks the State Department officer had mentioned? I continued the conversation hesitantly, groping for words. The man was going to wait for me downstairs. We agreed to meet at 9:15. But I was still suspicious. Was Durukal playing a trick on me?

We'd been together several weeks, but so far, we hadn't played any jokes like that. I telephoned Durukal's room right then. He answered with a sleepy voice. "Did you call me a while ago?" I asked. He hadn't called me. Anyway, my phone call had woken him up. I explained: "The first one of those crooks we've been warned about is downstairs," I said. "He's expecting me in the lobby at 9:15. Now hurry up and get dressed, and let's go down together and get rid of the guy."

So that's what we did. When we went down, Levi from Izmir was waiting in front of a bench at the reception desk. He came over to us very cordially and shook hands with us. After we had told which of us was the Halûk from Izmir and which was the Halûk from Istanbul, he excitedly started telling us his story. In Turkish and again with the same accent: "I left Izmir thirty-five years ago and came over here," he said. "Can you believe this is the first time I've met someone from Izmir since then? You can't imagine how excited I got when I read in one of yesterday's newspapers that two Turkish journalists had come here, and one of them was from Izmir..."

Obviously, the guy was carrying out his plan to bamboozle us. Durukal and I exchanged meaningful glances, as if to say, "Are you on to him?..."

The guy insisted on ordering coffee. He took a seat next to us: "Oh!" continued the man who claimed to be Levi from Izmir, "Oh, how beautiful is Izmir...How I miss it, you know?... My beautiful Karataş... I used to go there in the evenings with friends and sit on the docks, and what fun we'd have!"

I agreed that Karataş was probably a nice place, but nothing to get that excited about. If he had praised charming places, like our beloved Göztepe, or places famous for their beauty, like the Kordon or Karşıyaka, I might have swallowed it. Washington had given us strict warnings: Never to let ourselves be taken in.

He had learned from an item in the newspaper that we were going to be in Hollywood for several weeks: "You'll certainly want to tour the studios and talk with the stars," he said. "I'll make all kinds of arrangements for you. I did tell you that I'm the Director of Public Relations at Columbia Pictures, didn't I?"

Durukal and I again exchanged glances. It was obvious that he'd had enough of that bullshit. "Look, Mr. Levi," he said. "We are here as guests of the U.S. State Department. We are obliged to stay within the agendas they have drawn up for us. They told us the only person we were to contact in Hollywood was the general secretary of the Filmmakers Union. Furthermore, they gave us a

letter of recommendation to him. This morning we'll take that letter to him, and we'll do whatever he tells us to."

Levi was a bit embarrassed, or at least that's how he seemed to me. "Okay," he said. "Isn't the general secretary you mentioned Mr. So-and-so? (And in fact that was the name written on the letter we had). He's a very good friend of mine. You eat breakfast, and we'll go there together. Anyway my car is in the hotel's parking lot."

While walking to the restaurant for breakfast, we two Haluks whispered to each other: "This guy is a very thorough crook... It looks like he even arranged for one of those huge cars to pull the wool over our eyes!"

As we saw later, there was no part of that car that wasn't gorgeous. Finally, we started out, wondering how we would get out of that business. But as soon as "Mr. So-and-so" saw Levi, he greeted him so cordially that right away we realized that our fears that he was a crook had been completely groundless. After reading the letter we had handed him, the man said: "I see that you are in the best possible hands. I couldn't think of a more influential or classy person to help you make the contacts you want in Hollywood. You are very lucky. Levi will easily open all doors here for you. And of course, don't hesitate to call on me for anything you need."

This time when Haluk and I looked at each other, it was with profound embarrassment for our suspiciousness. Thanking Mr. So-and-so, we said our goodbyes and he confidently entrusted us to Levi from Izmir, while we felt comfortable enough to abandon ourselves to his Hollywood dream for three weeks. We witnessed how widespread his influence was in Hollywood, not only at the higher management level at Columbia Pictures, but at Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Universal Pictures, and even at Walt Disney Productions and all the other studios, large and small, and as we wandered around film sets to follow the scenes from up close, we saw how many famous and unknown stars he knew.

The Rita Hayworths, the Robert Taylors, the Esther Williams, the James Stewarts, and that beauty who caused people to stop and stare: Elizabeth Taylor... All were included! He gave us as much of his time as he could, so that we could write a short or long report, take photos to accompany it, and, without exception, get autographed photos of all of them...

Thanks to Levi from Izmir's unbelievable power, I could now relax. Against Adnan Duvenci's instruction, I had become like a very strong castle! (...) Levi gave us all his time. We toured studio after studio. And as he accompanied us everywhere, we saw how important he was. He had good relations with the executives of the different film companies and with most of the stars. He's just one of those people whom everybody loves.²⁰⁷

The Story of Izmir Native Chelebi Cardoso, Manufacturer of Ladies' Lingerie

As Hikmet Feridun Es put it, after making "quite a bit of money," Chelebi Cardoso chose one of San Francisco's biggest hotels, the St. Francis, as his permanent residence. Here is his life story:

He is famous among the Jews in California, and indeed among all the Turks in America. If you are called Chelebi, you won't seem like anything special to a Turkish Jew who doesn't know what it means.²⁰⁸ Chelebi is actually his name. And this is an individual whose name is really fitting.

If you are talking with the Jews in California, in the midst of the conversation you always hear, "as Chelebi says," "Chelebi has a saying," "This is what Chelebi says...", and they cite examples of his sayings. For example, when discussing the Turks in America, they always quote Chelebi's "In America we still rate like the people from Kayseri."²⁰⁹ It's a famous saying. The meaning of this

207 Cansin, (2004), pp. 93-98.

208 *Çelebi* in Turkish originally meant "prince" and was later used to mean "gentleman."

209 In Turkey the people from Kayseri are stereotypically thought of as merc-

saying of Chelebi's is: "To the people here we are both foreigners and quick-witted."

The wealthier Jews in California constantly get together with Chelebi. In the living room we came across everyone from our famous Abravayo's sister, Mrs. Abravayo, to the Eskinazis.

The first time I visited him, the poor man was in bed recovering from a heart attack. The doctors had strictly forbidden him to get excited and talk. It was unbelievable. In spite of our insistence, in his condition Chelebi sang me a Turkish song:

Let us play instruments while the dancing girls perform.

Let's read the words to sweet *gazels* and sing them to the sound of the *saz*.

Let's fool ourselves, saying the world is paradise.

Let's laugh, let's enjoy, let's brighten up our party."

After forty-eight years, when he sang the song, he remembered its *makam*²¹⁰ with all its subtlety. "I wanted us to hear this like when we were back in Izmir with Hâfiz Mehmet Efendi," he said.

Hâfiz Mehmet Efendi, Sheikh of the Mevlevi dervish order, and this rich California Jew were the closest, dearest of friends.

Chelebi comes from a very well known family of Turkish Jews, the Cardosos. And Chelebi Cardoso has traveled to every corner of the world, including China.

"I've never seen anything to match Istanbul!" he says, speaking of the city he last saw forty- eight years ago.

The day he came to America, he lived through a great adventure; he was denied entry without having set foot on land.

He explained that to me like this:

"I've been interested in three things: Beautiful music, beautiful people, and beautiful cities... And this has been the reason for my

hants and businessmen.

210 Musical mode.

constant traveling. Whenever I heard of a beautiful city, I hurried there. And you may be sure that I've never seen any more beautiful than Istanbul. I took my big trip from Turkey when I got married. My wife and I had a little money. First we went to South America; from there we went to Egypt, and then to England. Finally, with what little money we had left, we decided to settle in America. One evening we came to New York on the ship *Louisiana*. We had nothing much in mind, but maybe with the money we had, we'd be able to build a new life in this New World. We didn't have a lot of money in our pockets, but we were rich in dreams. As the ship approached the pier, the wonderful news was swirling around in our heads. The doctors and health inspectors came on board. My brother was waiting on the dock.

The inspectors told my wife: 'You may enter America. Go to this side!' My turn came. They inspected me all over. They didn't find anything on my body. But you know that for those coming from the East to America the most important, most in-depth inspection was of course that of the eyes. When they inspected my eyes, what did they say but: 'You may not enter America. Go inside that room!...' Please don't do that, misters! Act like gentlemen!...

But did they listen? 'You will go back... Your eyes are diseased,' they said, and they didn't say another thing. My great hopes, marvelous dreams, and wild fantasies of getting rich in America were totally destroyed!... They took me off the ship. My wife wanted to go back with me. I had no right to make her my partner in poverty. I told her:

"No way! ... If we both go back at once, we won't be able to come back. You are fine!... Get out of here... go stay with my brother. I'll go back to England. I'll get my eyes treated, and I'll come back!" I didn't even believe those words myself. Hence it was very hard for me to get my wife to believe it. Finally she agreed. We bade each other farewell on the ship. She got off. The next day, our ship headed back toward the Old World, without my even having set foot on the soil of that country I had come to with the world's biggest dreams. My wife was weeping and waving to me on the

pier. Maybe my eyes would never get better, and I would never see her again.

(...)

I spent a long time getting my eyes treated in London. As soon as I thought that I was well enough to be able to be allowed to enter America, I set out again. Nevertheless, I was extremely worried. Because, although my eyes looked okay, they were not quite as good as I had hoped.

When our ship sailed back into New York, I was so excited I could hardly breathe. This time my brother had come with my wife. I knew they were even more excited than I was as they waited for me on the pier. Would I have to go back again?

At last my turn for the inspectors came. I went before the doctors. They told me to open my eyes wide. I practically fainted!... Finally, when they said, "Okay, you can enter America!" I went over to the other side at once (...).

After the many places I had passed through in Turkey and the different languages I had learned, I had no trouble in America. Back then, there was a lot of construction going on in America. Furthermore, they were building the railroads. New factories were being opened. When America was building railroads and industrializing, it needed a lot of workers.

The large-scale influx of immigrants from Europe had begun. Nobody knew the languages of those immigrants who were coming. However, companies were looking for European workers, who were willing to work for less. I went from one factory and railway construction site to another. This is more or less what I told them. I would bring them foreign workers. For every worker I brought them, they would give me one dollar. Unlike today, back then the need for workers was that great.

After reaching an agreement, I would go to the port every day and look for workers speaking every language; once I had them in a long line behind me, I would deliver them to the factories and the companies. When I handed over the workers at the gate, I got one dollar a piece. Often I found three hundred workers in a single day.

(...)

However, fate did not smile on this job. America was beginning to see bankruptcies and widespread unemployment... Contracts for our workers petered out. Nevertheless, I had made up my mind that one day I'd be rich. Right away, I opened a candy store. It did a pretty good business, but not as much as I had expected. Do you know what kind of business I finally went into? Selling pistachios!... But do you know what kind of impressive, eye-catching advertising technique I used so as to sell pistachios better in America! I painted them different colors. White, red, and green pistachios were wildly popular. I saw that they liked popcorn a lot here. And I made it into candy flavored with mint, cinnamon, or ginger. And I dyed it green, red, or reddish brown. I did a lot of business."

Those multicolored pistachios and popcorn really are sold all over America. And all the Turkish Jews acknowledge that it was Chelebi who came up with the idea.

Chelebi went on as follows:

"I finally chose the business that made me the most money. Making a women's lingerie factory... Clearly, women in bars are fond of lingerie, they love lingerie!... The fancy chemises I produced were in especially high demand. They became famous as "Chelebi's chemises." "Thank God, now I'm very well off financially!"

Once again, Chelebi interrupted his talk with a song. And when it was over, he said:

"At first I supposed I had earned a lot by working for years. But now that I'm starting to get old, I realize the things I lost!" Then he added:

"If the doctors would let me, I'd play a game of backgammon with you."

Now this is Chelebi's biggest concern. He has very beautiful backgammon sets, inlaid with mother of pearl inside and out. He plays this game with old sayings.

As I was leaving Hollywood, he admonished me very seriously.

Don't keep his greetings to myself: in Istanbul I should give his regards to his old friend Taranto, and if perchance he was still alive in Izmir, I should give his very warmest regards to Hâfiz Mehmet Efendi.²¹¹

The Story of Hasköy Native Nessim, The Simit Maker of Kansas City

"I worked for five years at a well-known bakery in Hasköy. It was a matzo bakery. Then I worked in pastry bakeries in Tepebaşı and Tarlabası. I had a friend in that bakery. Moise, may God rest his soul... One day he came to me: 'I'm going to America. They are looking for a master matzo baker there. Come with me, if you like!' he said. I didn't go. I was too young back then. Moise went. In his letters he wrote that things were very good there. I started getting excited. I had a little money saved up. I ran away. The year was 1912!... There were organizations in New York and other ports that helped Turkish Jews who came to America. The biggest one in New York was the famous "Hebrew Sheltering Aid and Immigrant Society." It was founded there to help Jews from all over the world. But there was one man in charge for each country. For example, was it a ship bringing Turkish Jews into the port? Right away the manager in charge of the Turkish Jews' desk would rush over to the port. Anyway, he was Turkish himself. He recognized those coming from Turkey right away and took them. The organization had its own dormitories and hotels. He took them there. They ate, drank, slept, and looked for work. There are Jews who had come to America earlier and gotten a lot of financial help from the head of this organization, found work with his assistance, and later became rich. Now that immigration is no longer occurring on such a large scale, the organization has gotten smaller.

When our ship came to New York, this society's Turkish representative came and welcomed all of us. After spending days in the hold where the water got in, and after traveling for weeks,

211 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 10, 1948.

we were exhausted. That night when I inspected the bed where I slept, checking it out with my eyes and my hands, I couldn't believe how soft it was. Was I supposed to sleep there?...

However, the next day I got some bad news. They asked everyone what their occupation was. And I said: "I've come here to make matzos!..." And the community representatives said: "Now matzo is made by machines here. There is no handmade matzo." Even so, now that I knew that, they could look for a different kind of job for me. Nevertheless, I made a decision. I'd start my own business and work by myself."

Nessim from Hasköy laughed:

"All of us who came from Turkey to America had a project. 'If I do this job in America, I'll get really rich,' they said. For example, they were all pretty sure they'd get very rich, one by making some Turkish foods, another by making those Turkish-style milk puddings, the famous Turkish pickles, and others by making different kinds of halvah or Turkish delight. And I was the same way. One by one, I tried the different things I'd learned in Turkey. I made and sold pickles. But as you know, in America pickles are mostly sweet. There are very few sour pickles, at least made from cucumbers. If we see one of our Istanbul pickle makers in New York or somewhere else, with his white shirt and white face and with jars in his hand, we speak Turkish right away. He's sure to be a Turkish Jew. And I did that job too. It didn't work out. The tiny little halvahs I made didn't work out. My wife made milk puddings. I couldn't sell them. We heard a story about a walnut halvah that made a lot of money. We tried that too. It didn't work out either.

I wondered what I would do. I found a job in a grocery store. And around that time my missus got pregnant. Every day she had a craving for something. One day she asked:

'Can't you get hold of some tea with simit, some kashkaval cheese...?' I said we could manage the tea and even the kashkaval cheese. But where would I get simit with sesame seeds?

Try telling that to my old lady who was craving just that. She wanted simit, and nothing else would do.

'Make some at home... Aren't you a baker?' she insisted. I told a friend. He said:

'The sesame seed part is easy. Get some Italian flour at the grocery store.' And I caught on. I made some simit, improvising. It actually wasn't bad... My wife was very pleased. We gave some to the landlady. That American woman was thrilled. I took some to the grocery store where I worked: "Bring more!..." they said. We started making a second batch of simit... The grocery store owner was a German Jew. But he was a smarter Jew than I was.

"Make some more of that, and let's put it in the store. We'll make a 50% profit on it," he said. I could make two hundred simits per day. They were all gone before noon. And at twenty cents apiece... Terrific money, but that smart man didn't have an oven... Finally my wife realized what a business this was. She borrowed some money from her uncle. We rented an old garage. Doing the work ourselves, we installed a sort of oven. Now we make those simits there. What's more, I'm not making them. My wife learned well. She makes simits better than I do."

Nessim from Hasköy laughs.

"Well, this is not just simit, it's a life-saving simit..."²¹²

If it hadn't come to our rescue, we'd have been very poor. Now, thank God, I'm doing fine. I don't need anyone..."

He opened the package in his hand. He brought me a simit with sesame seeds shaped like an "H." Laughing, he explained:

"We also invented this. They give a lot of importance to tea parties around here. And they order these for birthdays or other celebrations. We make sesame seed simits in the shape of the letters of the alphabet. We can sell the ones in those shapes for a much higher price. Because now they are for tea parties..."

212 Nessim is playing with the idea that the simit, which is ring-shaped and is thus slang in Turkish for a lifesaver, had in fact saved his life.

Congratulations to the guy from Hasköy who has not only updated Turkey's age-old simit, but has even managed to introduce it to American living rooms.²¹³

The Story of Ankara Native Sara Asher Crespi

My father came to America in May 1912. My mother had a sister here, and they sent tickets for my father, so he came. He lived with my aunt and went to work in a battery factory. He used to solder batteries. Eveready batteries. The following year, 1913, he wanted the family to come to America. He borrowed some money from a friend, and he sent the tickets for us. There were five of us.

When it was time for us to leave Turkey, my mother sold all our possessions. I don't remember packing. We didn't have much to pack. Maybe she had a carpet, a couple of pillows, but the rest she sold. Then we took the train to Istanbul. My mother had two sisters there, so they got a room for us to stay until it was time to leave, like a rooming house. We stayed all in one room. My mother didn't have much money. And it just happened that we had to stay longer than we had to.

For the trip, my aunts gave my mother a jar of jelly to give to another sister who lived in the Harlem. My mother took it, and then we boarded the boat. But it wasn't a regular big boat. It was a very small boat with chickens. Chickens all over. It was terrible. From there, we went to Patras, Greece to get the big boat and stayed almost two weeks. It was very bad, because the boat was delayed. We went to a hotel... The day the boat arrived, my mother didn't have enough money to pay the fellow from the hotel. She begged to borrow money from some other people in the hotel who were also from Ankara, they lived on the same street, but they wouldn't give her. My mother started to cry. Everybody left for the boat. My mother and we children were the only ones left in the hotel. So she went to the owner. She said, "I only have this money here, what shall I do? They don't want to lend me no money. I can't stay here with my children." The man was very

213 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 21, 1948.

good. He was a Greek guy. He said, "Go in peace with your children to your husband..."

We were in steerage, all the way down. During the day we used to go on deck. The ones that weren't seasick, they enjoyed themselves. I didn't eat nothing on the boat. The only thing that kept me alive was garlic and bread. I couldn't keep anything in my stomach. I was throwing up all the time. As soon as my mother went on the boat, she took sick. She went into the hospital on the boat, and there were four kids. Who's going to take care of all the children? I could hardly take care of myself. There was another family from Ankara. They took care of the little ones. I took care of one of my brothers. They didn't get sick. My mother was in the hospital about a week and a half.

During that trip, we had a very big storm. It was awful. The boat was rocking and big fishes, sharks, they used to jump almost on the boat. People were afraid. Water was coming in the boat. And, you know, the Jewish people, when they're in a position like this, they always carried the matzo, the *afikomen*²¹⁴ from Passover. They started to pray, and throw the matzo in the ocean to calm the sea. It calmed down very well, and, thank God, we arrived at Ellis Island three weeks later.

The next thing I remember we were all sitting on the floor, in one corner of the main room, waiting for my father to come. He came with our aunt, the one from the Harlem. We kissed, and he gave us a banana which we didn't have in Turkey, and it was good.

We took a boat to the elevated trolley. My father already had prepared an apartment, two rooms on the Lower East Side; a bedroom and a living room. One-fifty Ludlow Street. That number I remember. Very Jewish neighborhood. Never see one Italian. There were a few synagogues. There was a Sephardic synagogue on Allen Street. Very religious we were, same thing like in Turkey. No lights on Saturday, no shoes in the house, everything got to be just so.

214 A half-piece of matzo that is broken at the beginning of the Passover Seder and set aside to be eaten later as "dessert."

I went to school on Ludlow Street. There was a school near the corner of Delancey and Ludlow. My mother had to take care of the four kids. My father was still working in the batteries. On Sundays, he used to go to shine shoes because my father didn't make much money, probably five, six dollars a week. He had to pay rent and the children and clothes. Clothes we didn't make. They were ready-made clothes, which was something new for us. Sometimes, at night, my parents used to enjoy themselves with friends. They used to get together, and they used to go buy a pitcher of beer, and they used to have a good time.

After Ludlow, we moved to Orchard Street. I think we got three rooms on Orchard Street. It was a busy street. They used to have pushcarts. They used to sell everything. Vegetables, dried beans, figs, lentils, pickles, rice. They were in barrels. But my mother couldn't speak English. At the beginning, she didn't know anything, so she would point. Eventually, she and my father learned—mostly from the children, the streets, and they spoke pretty well. From there we moved to Harlem where my aunt was on 110th Street. There were a lot of Sephardic in different blocks, some Italians, some Irish, but we all got along. We found rooms on 110th, and I started to go to a school on 113th.

The thing I remember though, a month or two after we arrived, my father took us to Ellis Island to see the Statue of Liberty. The boat was only five cents. [Laughs]. We were impressed to see that beautiful statue. We went inside. We walked up. I remember staring out through her eyes to Manhattan in the distance.²¹⁵

Israel Edvar Ojalvo's Story

I will never forget when I came to this country, in Ellis Island. So, they used to examine us. Yo know, the doctor. He had to ques-

215 Peter Morton Coan, *Ellis Island Interviews: In Their Own Words*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 1997), pp. 386-389. Although in the book she is called Osla Esen, the immigrant's real name was Sara Asher Crespi. See National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument Oral History Archive, tape analysis E1-29.

tion you, whether you know how to talk, whether you're deaf, whether you know if there's anything wrong. So a doctor was asking me a question. Of course, knew that we came from Turkey, that he's speaking to me in Turkish. I don't know a word of Turkish. And he said once, twice, three times. And he's looking at my mother. In other words, this young boy is deaf mute. He cannot hear and he cannot speak. So finally the interpreter told my mother, "Ask him what is his name." So my mother tells me, "Israel, Israel." That's in Spanish. "Dícele el nombre". "Tell him what is your name". And I popped out, "Israel". So the doctor was so amused, he took me by the ear and pushed me right out. Like in other words he understood that I did not understand Turkish, what he's telling me, but I do understand Spanish, what my mother is telling me. And that was a very, then we were in Ellis Island for two or three days.

They had to examine you. They, you couldn't come to the ship and go right out. You had to, the doctor has to examine you, has to see that you are well, everybody. My, and then they would take our heads and put them in a certain place to fumigate us if we have any bugs or anything, but we were always clean in every way. And I'll never forget when the ship docked in Ellis Island. I suppose my mother was telling me, "This is your father, this is your father." Pointing to somebody downstairs. They were all to one side of the ship. You know, maybe they had seven, eight hundred passengers. The ship was going to one side. The captain, the sailors, they all said, "Spread, spread apart!" You know, to level the ship because the ship almost went to one side. If you have eight hundred people looking to the side where the people are, that they came to visit, you know, you can do, overturn the ship over. So they told us to spread, and we did. At the same time we each went, one by one, to the railing. And I remember she said, "This is your father". He threw a banana over, you know, from the bottom to the top, for us. He had some fruit for us, but he threw it over. He couldn't come to the ship. I says, "What's this?" You know, yellow. I never..., then they heard, from downstairs they heard, "Peel it, peel it! You eat it!" "What does it taste [like]?" They

said, “It takes like a melon”. They said it tastes like a melon or a pear. We didn’t, we never tasted any bananas. We didn’t know what apples or oranges [were]. Oranges was out, absolutely. The only fruit maybe we ever had, somebody had a back yard, we had some peaches or apricots, we’d take one--that’s it. In fact, a boy of eight years old weighed twenty-seven pounds. That’s all I weighed. You know, they used to weigh you. There was no such thing as food. Nothing. And this is, this is what it was. So we worked ourselves up. We came to America.²¹⁶

The Story of Moisés and Elie from Izmir

Moisés and his older brother, Élie, along with his parents and his many sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins, all lived near Smyrna [i.e., Izmir], Turkey, in the late years of the 19th century. They were part of a community of Sephardic Jews who lived there. Centuries ago, during the Spanish Inquisition, their ancestors had fled from Spain and journeyed around the Mediterranean basin in search of a home. Some Sephardim settled in Italy, some in Greece, some in Turkey, and so on. Once settled in Turkey, these Sephardim had remained there for a very long time, clustered together in a tight community where they continued to speak the Spanish which over the course of time became more archaic.

There must, however, have been present even in this tight community the same restiveness that permeated southern European countries at that time. Did all the young people truly believe that in America the streets were paved with gold? Who knows. What were they all in search of as they climbed aboard all the ships and sailed westward?

Moisés, too, must have had his dreams, his hopes; he’s long dead and we can’t ask, but perhaps he dreamed, even as a schoolboy in Turkey, of coming to the glorious new world and making his fortune. At any rate, one night he didn’t return home. His parents

216 National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument, Oral History Archive, transcription of tape number 308, pp. 16-18.

didn't worry excessively; they assumed he had spent the night with friends or relatives in Smyrna, where he attended school. However, the next day his father, Papa David, went into the city and asked about his son. No one had seen him at school, no one had seen him anywhere. Eventually, Papa David went down to the pier where the steamers from Europe used to come in.

"Have you seen my son?" he asked again and again.

"Oh, but yes," he heard at last. "I have seen Moisés. I saw him yesterday, boarding the steamer for Marseille."

And here is where one gets the flatness, the missing emotion. Matilde, my mother-in-law, does not speak of her father as one who is sad because his son has left home. She is more apt to dwell intently upon what her brother had been wearing. "A white linen suit, very handsome, well cut in the latest style. And a panama hat." Matilde loves clothes, fashions, fine materials; and here, as this beautiful image takes shape in my greedy imagination, I think that perhaps the tiny Matilde may be reaching far back in her memory to the vision of her handsome big brother wearing this magnificent costume.

But back to Papa David's apparent lack of grief over the departure of a son. The oldest, also a son, named Élie, had already run away to America. It is possible that Papa David had hoped—even encouraged—the sons to take off for a new World. Did he have great dreams for them? Had he himself even yearned to come along?

When next the family got news of the wandering son, it was in the form of a letter from Marseille. "I don't wish to remain here," Moisés wrote. "There are limited opportunities. Will you please send me sufficient money that I may go to New York to join my brother, Élie?"

This the father did, and perhaps both Papa and his wife, Joya, were happy to think that their sons would be together in the New World, and that some sort of family life would be ongoing there. I can't help but be sad though, even 80 years later, for Joya. Surely she, the mother, wept bitter tears.

The journey to America by ship was a hard one. The weather was incredibly bad, with high winds and severe storms. Moisés was robbed, losing his identity cards as well as his money. He was sick and couldn't eat. He grew thinner and thinner. We must remember that it used to take a long time to cross the ocean. And he was in steerage.

At long last the ship arrived in New York harbor, and all the immigrants were of course shunted off onto Ellis Island. The officials demanded then to know who would speak for Moisés in America. "Why, my brother Élie," said the poor fellow. And Élie was sent for.

But when Élie came, having been summoned away from the cigarette factory where he worked, he didn't recognize his brother. Who was this drab scarecrow of a fellow wearing a filthy suit that hung upon his scrawny frame? Remember his beautiful white linen suit? Long ago it had lost its crispness and by this time it was limp and grey.

"I refuse to acknowledge this person," Élie cried immediately, whereupon Moisés fell upon him.

"Oh, Élie, my brother, surely you know me," he begged.

Élie backed away, fastidiously brushing at his clothing, and shot off a bombardment of questions. "Who are you, anyway? Your parents, what are their names? Where did you come from, where did you go to school?" All these questions and more did Moisés answer perfectly, but only when Élie demanded to know, "Your sisters, tell me their names," and Moisés rattled them off, from Alegra, who was the oldest, on down to Matilde, who was the youngest, with no hesitation, only then did Élie come closer. And, getting past the grime on his brother's face, the quivering lips, the hollows in his cheeks, only then did he look deep into his despairing eyes, and only then did he shout joyously, "It is you, Moisés! Welcome! I am so happy you have come to join me in America."²¹⁷

217 Sally Benforado, *Bring Me a Story*, (California: Floricanto Press, 1986), pp.

One problem facing the Sephardic Jewish immigrants was that the Ashkenazim did not socialize with them. And the only reason for this was that they did not share a common culture and, most importantly, a common language. For these reasons the Jewish immigrants coming from Anatolia and Istanbul only established close relationships with the Jews from the Balkans, who, like themselves, were Sephardic and spoke Ladino. The Greek and Armenian immigrants harbored bitter feelings against the lands they had left due to the tragedies they had experienced there. Because of this, Greek-American and Armenian-American non-governmental organizations responded to the activities the Sephardic Jews organized between the years 1989-1992, praising and exalting the Ottoman State and the Turkish Republic on the occasion of the Quincentennial of the Expulsion from Spain, with activities critical of Turkey. In his capacity as the last surviving representative of the first generation of immigrants, Milas native Albert Amateau would view these activities with great interest before dying at the age of 101.

Musa (Moris) Schinasi's Life Story

Musa Eskenazi was born in Manisa in 1855. He was his family's fourth child. He had two brothers named Salamon and Jacques, and a sister named Sultana. He worked for a short while in the tobacco industry in Manisa and thus got some experience.²¹⁸ When he was fourteen, he had a serious illness and was hospitalized and treated in Manisa.²¹⁹ In 1870, when Musa Eskenazi was fifteen, he and his brother Salamon left Manisa; he was barefoot

6-8.

218 Avram Galante, *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie* (Istanbul: Isis Yayıncılık, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 55; Naim Gülerüz, "Moris Şinasi Çocuk Hastanesi," *Şalom*, January 20, 1988.

219 Interview with Necdet Otaman's daughters, Turan Necdet Özcan and Cankız Sanal, December 20, 1999.

and had only two *mecidiyes* in his pocket. He went to Alexandria on a cattle boat. In the port of Alexandria he got jobs loading and unloading cargo on ships. A rich Greek named Garafollo, who was in the tobacco and cigarette manufacturing business, took a liking to Musa and made him his protégé. He took him home, and since his own son had died, treated him as if he had really been his son. Garafollo taught Musa etiquette and how to behave in polite society. Musa worked for him until he was thirty years old, and he learned the tobacco and cigarette manufacturing business very well. One day Garafollo told Musa, "Now the time has come for you to go to America, for it is the land of opportunities." Thereupon, with \$25,000 Garafollo had loaned him, Musa immigrated to America.

When Musa Eskinazi immigrated to America, he took the name Moris Schinasi.²²⁰ In 1893 he patented a cigarette rolling machine, and participated in the Chicago World's Fair (World Columbian Exposition) with a pack of cigarettes he had rolled on the machine. Since in those days everyone rolled the tobacco and made his own cigarettes by hand, Moris's cigarette rolling machine was a revolutionary novelty. After the fair, Moris Schinasi returned to New York and brought his brother Salamon over to work with him. He repaid the money Garafollo had loaned him when he left Alexandria. In 1893 the Schinasi brothers started a little cigarette factory at the corner of Broadway and 120th Street, bringing their workers from Manisa. The name of the business was the Schinasi Brothers Company. At that factory the two brothers began importing tobacco from the Ottoman Empire and manufacturing cigarettes. Those cigarettes were sold by street

220 Bortnick, (1989), p. 52.

peddlers.²²¹ They imported the cigarette papers from Egypt.²²² The brand of cigarettes they manufactured was “Egyptian Prettiest,” and they sold for 35 cents a pack. That was expensive for those days.²²³ Initially, about two hundred Jews from Manisa worked in the factory.²²⁴ The employees worked six days a week. Those working conditions were denounced by *La America*, a newspaper published in America and addressed to the Sephardic Jews. The newspaper demanded that the Schinasi brothers’ employees work only five days a week.²²⁵ The Schinasi brothers insisted that they hired Sephardic Jews to help them, since they were their countrymen. However, some people accused the Schinasi brothers of exploiting their workers by paying them low wages.²²⁶ Jewish women who had emigrated from Greece also worked in the factory.²²⁷ And that was why another cigarette business grew out of the Schinasi Brothers Company. A Turkish Jew named Sam Benaderet had worked for Schinasi Brothers as a foreman.²²⁸ Later, in 1915, Sam Benaderet settled in San Francisco and started his own cigarette factory there. That factory continued to operate until March 1980.²²⁹

The brothers Musa and Salamon made a big success of their business in a very short time and became millionaires within five or six years. Sultan Abdülhamit II rewarded Moris Schinasi for

221 Altina Schinasi Miranda, *The Road I Have Traveled* (New Mexico: Apodaca Hill Press, 1995), p. 3; Naim Gülerüz, “Moris Şinasi Çocuk Hastanesi,” *Şalom*, January 20, 1988.

222 Papo, (1987), p. 29.

223 <http://www.wclynx.com/private/theshaws/packssultan'sdomain.html>.

224 Angel, (1982), p. 139.

225 *ibid.*, p. 141.

226 *ibid.*, p. 144.

227 Papo, (1987), p. 29.

228 Bortnick, (1989), p. 52.

229 <http://www.wclynx.com/burntofferings/packsbenaderet.html>.

importing tobacco by decorating him with a fourth-degree Mecidiye medal in the month of Rebi-ül-evvel in the year of the Hegira 1324 (April-May 1906). Moris Schinasi later became a member of the Committee of Union and Progress. After living in America as a bachelor for seven years, Moris Schinasi decided to get married. He was then fifty years old, and the time for sowing his wild oats was past. When he went to Salonica, he asked his friend Jozef Ben Rubi to help him find him a suitable wife. Jozef Ben Rubi showed him a photo of his sixteen-year-old granddaughter, who was still going to school, and who lived in his home. Thereupon Moris asked his friend, “She’s a very pretty girl, will she want to marry me?” Laughing, Jozef Ben Rubi replied, “Musa, you are an old man. Laurette is just a little girl.” But Moris Schinasi insisted, “Will you ask her when she comes home from school?”

When Laurette Ben Rubi came home from school, Moris Schinasi immediately fell in love with her. Since Moris Schinasi was a very rich and very important person, Laurette said “yes” to his proposal. Moris and Laurette got married in Salonica in 1903 and went to New York together. Moris built a big mansion of imported Italian marble for his wife at 351 Riverside Drive in New York. It was there on August 4, 1907 that their first daughter, Altina, was born, and later on, two others—Victoria and Juliette—came into the world. Many of the mansion’s 35 rooms were furnished in the Turkish style, and the bathroom was equipped with basins like those in a Turkish bath.²³⁰ A Jew from Anatolia named Jacko who had immigrated to America was the house’s caretaker and watchman.²³¹ Although there was no piano in the house where Moris Schinasi lived in America, he used to listen to records of Turkish music on the gramophone.²³² When Moris’s brother Salamon

230 Miranda, (1995), p. 3; Naim Gülerüz, “Moris Şinasi Çocuk Hastanesi,” *Şalom*, January 20, 1988.

231 Miranda, *ibid.*, p. 12.

232 *ibid.*, p. 28.

Schinasi bought a mansion in the same area, the two brothers continued to live close to each other.²³³ Since the Schinasi brothers had excellent relations with the Ottoman government and imported their tobacco from the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan sent Salamon Schinasi's son Leon a thoroughbred Arabian stallion by means of the then-ambassador to Washington, Mehmet Ali Bey.²³⁴

Moris Schinasi helped Turks who had immigrated to America and fallen on hard times. One example of this was a chauffeur from Istanbul who had immigrated to America at the turn of the century and was going through hard times, since he couldn't find a job. After enduring some difficult months in New York, that chauffeur, whose name was Hamdi, went to work on Musa Schinasi's staff, and this is what he had to say:

That boring, depressing, and oppressive lifestyle went on until I went to work as the tobacco merchant Eskenazi Efendi's chauffeur.

And you are familiar with that Eskenazi Efendi. He was our rich fellow countryman who left money when he died to make a hospital in Manisa. Eskenazi Efendi was a very good, very charitable man. I worked for him for six months.

Six months later, we heard that freedom had been proclaimed in Turkey. The Turks in New York held a big meeting organized by our consul, Münir Bey. We were all longing for our homeland. I decided to return to Istanbul. I told Eskenazi Efendi what I had decided. He gave me the money for the ticket and a substantial tip besides.²³⁵

The Schinasi brothers were also active in the organizations founded by Sephardic Jews. They joined the Union and Peace Society, founded in 1899, most of whose members were Jewish

233 "The Rice Mansion sold for \$600,000," *The New York Times*, December 18, 1907.

234 "Stallion from the Sultan," *The New York Times*, July 7, 1908.

235 Cevat Fehmi, "Harikulade bir macera," *Cumhuriyet*, August 12, 1932.

emigres from Anatolia.²³⁶ In 1914 Moris Schinasi was elected honorary president of the Federation of Oriental Jews.²³⁷

In 1916 the Tobacco Products Company bought the Schinasi Brothers Company for three-and-a-half million dollars in cash. That included \$1,300,000 worth of Turkish tobacco in the Schinasi Brothers' warehouses in America and Europe. The factory was capable of producing two hundred fifty million cigarettes per year.²³⁸ After the business was sold, Salamon Schinasi's son Leon was made president of the firm.²³⁹

The life story of millionaire Moris Schinasi has been told by different people at different times in different ways. The Turkish novelist Peyami Safa writes of Musa Schinasi as follows:

Moise Eskenazi, who left four hundred thousand liras on his death to build a hospital in Manisa, was a penniless man in his youth. He tried to find jobs working in the rabbinate of Izmir and Manisa, but they didn't hire him, since he couldn't read and write. Then he went from Izmir to Egypt, where he opened a tiny tobacco shop with very little capital; and from Egypt he went to America, and at last...he became a millionaire.

But when his rich friends in America asked him why he always had his secretaries read his letters and telegrams, he replied, "I can't read and write!" and told them the story of his life.

"How strange!" they would say, "you became a millionaire without knowing how to read and write. What might you have done if you'd had an education!"

"What might I have done? Very simple: I'd have been a clerk in the rabbinate's office!"²⁴⁰

236 Angel, (1982), p. 27.

237 *ibid.*, p. 73.

238 "Schinasi Bros. sell for \$3,500,000 cash," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1916.

239 "Schinasi Bros. new head," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1916.

240 Peyami Safa, "Garip bir ders," *Cumhuriyet*, April 26, 1933.

Another source gives this version of the story:

Once a group from Manisa who were in America to raise money to build a hospital went to their wealthy countryman Moris Schinasi. They spoke with him and asked for his help in building a children's hospital. Moris Schinasi held out a check to them, saying, "Write however much you want." They said, "Sir, you write the check." And he replied, "I don't know how to read and write!" They said, "And if you'd known how to read and write, who knows what you would have become!" And he said, "If I could read and write, I'd have become a security guard for a church. In fact I went and applied for that job, but they said they didn't give me the job, 'since you don't know how to read and write.' And I jumped on a boat and came to America and became a rich big shot, as you can see," he said.²⁴¹

And, finally, a Jewish source, tells a different version:

Years ago, there was a big congregation in Manisa. Naturally, a congregation like that had its own private cemetery. There was a watchman in the Manisa Jewish cemetery named Moris Schinasi.

One day a fairly wealthy man who was searching for a grave with a piece of paper in his hand consulted Moris the watchman. However, our Moris didn't know how to read and write. Regrettably, he couldn't help.

"How can someone who can't read and write be a watchman in a cemetery?" that wealthy man complained to the authorities, and that's how Moris lost his job.

Poor Moris bummed around in the streets of Manisa. What destitute Moris experienced then was unbearable. Moris was about to give up hope when someone sitting beside him in a café said, "Look, Moris, I've heard in the last few days that there are quite a few freighters leaving Izmir for America."

That was all Moris needed to hear. The next day he was inside a

241 Ismail Yediler, "Moris Şinasi," *Zaman*, October 12, 1997. The word "church" in the text should be corrected to "synagogue."

freighter with a bag full of tobacco clinging to his back like the smell of Manisa.

Why did Moris take that bag of tobacco with him? I suppose he didn't know what else to do. Doubtless, he had nothing else he could sell or take with him.

Anyhow, when Moris saw people walking in the avenues rolling tobacco, he realized he had been right to bring his bag. Now it was he who was rolling tobacco in the avenues of New York.

Thereupon he found a way to send word to Manisa for them to send him tobacco. As time went by, Moris's tobaccos became popular with everyone.

And Moris would continue to be America's tobacco king for a long time after that. But he owed a debt of gratitude for that. He would build a hospital for Manisa.²⁴²

Moris Schinasi died in September 1929. His funeral took place on October 6, 1929. His fortune was estimated to be ten million dollars at the time of his death. Musa Schinasi, who had been saved by a hospital when he was fourteen, donated a million dollars of his fortune to Manisa for the founding of a hospital that would bear his name. And he bequeathed three hundred thousand dollars each to Women's Hospital, Lying-in Hospital, St Luke's, Sydenham, Presbyterian, and Children's Hospital.²⁴³

Laurette Eskinazi's Visit to Turkey

In keeping with Moris Schinasi's dying request, Laurette Eskinazi began preparing to travel to Manisa to visit her husband's birthplace; she was going to Turkey to build the hospital bearing her husband's name. But Laurette Eskinazi, who was born in Salonica, had acquired American citizenship when Moris, who was also an American citizen, married her. For that reason Lau-

242 Hayim Kampeas, "Konuklar ve Moris Şinasi Hastanesi," *Tiryaki* 5 (December 1994), p. 21.

243 "Charities get bulk of Schinasi estate," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1929.

rette Schinasi was uncertain whether, as a former Turkish citizen, she would run into problems upon entering and leaving Turkey. Hence she contacted the U.S. State Department and Turkey's ambassador in Washington, Ahmet Muhtar Bey, for clarification of the matter. As a result of those contacts, she was promised that she would encounter no such difficulties, and Laurette Eskenazi decided to make the trip to Manisa.²⁴⁴ Laurette Eskinazi came to Istanbul to build her husband's hospital on April 27, 1930 with Huntington Turner, the administrator assigned to his estate by the Chemical Bank and Trust Company.²⁴⁵ But before they came, Dr. Shepherd, the medical director of the Admiral Bristol Hospital in Istanbul, who had found out about the donation, contacted the Chemical Bank and Trust Company and asked them to build the hospital in Istanbul rather than Manisa. And the U.S. State Department expressed its preference that the hospital be built in Istanbul instead of Manisa. But the bank countered that it would be more appropriate to act in accord with the provisions of Morris Schinasi's will.²⁴⁶ Two days after arriving in Istanbul, Laurette Eskinazi and the bank's administrator, Huntington Turner, went to Ankara, where they called upon Dr. Refik Saydam, Minister of Health and Welfare. Orhan Şemsüddin Bey, brother of the ambassador to Washington, Ahmet Muhtar Bey, was also present at the meeting. Later, with the assistance of the U.S. Embassy, the guests also visited the Foreign Minister, Tevfik Rüştü [Aras]. On the day after their visit, Dr. Saydam invited the guests to dine at his home. Other officials from the ministry were present at the dinner as well. During the dinner, the minister appeared very favorable to the idea of founding the hospital in Manisa. He promised that

244 NARA, Record Group 59, Dept. of State, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial (in Box 1734).

245 NARA, Record Group 59, Dept. of State, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial, letter dated May 6, 1930.

246 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial, letter dated April 4, 1930.

the government would donate the land for the hospital, and that both the land and buildings would be tax exempt.²⁴⁷ Later, Laurette Eskenazi went to Izmir on the ship *Gülcehal*, and traveled from there to Manisa by highway. When Laurette Eskenazi arrived in Manisa on May 11, 1930, she was welcomed by Fuat Bey, general superintendent of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, who had come from Ankara especially for her, by Dr. Naci Bey of the same ministry, by the ruling Republican Peoples Party official Zühdi Bey, by Manisa Mayor Rıza Bey, and by members of the Red Crescent, the Child Protection Association, and the Women's Union.²⁴⁸ The Manisa City Council thanked Madame Eskenazi and gave a banquet in her honor; later, Laurette Eskenazi visited the home where her husband was born and grew up. And in the afternoon she went with Fuat Bey and some other people to see two lots that had been set aside for the building of the hospital. One of those lots was in the vicinity of the Old Hospital in the area known as the "Great Cemetery," while the other was situated across from the police station. Madame Eskenazi preferred the lot in the Great Cemetery area. But she felt that the decision about the more suitable of the two lots should be left to the Ministry of Health and Welfare.²⁴⁹ Later, Madame Eskenazi returned to Izmir, from whence she went back to Istanbul on the ship *Gülcehal*.²⁵⁰ Upon her return, she made the following comments in a statement to a reporter for the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*:

When I went to Ankara, I met with an official of the Red Crescent center. And from there, I went to Manisa. I am grateful for the kind reception I was given. In Manisa I saw the lots set aside for the construction of the hospital. One of them was preferable to the other. Now the plans will be drawn up and decisions will be

247 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial, letter dated May 6, 1930.

248 "La construction d'un nouvel hospital à Manisa," *Le Milliet*, May 12, 1930.

249 "Manisa hastanesinin inşasına başlanıyor," *Milliyet*, May 13, 1930.

250 "Mme Eskenazi, femme du donateur originaire de Manissa, est rentrée à Stamboul," *Le Milliet*, May 19, 1930.

made about how many floors it will have, and how many beds it will hold. I hope to remain here while that is being done, and I'll go back to Ankara and Manisa whenever necessary. It's still not clear when I will go to America.²⁵¹

It was decided that two hundred thousand dollars of the million designated in the will would be spent on the hospital and its equipment, while the balance of \$800,000 would be invested in securities, and the income it produced would be sent to the hospital every year.²⁵² After the Chemical Bank representative Huntington Turner returned to Istanbul with Madame Eskenazi, he went back to Ankara to meet with Dr. Refik Saydam and Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, departing from Ankara on May 27, 1930. Immediately after he left, Dr. Saydam announced that the Chemical Bank and Trust Company had agreed in writing to pay two hundred thousand dollars in cash for construction of a forty-bed hospital. He said that he had proposed to Turner that, after \$800,000 of the bequest had been invested in stocks, the approximately \$32,000 in income that it would produce annually to endow the hospital be deposited in the Turkish Republic Agricultural Bank. Regarding the matter of the customs duties that would be charged, Dr. Saydam had looked into obtaining exemptions, and announced that such duties would not be levied except on the x-ray machines and some medicines, such as quinine and neosalvarsan. He wrote that in order to obtain this exemption, the Council of Ministers had needed to have a law passed by the Grand National Assembly, and that had required lengthy formalities. The staff and budget that Saydam envisaged for the forty-bed hospital were as follows:²⁵³

251 "Memleketimize bir milyon dolar getiren kadın," *Cumhuriyet*, May 20, 1930.

252 "Manisa hastanesinin inşasına başlanıyor," *Milliyet*, May 13, 1930.

253 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/20, document dated June 3, 1930.

<i>Staff members</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>Total annual salary</i>
Specialized physicians	2	350 liras	8,400 liras
Supplementary pay for medical director	1	100	1,200
Assistants for surgery and medical Departments	2	100	2,400
Nurse with certificate in radiology	1	200	2,400
Ear, eye, nose, and throat doctor	2	100	2,400
Head nurse	1	125	1,500
Nurses	2	100	2,400
Orderlies (female)	6	40	2,880
Administrator (American)	1	300	3,600
Servants (including doorman)	10	40	4,800
Engineer	1	150	1,800
Cook	1	60	720
Clerk	1	80	960
Pharmacist	1	100	1,200
Total	32		36,660

Construction of the hospital

After Madame Eskinazi's return to America, Dr Refik Saydam emphasized that it would be very difficult for him to acquire all the necessary equipment for the new hospital without an exemption from customs duties, and the Grand National Assembly passed the law. On December 28, 1931, Turkey's Council of Ministers passed Law Number 1907, making it possible to import the materials to be used in the hospital's construction without paying customs duties. The exact text of the law was as follows:²⁵⁴

Article 1 – The construction materials, hygienic and scientific equipment, and furnishings, together with instruments, machinery and medicines brought from abroad for building and equipping the international hospital to be built in Manisa under the name of the late Moris Schinasi, as provided in his bequest, will receive a one-time exemption from official customs duties.

254 "Law concerning the exemption from official customs duties of the equipment to be imported from abroad for construction of a building in Manisa under the name of The Moris Schinasi International Hospital," law number 1907, *Resmi Gazete*, 31 Kanunievvel (December 31), 1931, p. 1103.

Article 2 – The land for the hospital will be purchased by the Government and donated free of charge.

Article 3 – In accord with the laws and statutes of the Turkish Republic, the Hospital will provide its services free of charge, and, provided there is enough space, up to one-fifth of its beds may be used for paying patients.

As outlined in Article 1 of the law, the hospital for which arrangements were being made by Dr. Refik Saydam would be called the Moris Schinasi International Hospital. According to Article 3, when the hospital opened it would offer surgical, maternity, and general services. As required, it would accept patients suffering from diseases of the eyes, ears, nose and throat. According to Article 4, the hospital would include

- a) a polyclinic, treating all patients;
- b) a radiology laboratory;
- c) a laboratory for performing chemical and bacteriological analyses;
- d) a pharmacy where patients' prescriptions could be filled.

According to Article 5, patients would be treated free of charge. If the income produced by investing Moris Schinasi's \$800,000 bequest in the stock market should prove insufficient, an arrangement would be made between the Chemical Bank, which administered the bequest, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare to supply the needed funds. The number of paying patients was not to exceed a total of one-fifth of the beds.

As outlined in Article 8, the originally proposed list of personnel was altered as follows:²⁵⁵

255 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/24, letter dated January 15, 1932.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Monthly salary</i>	<i>Total monthly Payroll</i>
Medical director (surgeon or internist)	1	350.	350.
Specialist (internist or surgeon)	1	300.	300.
Ear-nose-throat specialist (for three consultations per week)	1	70.	70.
Eye specialist (for three consultations per week)	1	70.	70.
Radiologist (for three consultations per week)	1	80.	80.
Physicians' assistants	2	70. each	140.
American head nurse	1	350.	350.
American nurse	1	300.	300.
Turkish nurses (one is midwife)	4	65. each	260.
Electrician-mechanic	1	80.	80.
Orderlies (female)	4	30. each	120.
Cook	1	50.	50.
Pharmacist	1	100.	100.
Clerk	1	80.	80.
Servants (gardener, porter, etc.)	10	30.	300.
Total	31		(Annual) 28,560.

In 1932 the average value of the dollar was approximately 2.12 Turkish liras.²⁵⁶ Consequently, the annual total of 28,560 liras for personnel salaries came to \$13,500; hence the income from the \$800,000 endowment could easily cover both the cost of personnel and the hospital's other expenses. It was envisaged that the hospital's expenses would be audited by a three-person committee, consisting of the Governor of Manisa, the Administrator of the Provincial Department of Health, and an American citizen residing in Turkey chosen by the Chemical Bank and Trust Company.²⁵⁷

After the law was passed, the Chemical Bank administrator Huntington Turner and the architect W. Stuart Thompson returned to Ankara and visited Dr. Saydam to arrange for the construction of the hospital. Later, they would travel from Istan-

256 Turkish Republic Istanbul Municipal Government Office of Statistics and Publications, *İstanbul Şehri İstatistik Yıllığı*, vol. 4, 1934-1935 (Istanbul: İstanbul Belediye Matbaası, n.d.), p. 237.

257 NARA, 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/24, document dated January 15, 1932.

bul to Manisa.²⁵⁸ The President of the Bar of the Aegean District, attorney İsmail Hakkı Gökmen, handled the Foundation's legal affairs. And when Madame Eskinazi visited Manisa, she also visited Gökmen's home. An engineer named Galip—whose nickname was “Guffawing Galip Bey” on account of his loud laughter—was the engineer for the construction project. During the construction, prefabricated houses were assigned to the engineers on the building site. When the construction was completed, Gökmen asked to purchase one of those houses and had it transported to his vineyard.²⁵⁹ Work on the hospital began on June 1, 1932.²⁶⁰ The hospital's cornerstone bearing the date August 1, 1932 was laid in a ceremony at which the Governor of Manisa was present.²⁶¹ During the ceremony sheep were sacrificed, and Atatürk was thanked. Delays and increased costs in importing the equipment due to the bureaucracy at the Izmir customs depot were discussed.²⁶²

On May 24, 1933, while the Moris Schinasi Hospital was under construction, the Ministry of Health and Welfare adopted a “Law Pertaining to Hospitals.”²⁶³ A legal basis was thus provided for establishing the Moris Schinasi Hospital. Later, on July 31, 1933, a ten-article set of bylaws was signed by Huntington Turner and the ministry, and, on August 15, 1933, a document granting the hospital's first medical director, Memduh Necdet Otaman, authorization to administer the hospital on behalf of the Chemical Bank was issued at the First Notary's office in Manisa.²⁶⁴

258 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/25, letter dated June 1, 1932

259 Interview with İsmail Hakkı Gökmen's son Oğuz Gökmen, December 8, 1999.

260 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/26, letter dated June 1, 1932.

261 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/27, letter dated August 1, 1932.

262 NARA, document dated August 1, 1932 and numbered 867-9222/372 “News of Izmir.”

263 Number 185 “Hususi Hastaneler Kanunu,” *Düstur*, 3. Organization, Vol. 14, pp. 983-992.

264 The document is in possession of Memduh Necdet Otaman's daughters,

The hospital opened in a ceremony held on August 15, 1933. Those present at the ceremony included Hüsamettin Şerif [Kural] Bey, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Huntington Turner, representing the Chemical Bank, Izmir Health Department Director and subsequent Governor of Manisa Dr. Lütfi Kırdar, and various notables of the time. During the ceremony Moris Schinasi's ashes were placed in the wall of the hospital behind a plaque bearing the inscription "A gift from Moris Schinasi (1855-1928) to the city of his birth." It was decided that the hospital would officially accept its first patient on October 1, 1933. There were forty beds in the Moris Schinasi Hospital, which was furnished with the most up-to-date medical equipment.²⁶⁵ According to a report prepared by the U.S. Embassy in 1941, the hospital building and equipment were worth \$302,571. There were thirty beds and a polyclinic in the hospital. Every year 500 patients were treated in the hospital and 7000 in the walk-in polyclinic.²⁶⁶

Moris (Musa) Schinasi's Impact on Turkish Society

Moris Schinasi was viewed as an "true Turk" on account of the hospital he bequeathed. During the Single Party Period (1923-1946), when the Turkish Jews were being harshly criticized for not speaking Turkish and not being sufficiently "Turkified," Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, a famous publicist, recalled Moris Schinasi's patriotic contribution to Turkey with these lines: "Last Thursday in their synagogues the Jews of this land swore to speak Turkish, like that man of letters Avram Galanti, the poet İsak Ferera, that son of his homeland [Musa] Eskenazi of Manisa, and [Munis]

Turan Necdet Özcan and Cankız Şanal.

265 NARA, File 367.1162: Schinasi Memorial/28, letter dated August 31, 1932; "Manisa Hastanesi," *Tıp Dünyası* 6, 4 (August 15, 1933), p. 2170.

266 NARA, RG 59, E-325 Box 1549, Consular Trade Reports-194, June 12, 1941, document no. 811503, Near East/42.

Tekinalp, who grew up to be a Turkist.”²⁶⁷

In a conversation with the journalist Sinan Korle, Jews who had immigrated to Israel in 1948-49 proudly mentioned Moris Schinasi:

Yesterday, when people of ignorant and unconcerned backgrounds mingled with those of culture at large gatherings, in spite of everything, the mature, enlightened people—whether they were Jewish or not—were always spoken of with appreciation.

A lovely example of this was Eskinazi of Manisa, who, after making a fortune and thriving in a distant land of which he became a citizen, did not forget his homeland, and in return for all the benefits he had received, donated a hospital to his countrymen.

That Eskinazi came out of a situation where all the races had co-existed on these lands for centuries, but unfortunately, only one of those races has retained the benefits of citizenship.²⁶⁸

Manisa native Nihal Yeğınobalı refers to Moris Schinasi and the hospital in his memoirs thus:

In my view, another area that was rather mysterious was the private Eskinazi Hospital, just a little outside of town. One day Memnune Hanım took our class there. While telling us the story of his life, she mentioned that his ashes were in a bag hanging from the ceiling in a corner of a broad veranda in front of the hospital. Eskinazi was a Jew from Manisa, who later went to America and became a doctor, and when he died, he had provided in his will for the founding of a hospital in his birthplace, stating that his body should be cremated and his ashes taken to that hospital. Our teacher meant to teach us a lot of things by giving us this tour of the hospital, such as thinking of others and the debt we owe our homeland. But what affected me the most

267 Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, “Yahudinin Türklüğü!”, *Akbaba*, October 1, 1940, p. 351, col. 2. İsak Ferera was a Turkish Jewish poet. Avram Galanti (1873-1961) was a Turkish Jewish historian, Munis Tekinalp (1883-1961) or Moise Cohen, was a Turkish Jewish intellectual.

268 Sinan Korle, “Bugünkü İsrail,” *Vatan*, June 16, 1949.

was that astonishing bag of ashes, alien to our traditions. Later on, I thought long and hard about that bag. Obviously, Eskinazi loved that town as much as I did...and I decided that when I died, I too wanted to be cremated rather than buried.²⁶⁹

And the medical director of the hospital (1988-2000), Dr. Sevim Benzergil, reminds us that the memory and attachment to the city of his birth that Moris Schinasi took with him when he left Manisa at the age of 15, manifested by the duty he felt to the hospital, must not be forgotten by his countrymen today:

We owe it to little Moris's memory to repair the damage done to [the Hospital's] original construction and to restore it as needed in conditions appropriate to our time and place, so that it may provide nonsectarian service to our children and reach new generations in conditions and an environment of high quality.²⁷⁰

On January 1, 2010 the Moris Şinasi International Hospital for Children and the Manisa Doğum ve Çocuk Bakımevi Hastahanesi (Manisa Birth and Child Care Hospital) were merged with the Merkez Efendi State Hospital and the Moris Şinasi Hospital's name was changed to the unwieldy "Manisa Merkezefendi Devlet Hastahanesi Moris Şinasi Çocuk Kliniği ve Doğum Kliniği" (Manisa Merkezefendi State Hospital Moris Şinasi Child Clinic and Birth Clinic).

269 Nihal Yeğınobalı, *Cumhuriyet Çocuđu* (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 1999), p. 57.

270 Dr. Sevim Benzergil, *Biography (documents), Particulars*, Manisa [1997]. Benzergil's private archive.

THE ARMENIAN IMMIGRATION

1. Reasons for Immigration and Number of Immigrants

The Armenians were the most numerous group of non-Muslims to immigrate from the Ottoman State to America. Known as “Kağtagan” in Armenian, these immigrants also held an important place among the other ethnic groups that came to America at the same time.²⁷¹ These lines on a memorial plaque on Ellis Island, which is now a museum, attest to that importance:

Haigazoon Semerdjian, an Armenian, lived with his family in Konya, Turkey, where he owned a store that carried fabrics imported from Europe and England. The Semerdjians’ lives changed radically in 1915, when a new wave of violence broke out against the Armenians in Turkey. Haigazoon opened his home to refugees fleeing persecution in the countryside, and distributed American relief funds to those in need. Eventually, he, his wife Verghin, and their four children were also forced to flee. They found safety in Constantinople (today’s Istanbul), but some of their relatives, including Verghin’s parents and younger brother, could not escape; they perished along with over a million other Armenians.

In 1921, having waited over a year for other family members, the Semerdjians sailed for New York, stopped at Ellis Island for inspection, and then settled in Philadelphia. Only Verghin’s sister and her family accompanied them to the United States. Other relatives went to Australia, France, eastern Europe, and South America.

What particularly distinguished the Armenian immigrants from other Ottoman immigrants was the fact that, due to the

271 Karin Karakaşlı, “Yeni Dünya’nın Ermenileri,” *Agos*, September 29, 2000.

massacres they had experienced during the 1915 Deportations, the thought of returning never crossed their minds. However hard living conditions in America may have been, the Armenian immigrants had come to America with no intention of going back. This immigration began accelerating during the second half of the nineteenth century for four different reasons: (a) when the missionary activities among Muslim Turks conducted by Protestant missionaries belonging to the so-called American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM for short) had not been successful, they had directed their efforts toward the Armenians; (b) as a result of the late 19th century Ottoman-Armenian clashes and the 1915 deportation; (c) economic reasons; (d) evasion of military conscription.

The first and most important of these reasons was that American Protestant missionaries had come to Anatolia in the 1820s and eventually opened schools teaching English in every city and district that was densely populated by Armenians.²⁷² Armenian young people educated in those schools were encouraged to go to America for theological training. After completing their education, some of those young people would return to Turkey to work as Protestant clergymen and continue the missionary work. In addition to this, the first president of Robert College, American missionary Cyrus Hamlin, also encouraged many of the college's young students to pursue higher education in America. Some of the young Armenians who went to America for theological training did not return, instead settling there and starting businesses.²⁷³ Another group consisted of small shopkeepers, craftsmen, and villagers immigrating to America in search of better job oppor-

272 Nedim İpek, "Anadolu'da Amerika'ya Ermeni Göçü," *OTAM (Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi)* 6 (Ankara, 1995), pp. 257-280, 259-261.

273 Robert Mirak, *Torn between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 37-39.

tunities. These people came from the areas where the missionary activity had been most intense.²⁷⁴ The numbers of Armenians immigrating to the US between the years 1843-1915 were as follows:

1834-1890	1,500
1891-1898	12,500
<u>1899-1914</u>	<u>51,950</u>
Total	65,950

The American officials classified the Armenians who came in the period 1834-1890 under the heading “Turkey in Europe.” This was a very broad category and included Syrians, Bulgarians, Greeks from Greece, Greeks from Turkey, Jews, and Armenians. As immigration from Turkey increased, in 1869 the American officials would add the classifications “Turkey in Asia” and “Armenia” to “Turkey in Europe.”²⁷⁵

Those who came up to 1890 were the pioneer immigrants. The upper crust of the Ottoman Armenian immigrants consisted of students, businessmen, and professionals. In the 1880s some villagers and craftsmen from poor rural areas also came. Beginning in the 1870s, many of these people came from Harput, due to the presence of particularly intense missionary activity in the area. The first person to immigrate from Harput was a certain “Garo”, who came to Worcester in 1867 with Rev. George Knapp. At first, Garo worked for low wages in Rev. Knapp’s home, but later he got a better paying job in a wire factory. The letters warmly praising America that Garo sent to his relatives and friends who had stayed behind in Harput caused immigration from Harput to America to increase. And people from Erzurum, Sivas, and Bitlis too would soon entrust their fate to immigration.²⁷⁶ The 3,000 people from Harput who immigrated to Boston were a record number, however. All the needs of the immigrants from

274 İpek, (1995), 259-261.

275 Mirak, 1983, pp. 288-289.

276 *ibid.*, p. 41.

Harput and the surrounding area were met by graduates of the Harput Euphrates College, and by the Union of Harput Protestant Churches and the Harput American colony. The American Consulate in Harput was also influential in those tasks.

A significant portion of the young Armenian males from Harput immigrated to avoid paying the fee in lieu of military service, and later they brought their families over to join them. Every year they sent a hundred young Armenian girls from Harput to marry the young Armenian bachelors who had come to America.²⁷⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the most eager group to immigrate were the Armenians of Gaziantep and Merzifon. Another center that experienced intense immigration was Kiğı (also spelled Keghi) in the province of Bingöl. Around 2,000 Armenians from Kiğı—mostly craftsmen and farmers—immigrated to America, settling in New York, Illinois, Michigan, and Rhode Island.²⁷⁸

Between the years 1890 and 1899, a second wave of immigration would result from the massacres carried out by the Hamidian Regiments (1894-95), whom Abdülhamid II employed to suppress Armenian revolutionary activity, and still a third wave would result from the continuation of those massacres between the years 1900 and 1914. In such a climate of massacre, and the fear, terror, and insecurity they provoked, Armenian businessmen increasingly felt unsafe traveling to Anatolia, and this, along with high taxes and the worry that new massacres could occur led ever greater numbers of Armenians, including families with property, to abandon the lands of their birth. Between 1899 and 1914 one-fourth of the Armenians immigrating to America had their tickets sent to them by relatives already there. In 1900, this pro-

277 *ibid.*, p. 49.

278 Mark B. Arslan, "Armenian Immigrants to the USA & Canada from Keghi, Erzeroum, Armenia," <http://www.arslanmb.org/arslanian/Keghimigrants.html>.

portion had declined to twelve percent, but in 1913 it was over thirty-three percent.²⁷⁹

The Ottoman officials frequently obstructed the Armenians' emigration on the pretext that the American government would not permit them to enter. The Ottoman administration did this because they suspected that once the Armenians had obtained American citizenship, they would return to Anatolia with important quantities of weapons.²⁸⁰ In order to prevent a loss of population, preserve its tax income, and keep poor immigrants from damaging its prestige, the Ottoman State eventually attempted to prohibit emigration/immigration to America. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also took initiatives with foreign diplomats discourage the United States from accepting Armenian immigrants. In response, Armenian "immigration brokers" appeared on the scene to send Armenians living in Harput, Sivas, Adana, and Diyarbakır to America.²⁸¹

2. Where They Settled

The first immigrants were overwhelmingly men. Their port of entry was usually New York, but quite a few immigrants also entered through the ports of Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and San Francisco. Usually the father, as head of the family, or the oldest son would immigrate first, look for work, and, after saving up a little money, would send the money for tickets so that the family members he had left behind could join him.²⁸² The distribution of the immigrants who came between 1899 and 1914 according to the states where they settled was as follows.²⁸³

279 Mirak, (1983), pp. 48-58.

280 *ibid.*, p. 43.

281 İpek, (1995), pp. 262-264.

282 Berge Bulbulian, *The Fresno Armenians: History of a Diaspora Community* (California: Word Dancer Press, 2001), p. 10.

283 Mirak, (1983), p. 293.

State	Number of Armenian immigrants	As a percentage of total number of immigrants
California	2,443	5
Connecticut	1,467	3
Illinois	3,220	6
Massachusetts	14,674	28
Michigan	1,213	2
New Jersey	1,990	4
New York	15,943	31
Pennsylvania	1,851	4
Rhode Island	4,740	9
Other states	4,409	8
Total	51,950	

Boston, Massachusetts was an important center of settlement for Armenian immigrants. Young Armenians in Boston worked in the textile and wire factories. Most of the immigrants had a trade. Some of them continued to practice their old professions in the New World, but most went into the grocery, tailoring, and shoe businesses. Some Armenians, tired of living in America's northeastern cities, settled on the West coast, particularly in Fresno, California, where they join the growing Armenian colony mostly engaged in farming. The American West—especially Los Angeles, with its population of 132,000 Armenians—would eventually become home to the most important Armenian community.²⁸⁴ Rubber factories, shoe factories, metalworking factories, and the steel industry were fields that employed Armenians by the hundreds. Workers toiled more than fifty hours a week to earn nine dollars in wages. Sometimes the work week approached seventy hours. Because the Armenians were so plentiful, when the unions went on strike, employers would ask their Armenian workers to find other Armenians to act as “strike breakers” and replace those who were on strike. Indeed, Armenian workers were in great demand.²⁸⁵ Another state with a dense population of Armenian

284 *ibid.*, p. 43.

285 Luder Tavit Sahagian, “Armenian Immigration to America,” http://www.needham.mec.edu/HighSchool/cur/kane98/kane_p6immig/armenian/Luder.html,

immigrants was New Jersey. The first Armenians who settled there had originally come from Diyarbakır in 1884. Massive immigration to New Jersey would occur in 1894-1895, after the massacres. The first immigrants were silkworm breeders from Diyarbakır. These young people would continue to practice the same trade in New Jersey. In addition to raising silkworms, the Armenian immigrants were involved in manufacturing jewelry and weaving rugs. When the silk worm businesses shut down in the mid-twentieth century, they began working in the fields of dry cleaning, tailoring, shoe polishing, and watch repair.²⁸⁶

There were also artists among the immigrants to America. The oud player Melkon Alemsheryan (whose stage name was Marko Melkon), the *kanun*²⁸⁷ player Garbis Bakirdjian, the violinist Nishan Sedefyan, and “Sugar Mari” Vartanyan, who played Turkish music in Greek coffeehouses and nightclubs, were some of the more acclaimed Armenian artists. In the mid-1950s, those places were mostly located on New York’s Eighth Avenue. Melkon Alemsheryan, who was born in Izmir in 1895, had immigrated at the age of seventeen because his father was unable to pay his fee in lieu of military service; he had been undecided for a while as to whether to do his military service or run away, but eventually decided to run away and went to Athens. After playing in tavernas there for a while, he immigrated to America. Adopting the name Marko Melkon, he started singing in Greek tavernas in New York. When the Turkish army liberated Izmir from the Greek invaders at the end of the War of Independence, his mother and father first fled to Greece and then came to America with money their sons sent them. The *kanun* player Garbis Bakirdjiyan immigrated to America in 1922 with encouragement from Melkon.

286 Gary A. Kulhanjian, “From Ararat to America: The Armenian Settlements of New Jersey,” *Journal of Armenian Studies* 3, 1-2 (1986-87), pp. 35-46, 36-37.

287 A Middle Eastern instrument resembling a zither or dulcimer.

Most of the musicians who played in the tavernas and clubs on Eighth Avenue were Armenians, although there were also Greek and Jewish immigrants from Anatolia among them. Some well-known names among the Greeks were Ashil Poulos and John Pappas, while Louie and Nathan Matalon and Victoria Hazan were Jewish.

3. The Paths of Immigration

Up to 1911, Samsun was the most important port for Armenians coming from Eastern Anatolia, while those from Cilicia used Antakya and Beirut. Since the police carried out fewer inspections in the Mediterranean ports, after 1911 Armenian youths going abroad to evade military service preferred them, regardless of their place of origin. The immigrants would travel in wagons in groups of forty to eighty people to the Mediterranean or Black Sea ports, while poor immigrants would travel by foot in caravans for protection. Families carried their children on their backs or in baskets strapped to the backs of donkeys and mules. On the day the caravan set out from the village, they would do no work and would attend a special ceremony. The women would fasten jewelry, money and blue beads or blue rags to the travelers' clothes as good luck charms. The children were blessed and kissed, and their relatives gave them silver crosses. One immigrant remembered that when he took his children from his grandmother, she had run after the carriages weeping. Kurdish or Turkish guides led the caravans. The journey was dangerous, because Kurdish gangs would often attack the caravans in order to rob the Armenians. Armenians who wanted to go from the villages to the ports were obliged to carry official government passports (*tezkere*). Obtaining these passports required the paying of some sort of bribe. The bribe was the equivalent of twenty to thirty dollars, or five to ten times the value of the passport. And the trip was expensive. The price of a steamship ticket and visa ranged from fifty to

sixty dollars. This was equivalent to a year's income for a journeyman or at least three year's savings for an artisan. That's why some people made the trip to America in two or three stages.²⁸⁸ For example, Rev. Armenak Saroyan, the Bitlis-born father of the famous short-story writer William Saroyan, came to New York by himself in 1905; his wife and daughters would join him two years later. The reason for the long delay was simply that they were penniless. When the grandmother, Lucy, together with a group consisting of her daughters Takuhi (Armenak's wife) and Verkin, her son Aram, and her grandchildren Cosette and Zabel, left Bitlis, the first place they went was Erzurum, and they spent three or four months there. During that period, Takuhi gave birth. Later, the group would spend another month or two in the port city of Marseilles, and finally spent six months in another port city, Le Havre. Eleven-year-old family member Aram learned French and translated for Armenians who were in Le Havre waiting to immigrate to America, and he sold stockings knitted by his mother and sisters to stores. From all these activities the Saroyan family was able to save enough money to buy tickets for the trip to America.²⁸⁹

Armenian brokers took advantage of the immigrants in every imaginable way. The brokers' aim was to extract exorbitant profits from their compatriots. The brokers sold the immigrants boat tickets, assuring them that they would get them "all the way to America," when in fact they would only take them as far as Naples. When they cashed the immigrants' checks, they didn't give them the full amount. The women were often subjected to sexual abuse. After buying a second-class ticket, when they boarded the

288 Mirak, (1983), pp. 60-65.

289 William Saroyan, *The William Saroyan Reader*, (New York: Barricade Books, 1994), pp. 468-469. Years later, William Saroyan visited his father's hometown of Bitlis, accompanied by Turkish Journalist Fikret Otyam. See Fikret Otyam, "Baba Ocağında," *Cumhuriyet*, May 31-June 7, 1964.

ship, they were often shocked to discover that they were in third class. Careless travelers were often robbed or bilked out of their meager savings. All these things resulted from the immigrants' having the brokers perform these tasks for them, since the Armenian peasantry didn't know foreign languages. The way the brokers earned the most money was by providing phony cures for trachoma. According to an American consul, forty percent of the Turkish Armenians had trachoma. In 1897, describing trachoma as "a dangerous and contagious disease," the U.S. Congress stipulated that all immigrants be examined and imposed a fine to the steamship companies of one hundred dollars per passenger brought over with trachoma. This decision would lead to the establishment of health inspection stations in the ports of Naples, Marseilles, and Liverpool. The prospect facing them in the Armenian-owned hotels and boarding houses in Marseilles and Liverpool was heartbreaking. Quacks and charlatan doctors in collusion with the hotel owners promised to cure the immigrants of trachoma, and then split the profits among themselves. The most diabolical swindle was that some brokers convinced healthy immigrants that they had trachoma and persuaded them to be treated for it. Sometimes, attempts were also made to smuggle immigrants with trachoma into America by claiming they were ships' crew.²⁹⁰

4. The Armenian Leaders' Stance on Immigration

The way the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnaktsoutian*) responded to this wave of immigration in America is interesting to examine. Hoping to see the principles of the Second Constitution successfully implemented, the Federation came out against emigration by Ottoman Armenians. Instead, the Dashnaks called for their fellow-Armenians to enlist in the Ot-

290 Mirak, (1983), pp. 60-65.

toman Army and to perform one's duty as a citizen. Up to 1913, the Turkish and Armenian political and spiritual leaders had been silent on the issue. After that year, when immigration peaked, the Armenian National Assembly met and unanimously voted to prepare a program to arrest the ever-increasing wave of emigration. Although the conservative Armenian daily newspaper *Puzantion* came out against that view, even encouraging immigration, on the eve of the First World War Armenian leaders were all seriously concerned about emigration and its effects on the community.²⁹¹

5. Professions and Working Conditions

The Armenian immigrants, who had viewed the U.S.A. as the "mother of equality and freedom" when they arrived, soon encountered discrimination. For many years Armenian immigrants were not accepted into American clubs and organizations that were social in nature. In order to be able to participate in sporting events, Armenian athletes had to be extraordinarily talented. At school Armenian students were called by the epithets "Turks," "dirty black Armenians" or, out West, "Fresno redskins." Their habit of constantly trying to bargain while shopping gave rise to the prejudiced view among Americans that they were not all that honest. Another prejudice was that Armenian homeowners set fire to their homes in order to collect on fire insurance policies. For a long time, non-Armenian farmers and employers refused to hire Armenian immigrants.²⁹²

Immigrants newly arrived in America were usually obliged to pay bribes in amounts ranging from five to fifteen dollars in order to find a job. Some penniless immigrants gave different belongings instead of money. Some immigrants borrowed from loan sharks in order to come up with the money. It was mostly immi-

291 Mirak, (1983), pp. 66-68.

292 Bulbulian, (2001), pp. 105-120.

grants from Van who worked in the factories in the Niagara Falls area. A factory worker from Van is reported to have not only solicited bribes to get jobs for his immigrant countrymen but also to have collected a second bribe for rehiring the immigrant after he had been sick. In the period of increasing immigration, the bribe collectors multiplied “like mushrooms.” A court officer’s rueful saying, “No Armenian immigrant ever gave one of his countrymen so much as a cup of water without first getting bribe,” only reflected an all-too-frequent occurrence.

In time many of the Armenian immigrants who settled in America would become small shopkeepers, merchants, or professionals. A group of immigrants who knew English and wanted to bring the relatives they had left behind to America bought a ticket sales agency from the steamship companies with the goal of selling tickets to their compatriots. These people would find a ready clientele among their non-English speaking. These entrepreneurs sold insurance policies to the immigrants, cashed their checks, and did all manner of consulting. Some entrepreneurial immigrants made yoghurt and bulgur wheat, some opened grocery stores selling Armenian-style food items. In the areas densely populated by Armenian immigrants, they started Armenian restaurants, boarding houses, and coffeehouses. In addition, Armenians were active in many different fields, working as barbers, jewelers, tailors, and cobblers, but the most successful among them were the rug merchants.²⁹³

Oriental Rug Merchants

Their success in the Oriental rug business in America derived in part from Americans’ fascination with the “Mysterious Orient” that occupied the public’s attention in the late nineteenth century. And this growing interest even influenced interior

293 Mirak, (1983,) pp. 90-94.

decoration. Now, wealthy Americans began hanging beautiful examples of Turkish and Persian rugs on the walls of their homes or spreading them on their floors. In the 1880s stores selling oriental rugs began opening in New York, Boston, and Chicago. Philadelphia was a city with a dense population of Armenian rug dealers. Names such as those of the Davidians, the Zakiyans, the Boyadjians, the Temoyans, the Nahikians, and the Jerehiyans are recalled as having been among the earliest dealers or restorers of rugs.²⁹⁴ The biggest stores among the rug merchants who had immigrated from Anatolia were owned by Gullabi Gulbenkian, Arshag and Mihran Karagheusian, Sarkis Telfeyan, Bedros Kazandjian, Topalian Brothers, and Hovannes Tavshanian. The Gulbenkians, rug dealers from Talas, had businesses in Constantinople and Izmir. Arshag and Mihran Karagheusian's stores in New York were simply branches of their shops in Constantinople.²⁹⁵ The Karagheusian brothers had fled to the U.S.A. from the massacres occurring in 1896 and begun importing rugs from Europe. In 1923 they would found their own rug weaving plant. The Gulistan Rug Weavers became internationally famous in the field as "American oriental rugs." The Karagheusian plants would remain active for fifty years. At one time they had 2,000 workers at their plant. In addition to weaving rugs, during the World War II years the Karagheusian brothers produced textiles for the US army.²⁹⁶ Telfeyan was a rug merchant who had immigrated from Kayseri to Constantinople. Telfeyan's children, who had been educated in Protestant schools, would continue their father's occupation in New York. One of the most successful of these mer-

294 Pamela B. Nelson, "A Brief History of Armenians in America and of the Philadelphia community," <http://www.balchinsitute.org/museum/rugs/history.html>.

295 Mirak, (1983) pp. 106-107.

296 Kulhanjian, (2008), <http://www.textilehistory.org/KaragheusianGulistan.html>

chants was Hagop Bogigian, who opened a rug store in Boston's Harvard Square in 1881. Thanks to the fact that the famous poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow introduced Bogigian to Harvard University faculty members, businessmen, and many influential women, he soon got acquainted with Boston's wealthy and influential elite and became well-known.²⁹⁷ In the 1890s the oriental rug merchants came up with another branch of the profession. This occupation--invented by the Armenians, which required no capital other than strong arms and backs, consisted of washing and repairing rugs. The success obtained by Armenian immigrants in that branch of the business would create the myth that all Armenians in the New World were involved in the oriental rug business.²⁹⁸ A Turkish journalist who traveled to the 1939 New York World's Fair would have the following to say about how the Armenians dominated the oriental rug business:

As soon as I came to America, everyone asked why they weren't getting beautiful handmade rugs. Our young people studying in states like Missouri and Georgia in particular heatedly discuss this subject. Those who live there—the authentic, original American people—are looking for rugs as original Turkish works of art and are willing to pay high prices for them. For a while, the Armenians who had fled from Turkey went into this business and made a lot of money, but later on, wanting to earn money more easily and to avoid sending money to Turkey, they maliciously started manufacturing Turkish rugs in factories here. The quality of the merchandise declined, and demand went down. This time they lowered the prices, and so they finally started making rugs from yarn, no one would buy them, and many of the principal Armenian rug merchants went bankrupt, they went bankrupt, but... they also gave a bad name to Turkish rug makers.²⁹⁹

297 Mirak, (1983), pp. 106-107.

298 *ibid.*, p. 110.

299 Kemal Sünnetçioğlu, *Seyahat Hatıraları*, (Istanbul: Güven Basımevi, 1944), p. 61.

6. Anatolian Armenians in California

When some Armenians succeeded in the rug business in a short time, others tried their luck in the field. Fresno, the most important agricultural settlement among the Armenian immigrants, was in California's fertile San Joaquin Valley. The Armenians who settled there grew cantaloupes and figs, planted vineyards, and made wine.³⁰⁰ The first Armenians who settled in Fresno, the brothers Hagop and Garabed Seropian, came there from Worcester on the advice of a doctor. For the Seropian brothers, Fresno resembled "the sunny lands where the farms in the foothills of Mount Ararat were watered by the Euphrates and Tigris." The glowing letters the Seropian brothers sent to the friends and relatives they had left behind resulted in the influx of a large group of Armenians from Merzifon to Fresno. In 1900 five hundred of the 9,134 people living in Fresno were Armenians. This represented five percent of the population. By 1908 the number had risen to three thousand Armenians out of Fresno's total population of 20,100, or roughly fifteen percent.³⁰¹ After Merzifon, the second large group of Armenians to arrive was from Yozgat.³⁰²

The *Hürriyet* newspaper's correspondent Hikmet Feridun Es described the prospect he encountered when he arrived in Fresno—which he nicknamed "the Kumkapı³⁰³ of California" or "the Armenian Mecca" in 1948—as follows:

One by one I am reading the signs on the stores: Berberian, Terziyan, Ahchian, Berberian again, Ekmekjian, Kerestijian, Istanbullyan... Among a thousand names ending in *-yan*, I hardly recognize a single American name.

300 Mirak, (1983), pp. 111-122.

301 *ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

302 Bulbulian, (2001), p. 32.

303 The Kumkapı neighborhood in Istanbul, once populated mostly by Armenians, is the seat of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate of Istanbul.

The shops ended, and when we entered the residential area, we found all the doors open. It was so hot that all living beings lay sprawled on their porches.

All of a sudden, we got excited. In the moonlight the sound of a familiar gazel began: "On every side is a tavern where love awaits..."

A gazel in the middle of America, in the heart of California!... Ardent cries of "Imdat!" and "Yasha!"!

The Armenian Mecca had become one big saz band. There they gave a warm welcome to a gazel or a Turkish song from Ankara radio. The clattering of backgammon checkers on boards and the rattling of dice arose in front of the doors.

A male voice shouted:

"Roll the dice, Dudu Hanım...Don't hold on to them!..."

And then we heard a woman object in Turkish. The smell of salt cod smoking on the grill in the house wafted out to the street. In Fresno, I smelled that odor for the first time in two years. The regular sound of a pestle beating against a mortar accompanied the gazel. They were probably crushing garlic for *djadjik*.³⁰⁴

Am I in Kumkapı?... Am I in California? (Besides, later on I heard that the Armenians called the street behind us Kumkapı). And indeed here in the middle of America was a more comfortable Kumkapı...

We heard a woman's voice ring out from one house to another: "Tell Pırlanta. She should come over and bring Hafız Burhan's"³⁰⁵ records..."

As we passed by the side, there in front of a window on tiny plates were Sandıkburnu-style snacks to accompany the raki! And the smell of anise floated outside with the smoke.³⁰⁶

304 *Djadjik* (*tsatsiki* in Greek) is a dill- or mint-flavored salad of yoghurt, cucumber, and garlic.

305 Hafız Burhan [Sesylmaz], (1897-1943) was a Turkish sound artist, imam, muezzin, mevlithan, composer and gazelhan.

306 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 16, 1948.

Most of the Anatolian Armenians Es encountered in Fresno had never gone back because they remembered the genocide that had occurred during the Deportations.³⁰⁷ Hikmet Feridun Es also visited the bazaar held in Fresno every Thursday and wrote about what he saw there as follows:

All the people and the vendors speak Turkish. Now and then, they shout Turkish. They argue and bargain in Turkish. It's something to see... An Armenian olive vendor from Edremit, an egg seller, a chicken vendor from Van, a fat man selling honey, a gray-haired man from Erzurum. Hagop Efendi from Kayseri sells sausage and smoked meat. If you want to buy something, they'll sing a song in your honor. They weigh your purchase, wrap it up, and give you your change, all while still singing the song.

These songs usually have just one subject...And the "Konya song" is very well-known here:

"What they call Konya is a little town,
What the Turks call a people is like a small town,
No reckoning will come for slaughtering an Armenian..."

They say they don't know if this song got started in Fresno. They wrote new versions of this Konya song that had been sung for years as a "Song of revenge."³⁰⁸

Es had this to say about the pita bread bakery belonging to Sooren from Istanbul:

In America we rarely came across a bakery that made our Istanbul-style pita bread. Two of the bakery's walls bore the word "Peda," derived from the Turkish *pide*, in big letters. In the display windows the pink and white pitas were eye-catching—you could tell how soft and puffy they were by looking—and their surfaces had been brushed with egg. Furthermore, it was described as "Armenian bread" in a sign in English. (The pita bread

307 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 16, 17, 23, 1948.

308 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 21, 1949

our bakers make is very well known in America by the name “Armenian bread”).

I was seeing bread baked in a bakery, outside a factory, for the first time in the New World. They called that bakery “Sooren’s bakery”; it was a famous place not only in Fresno but throughout the area where it sent bread.

Sooren was originally from Istanbul. For some time he had baked French bread and pita in a famous bakery there. Then he upped and came to America. However, he had been very bored there. Finally, he had decided to revive the old breadmaking art in America. He began making pita bread, first in New York, then in Boston, and finally in Fresno. The Americans went crazy for this strange, soft bread that they had never seen before. Sooren’s pita bread was just as successful as the Armenian writer William Saroyan’s stories. People starting saying “peda, peda,” asking for that bread everywhere, in every restaurant, and in no time that bread had spread all over America.

And making pita famous as “Armenian bread” provided a good opportunity for publicity. Today there is no one who doesn’t know “Armenian bread.” The Armenians really are masterful when it comes to advertising.

Today pita baking is a very widespread business in America, and is in the hands of Armenians. In any American city you can find tastier pita than you could find in Istanbul. And, as we have said, it was Sooren who brought pita to America and popularized it. Later on he married a young girl and then died suddenly. Now the buxom, raven-haired young widow with enormous eyes, Madam Sooren, and her younger sisters manage the bakery. They speak excellent Turkish. The bakery’s fame is steadily increasing.

Ramadan pita, though under a different name, enjoys a prominent place on American tables, with a glass of tomato juice beside it.³⁰⁹

And this is what Hikmet Feridun Es said about a gathering in Roeding Park:

309 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 18, 1948.

The side of the park across from its very rich zoo was full of Armenians. Young girls in Anatolian costumes were dancing in the middle of the dance floor. A small band was playing. But just the tune... They weren't singing the words to the Turkish songs. A woman's voice on a loud speaker was explaining the songs being played and the dances that were going to be performed in English. We heard her announce, "An Armenian dance tune!..." Then began a sound we hadn't heard for a long time. A drum... and a pipe!³¹⁰ Where were they coming from? But the man playing the drum was a real expert. The man's china blue eyes and red hair were even more amazing. Because you rarely come across that type in Fresno.

Our amazement increased when we heard that the drummer was a regular American. He was married to an Armenian girl. He was basically a jazz musician, but after becoming the son-in-law of an Armenian family, he had seen our type of drum there. He had practiced on it for years... Now he played it fantastically.

The performers were just as astonishing as the musician. It was more or less our *zeybek*.³¹¹ It was surprising that these very young girls who were American-born didn't break or injure their knees when they hit them with a loud smack while performing a *harmandali*.³¹² How did they learn it? How did they get it?... And how did they master it so well? ...And after that, three young girls right across from each other performed a dance similar to a *çiftetelli*.³¹³

All those dark-skinned beauties were wearing striking red dresses with yellow embroidery and bolero jackets. And they applauded them enthusiastically. That is the best advertising of all.

As we had understood from the lady speaking on the loudspeaker, quite a few American people, not only from Fresno but from

310 The pipe in question is the oboe-like reed instrument called the *zurna*.

311 A dance from western Anatolia.

312 A folk dance from the Aegean region.

313 A dance of Anatolia and the Balkans with a rhythmic pattern of 2/4.

the surrounding area as well, had come today for the Armenian songs and dances. Later that day, we realized how the people of the New World enjoyed many of our things, such as listening to the sounds of the Turkish Armenian drum and our songs and watching our dances.³¹⁴

Later, Es went to a cafe frequented by Armenians from Mush; here are his observations:

The “Mushites cafe” was filled to overflowing. Not a word of Turkish was heard anywhere. They were only speaking Armenian and English. On the wall was a picture of a young woman whose hands and feet were tightly bound. Under the picture was some writing in Armenian. Next to her another beautiful young girl with very long hair and torn clothing was being whipped by a man with a scary face who was wearing a fez... Presumably, this monster was one of us. And the other beautiful girl is one of them.

This place was frequented not only by people from Mush but by those from Harput and Bitlis.

And in this cafe I found out one of the strangest things in the “Armenian Mecca.” When the waiter came, I ordered coffee. He asked:

“American coffee? ...Armenian coffee?”

Although I am addicted to coffee and curious about it and have drunk the coffees of all nations, from Danish coffee made with eggs on down, I had never tasted Armenian coffee or even heard of it. Showing my ignorance, I said,

“Bring me an Armenian coffee.”

But the only thing that came was our same old coffee in a little yellow brass coffeepot with a tiny, empty cup on a tray.

The waiter poured the coffee into the cup. Just to be perfectly sure, I took a sip, and then I said to the man:

“A Turkish coffee!...”

314 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 25, 1948.

Wrinkling his eyebrows together so that they formed a unibrow above his nose, he replied with just two words:

“It’s Armenian.”

“Dear boy, the whole world—even Americans—call this “Turkish coffee.”

“We call it Armenian coffee.”

After those words, he walked away. While saying some things, he pointed me out to an elderly man next to an Istanbul-style counter, where coffeepots were on the fire. Then they both shook their heads. They were acting as if I had maligned their religious beliefs. They were dismissing our title to our world-famous coffee.

He went into the part of the cafe that served as a restaurant with some glasses.

Harput meatballs with bulgur and raw meatballs!... Forty years ago in America, we had heard the story of a certain Takfor Efendi, who ate almost nothing but raw meatballs for forty years.

Beside me, two people were playing backgammon, while others were watching them. A quarrel broke out between the two players over one of the dice. Up to then, they had only been speaking Armenian. When the argument between them became a fight, they changed languages too. And a horrendous fight began in Turkish. They piled on Turkish swearwords and Turkish epithets. Both sides calmed down. They made up. They started playing again. Now that they were calm, they started speaking Armenian again. A bit later, a quarrel broke out, then a fight: Back to Turkish!...

I learned later that apparently this sort of thing is a big, well-known custom here. The players sat in the cafe for four hours speaking Armenian non-stop. Whenever a fight started, whether it was over not showing one’s hand in a card game, or a throw of the dice in backgammon, Turkish started at once. Whether they were from Bitlis, or Harput, or Mush, they definitely quarreled in Turkish. All the Turks and Armenians in America were aware that that’s how things are done. Furthermore, when they were re-

ally enjoying a game, Turkish would start to pop up in the midst of the Armenian.

They'd never fail to say "Hurrah for you, Abidin... What a lover you are, Serkis!..." in Turkish, while shaking a handful of backgammon discs.³¹⁵

Hikmet Feridun Es's impressions of his visit to Fresno were as follows:

I was the first Turkish person they had come across since leaving the country—that is, in thirty or forty years. If we set aside the group who play the oppressed minority and make a business and advertising device out of this, and the fanatics and the *Dashnak*, occasionally the very candid people I have spoken with have taken every opportunity to let me know how proud they were to be my fellow countrymen. I've even heard some of them say, "They can hang me if they like... But let them take me to Kumkapı and hang me there..." And alongside them, there are also those who are enraged and thirst for revenge. Let's be impartial!

Two or even three generations have gone by since the Turkish Armenians left Turkey for America. It's not the Turkish Armenians from here but that new generation of Armenians born here who will instigate the propaganda of tomorrow. They are American-born. They speak English as well as Americans. In the American milieu someone who speaks bad English like his father is not considered weird--on the contrary! Armenian humor, their swarthy faces, and their sarcasm and charm are endearing to everyone. And in fairness to us, the made-up stories of terrible massacres exaggeratedly fed to these children from generation to generation eventually acquire the status of a myth. Of course, the young American-born Armenians have all the rights of Americans. Already some of them are rising to important government positions. Soon, they may even be congressmen.

So what is important today is not the propaganda of elderly or middle-aged Armenians who came from Turkey but the behavior

315 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 22, 1948.

of this new generation. We hate the propaganda they are making. They literally say that “We wanted to eat the Armenians raw.” And they are convinced of that. Because their ears are full of it.

Why don’t we explain our hurt feelings to them? And who will be accountable for this gnashing of teeth? What is it good for?³¹⁶

In another article Es expresses his views of the Anatolian Armenians as follows:

Armenians in America just love all our stuff, from the *çiftetelli* to shish kebabs, our foods, our customs, even our pita. They even liked them so much that right away they adopted all those things as their own. It’s as if there was nothing of ours that they didn’t like. Except for ourselves... This is very hard to explain from a psychological viewpoint.

So much hatred for someone whose pleasures, songs, dances and foods we love! And some of them, in spite of all the propaganda, are not like that. And after talking a bit to break the ice, I’ve heard some of them say:

“My dear, no Turk can do without the Armenians, and no Armenian can do without the Turks. Have you ever seen such a thing?”

But when someone from Fresno passes by them, right away they soften their voices, or change the subject, and the more cautious ones translate from Turkish to English.³¹⁷

8. Life Stories

The Story of George Mardikian, Proprietor of the Omar Khayyam Restaurant

One of America’s best-known chefs, Istanbul-born George Mardikian, ran away from home at the age of fifteen to join an armed band of Armenians, and when Armenia’s independence was recognized, returned home to his mother in Istanbul, but

316 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 27, 1948.

317 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 25, 1948.

was again arrested and imprisoned when the First World War began. Escaping from prison, Mardikian bought a ticket with money sent to him by a brother and sister in America and immigrated to America.³¹⁸ Mardikian explained how he came to America:

When I first came to America as a young man of twenty-two, fresh from the horrible wars in the Near East, from murder and torture, I knew what it meant at first hand to be starved and frozen and left for dead in the snows of winter. And when I escaped these tortures and came to America, it was like coming to Heaven. As a child I remember my first glimpse of Mt. Ararat, which is the most majestic sight to every Armenian. Across a hot valley and far up into the sky this snow-covered mountain rises nearly 17,000 feet, with two peaks. This mountain was the legendary resting place for Noah's Ark. I shall never forget it. But there are also bitter memories of Armenia, and I shall never forget the new thrill I had when, as an immigrant boy, I saw the Statue of Liberty as we came into New York Harbor. Here was relief from torture and heartbreak, and I felt it with all my heart. At that moment, I decided to leave all hatred and bitterness behind and begin life anew; like the many wonderful things we had heard about America in Armenia, the Statue of Liberty seemed to symbolize them all that day.

When we arrived at Ellis Island, immigration officers inspected us, gave us a shower and changed our clothes. That shower seemed to wash all the ugliness of the world away forever. My brother Arshag had wired from San Francisco to tell us he had my railroad tickets, and so I set out to cross the United States. Since I could not speak a word of English or understand anything that was said to me, my ticket was pinned to the lapel of my coat; this had my name and destination on it. People were kind and smiled at me; the contrast was so great, it was hard to believe that people could be as happy and cheerful as I saw them that day on the train. Everything I saw inspired me with an ambition to be one of

318 "George M. Mardikian," <http://www.horatiaoalger.com/members/mar76.htm>.

them. I thought of many things, and decided I should go to school immediately, study English and learn how to be a good American. The cross-country trip was not without momentary excitement and misgivings. Coming into Kansas City, the Traveler's Aid Society took charge of me. During the stopover I looked into a street and saw thousands of men wearing fezzes marching toward the depot. My God, I thought, are there Turks here too? And I reached instinctively into my pocket for the rock I invariably carried at home as protection against them. When they came closer, I realized they were not dressed quite right and they seemed too happy to be Turks. I believe the first thing I asked my sister when I reached San Francisco was who these people were. She told me they were Shriners who had been to a convention.³¹⁹

Arriving in New York at the age of twenty-two on July 24, 1922, Mardikian went to San Francisco, where he had heard that people picked up silver dollars and gold pieces from the ground. It wouldn't take long for Mardikian to realize that this wasn't true, and after walking around for eight days, he would start working as a dishwasher in a restaurant for twelve dollars a week. He worked twelve hours a day. Later, he worked as a busboy in a cafeteria for thirteen dollars a week. Still later, he moved to another restaurant for eighteen dollars a week. He worked ten hours a day. Four and a half years later, he became a manager in the same restaurant.³²⁰ Mardikian started working in the restaurants on cruise ships catering to rich travelers in order to learn the fine points of the profession by working with famous chefs and acquiring their expertise.³²¹ In the foreword to a book describing his food, Mardikian explains how he got his experience as a chef:

319 George Mardikian, *Dinner at Omar Khayyam's*, (New York: Viking Press, 1944), pp. 22-23.

320 Bev Brown, "Success Story is Inspiring," *Herald and News*, Statue of Liberty National Monument Library, "Armenians" file.

321 "George M. Mardikian," http://www.horatioalger.org/member_info.cfm?memberid=mar76

I have not been particular what jobs I have had to take in famous hotels and restaurants in order to learn the secrets of chefs noted the world over. For instance, I remember getting a job in Alexandria, Egypt, so that I could work near the famous restaurateur, Ashji Mugurdich, who was a great chef in the palaces of the sultans and pashas in Constantinople (now called Istanbul). He also worked as chef of the Tocatlian Hotel, the most popular place to eat in Constantinople.

Here I worked from sunup to sundown. My wages were five dollars a week. Somehow the old fox found out that I was living at a French *pension*, and he knew that rentals there were never less than six dollars. So it worried him.

One morning I came to work and as I walked in I said "Good morning." Usually he would answer cordially. But this morning he said nothing. I thought probably he had had a bad night or a fight with his wife, or something, so I left him alone.

During the course of our work I would ask for certain things. No answer. This went on for a couple of hours, until finally I got tired of the whole thing. I said, "What's eating you? Why don't you answer me?"

Slowly he laid down his knife, and walked toward me. "Where do you live?"

"Why?" I asked.

"I want to know. Where do you live?"

"At the French *pension*."

"How much do you pay?"

"Six dollars a week."

"That doesn't make sense, does it?"

"I don't know what you're driving at," I told him.

"Well," he said, "how can a man who is making five dollars a week pay six dollars for room rent?"

Naturally I didn't want to explain that the only reason I was working for him was to try to learn his cooking secrets. So I said,

“Well, it is not my fault that you don’t pay your help enough.”

That didn’t convince him, but he shook his head and went back to work. Two or three minutes later he came over to me again. In a whispering voice he said, “Tell me, did you murder someone in the United States?”

He had put two and two together and figured that here was a man who must have killed someone, stolen his money, and was hiding from the police. Now no one in America would ever think of a thing like that. One must have a very suspicious, Near Eastern mind to come to such a conclusion.

Fortunately, I had already arranged for my passage to Naples, so I decided to tell him, “I quit. The reason I was working for you was to learn your culinary secrets for my patrons in my beloved America.”

Somehow this explanation touched him very much. Whereas before that every time he mixed a new dish he would turn his back to me, now he couldn’t do enough for me. He tried to teach me everything he knew. We had a very fine dinner together the night before I left, and he promised to send me his favorite recipes as he thought of them. He kept his promise, and corresponded with me for years. Unfortunately, his handwriting was very bad, and I could not make it out. So if I am not able to duplicate some of his wonderful delicacies, put it down to that fact.³²²

After becoming a skilled chef, Mardikian would open his first restaurant in Fresno in 1932, and in later years would add two restaurants and a shop selling sandwiches. From 1942 to 1954, he served the U.S. Army as a food expert, improving the flavor and quality of the food. He was honored for this service by Presidents Hoover, Truman, and Eisenhower.³²³ During the Korean War, Mardikian went to the front to ensure that the food being served to the American soldiers and their allies was tasty, satisfying,

322 Mardikian, (1944), pp. 16-18.

323 Mardikian, http://www.horatioalger.org/member_info.cfm?memberid=mar76

and of good quality. Since the Turkish soldiers at the front were unhappy with the food, which was not to their taste, Mardikian prepared special foods for them. The Turkish allies were very happy about this and gave a dinner in Mardikian's honor, and during that dinner, Mardikian addressed the Turkish soldiers in Turkish, telling them:

Many years ago I longed for a chance to poison all of you, because your people had murdered my father. Today I feel proud to be an American and together with you as your ally.³²⁴

In 1939, when a Turkish Ambassador and his wife visited the Turkish Pavilion at the Golden Gate International Exposition, Mardikian entertained them at his restaurant.³²⁵ In 1944 he published his book *Dinner at Omar Khayyam's* in which he explained his recipes. After the Second World War ended in 1945, during the months of April-June, at his restaurant he entertained the Turkish government commission that was participating in the San Francisco Conference working on preparing the United Nations Charter. While the Turkish commission was dining at his restaurant almost every evening, there was tension among the waiters, who had not forgotten what they had experienced during the genocide in 1915, so Mardikian assigned waiters who were not Anatolian immigrants to serve the commissioners.³²⁶ Mardikian had not forgotten what he had experienced during the 1915 genocide either, and he commented that when the then Foreign Minister Hasan Saka and his friends dined at his restaurant, "I wouldn't have hesitated to poison them.. But what could I do, for they were guests of America..."³²⁷

324 Frank J. Taylor, "The GI's Chow Champion," *Reader's Digest*, September 1952.

325 George Mardikian, *Song of America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1956), p. 194.

326 George Mardikian, 1956, p. 227.

327 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 20, 1948. Hasan Saka was Foreign Minister from September 13, 1944 to August 7,

The Story of Nazlı from Yozgat

“I came over on the *Gülcecal*’s maiden voyage. Back then, I was very young. And I daresay I was very beautiful. For those days—and even for now—the *Gülcecal* was surprisingly fast. We made the voyage from Istanbul to New York in seventeen days. Besides which, we spent a day waiting at Gibraltar... Is Captain Lûtfi still alive?... Was he the skipper of the *Gülcecal*?”

I said Captain Lûtfi was dead. By now people in the hall had gathered around us. One of them said,

“Please, have a Samsun-Bafra,” referring to an old Turkish cigarette whose name he recalled from thirty-nine years ago.

I asked Nazlı:

“You came from Istanbul to America all by yourself...In those days?”

“Yes, all by myself. I was seventeen. And with neither money in my pocket nor a dream in my head of one day marrying so-and-so. Then I got married and settled in Fresno... But I don’t want to die before I get a chance to sit on the shore at Bebek drinking a cold beer.”³²⁸

(...)

Nazlı welcomed us into her home with the proverbial attentiveness and hospitality of the people from Yozgat. We were amazed when we went into the parlor. We had come into a display of fresh and dried fruits. From big amber-colored apricots, to the huge, misty dark grapes piled on top of them... Among them were some odds and ends that no longer can be found in Turkish cities... For example, crushed walnuts, and the sort of candy made from dried grape pulp that we call Abdülleziz. Yes, Abdülleziz in America, in California!...

She dished out pomegranates, crushed hazelnuts, crushed almonds onto tiny little plates.

1946. He chaired the Turkish delegation participating in the San Francisco Conference in June 1945.

328 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 19, 1948.

Just the way we used to set a fruit table for guests.

Smiling, Nazlı said:

“Sir, there’s a famous saying. They say about us: ‘The people from Yozgat make a wedding feast with just one egg...’ How can that be? You may have nothing but one or two eggs, but the world should not miss out on a wedding party!”

With those words she invites us into the main alcove.

“I picked the pomegranates and nuts with my own hands. But first of all, would you care for a liqueur? Or one of our national rakis?...”

I must confess that I was embarrassed to be offered such hospitality in the unofficial headquarters of the Dashnak.

While piling grapes on a plate, the lady of the house held out to us a plate of grapes on ice very similar to our *rezak*.

“Grapes from our homeland... What they call *rezaka* in Turkey. Here it’s more processed, a different grafting is done. And they gave it the name of “Sultana.” Now it is America’s most famous grape. Fresno is proud of the Sultana grape.

And indeed the Sultana grape was just as delicious as our most common *rezak*. Even better, and absolutely seedless. It had a light and lovely fragrance...

Nazlı commented in Turkish: “Let’s have some pigeon’s blood tea,” and the tea that she was brewing in a samovar really was the color of pigeon’s blood. As she came with a tray, said:

“This is yours. And she pointed insistently at one of twenty glasses of tea. My hand went toward another one.

“No... Another one... Not that one...,” she said rather hurriedly.

How strange people are! She was so insistent that we should take that cup on the very back of the tray that we were suspicious.

And I guess they realized that we were suspicious, because they started laughing meaningfully. And they looked each other in the face. I wonder? Were they threatening us in the same way that Mardikian had threatened Hasan Saka?

As we were swallowing the tea, they looked us intently in the face. And the tea really tasted strange. Furthermore, there was something on our tongue.

Apparently, our dear lady had put cloves in the tea...³²⁹

The Story of Pirlanta from Yozgat

Although Yozgat native Pirlanta came to America thirty-five years ago, she still didn't even know thirty-five words in English. And she knew even less Armenian than English. The only language she knew was Turkish. Most of the Armenians from Yozgat, Sivas, Kayseri, and Istanbul that we came across in Fresno spoke only Turkish. Others who knew Turkish very well took great care not to speak it. The Armenians from Mush were particularly fanatical about refusing to speak Turkish.

We see it as destiny that Pirlanta should have married an Armenian from Mush in Fresno.

From their wedding night on, the man gave his young wife an ultimatum:

"You shall not speak the language of the Turks! Do not pollute the walls of our home!..."

"I couldn't learn Armenian at that age. And I don't know English either," she said.

But her husband wouldn't listen. So for exactly four months, husband and wife didn't speak to each other.

If her husband yelled, "Wife, open your mouth...", Pirlanta would calmly reply:

"It will pollute the walls of the house!..."

Finally, the priest of the Dashnak church involved himself in the affair. The priest was a fanatical member of the Dashnak. He told Pirlanta:

"Come and learn Armenian... Give up that Turkish," but she paid no attention to his advice.

329 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 20, 1948.

When the priest saw that he had failed, he became very aggressive, bold, and furious that a woman would dare defy her husband. The priest said to the wife:

“Let’s see, why do you use the language of the Turks?”

Pırlanta replied: “Turkish is my language... What of it?... The Turks are better than you.”

Would you have said such a thing? Fresno was seething with anger for months. Now whenever someone goes there, this is the first piece of well-known gossip they tell him. People in Fresno were really embittered against Pırlanta for having defended Turkish. In fact, they declared a sort of boycott against the poor thing. The priest, the priest’s wife, her own husband, her husband’s relatives and countrymen all turned against her.³³⁰

Harput Native Artin Shamshoian’s Story

Mr. Shamshoian’s name is very well known among the Turkish Armenians. The Shamshoians have many relatives, stores, and businesses in New York, Boston, and Fresno.

When Harput native Artin Shamshoian came to America, they tried to remove his amulet from his neck on [Ellis] Island. Shamshoian resisted:

“It’s impossible!... Even if I have to go back, I can’t take off that amulet. Because when I take it off, you might as well call for the priest and the gravedigger,” he replied.

At first they thought he was joking. Then they saw that the man was very serious. If they took it off, he really would go back.

“Okay, okay,” they said, “you can keep your amulet.”

Later, Artin Shamshoian took many jobs, got into fights, and earned quite a bit of money, always with the amulet on his neck... He was constantly slipping a hand under his shirt to check on it. One time gangsters attacked Mr. Shamshoian between New

330 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 19, 1948.

Mexico and California. They robbed him blind, taking his money, gold watches, rings, etc... in the end, since he was in mortal danger, Mr. Shamshoian didn't fight back, he let them take it all. But when one of the thugs saw the amulet on his neck and reached for it, the Turkish Armenian cut him off, yelling:

"No!... You can't have that!..."

And indeed they would only be able to remove Mr. Shamshoian's amulet after he was dead. The amulet Shamshoian wore around his neck had been written by Potuk Hodja in Harput.

Most of the people in Harput had one of Potuk Hodja's amulets. If you ask an Armenian from Harput about Potuk Hodja, he'd say, "They're written on sheepskin," and he'd describe Potuk Hodja like this:

"He is a very tiny man, short in stature, with a very pointed nose, very small eyes, a pockmarked face, and a long beard..." But no one would deny that he's a miracle worker...

I don't think there's any place that gives as much importance as Fresno to hadjis, hodjas, and priests.

Who knows in what village in Harput Potuk Hodja lived and when he died. But his name and his fame endure even in the heart of California.³³¹

The Story of Civan, Who Sent to Istanbul for a Bride

The Armenian had come to Fresno and gotten rich, had led his life, bought a house, deposited plenty of money in the bank, and still considering himself young, his sole desire was to send for a beautiful bride from a village—for example, a Hayganosh from Kumkapı, a Shakeh from the Bosphorus, or a Mannik from Sivas. Instead of going [to Turkey] to get married, they used to send for a bride.

I met an individual named Zambakoğlu in a park in Fresno. He had been married three times.

331 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 17, 1948.

"I just couldn't win. All three died," he said.

Then he gave a detailed account of the affair. All three wives were from Turkey.

As a matter of fact, when he found out that we were about to go to Istanbul, a man named "Civan" showed up. He too had sent to Istanbul for a bride.

"She was a beautiful Armenian girl. With a very pretty face..." he said. Civan had a brother named Osman in Istanbul, in Samatya. Osman had become a Muslim, married a woman of his new religion, and had a family...

But Civan was pursuing a totally different life in Fresno. Osman wrote him letters in Turkish full of old expressions. Although the two brothers were as different in thoughts, taste, feelings, and lifestyle as people from opposite ends of the earth, Civan wrote him: "For heaven's sake, find me a girl from my homeland." He said that he had concluded: "Send me her picture. I'll send the money necessary for the trip, passport, etc.!"

Only two of the brides who had come to Fresno from Turkey had abandoned their comfortable life to run away back to Istanbul. And that was another gamble.

This Civan was a very sensitive man. Of the sort to be found in all the Turkish legends written in books in the Armenian alphabet. They shed plentiful tears, especially when reading *Leyla and Mejnun*.³³² Those who knew him teased him about his sensitivity. On summer nights, through the open window, you could hear him reading lines from *Leyla and Mejnun*. "With his thin mustache, and dark, thin face, he resembled the actors who played the role of "Count" in the dramas of Manakian. He always had a melancholy expression on his face. But when he mentioned the Armenian beauty who was coming from Samatya, that sad face brightened up. The stars sparkled in his cloudy eyes. From now on Civan's bliss was inexpressible. Civan had fallen in love with

332 A classical Perso-Arab story of a poet who went mad upon being prevented from marrying the woman he loved.

his Armenian bride who was coming even before he had seen her, even before that person had been chosen in Istanbul.³³³

The Story of “Two-Wheel” Keork

People in Istanbul knew that guy very well. For years in the doorway of an apartment building in Pangaltı he sold lemons, matches, cigarettes, etc. Since Mr. Keork was a strange man, he attracted the attention of the Istanbul people. Mr. Keork disappeared from Istanbul all of a sudden and turned up in Fresno. Now he is one of that city’s best-known types.

The people just call him “Two-Wheel.” And the reason for that is that there are always two wheels in front of his house in Fresno. In America, especially in the West, having two wheels in front of one’s house is considered a sort of sign of nobility. Because the first families got here here after a months-long journey across the continent in wagons with big wheels. The first to come later on became the owners of big estates and were remembered as the oldest families. As a reminder of the wagons the first settlers came in, they always left an old wheel—by that time, it had even been handed down—in front of their homes.

Although Mr. Keork had come to Fresno much later, he didn’t neglect to put a wheel in front of his house. And thinking it would make a stronger impression, he put two wheels there. And that’s how he got the name “Two-Wheel.” He was an expert at making up anti-Turkish stories in the language of the people.³³⁴

The Story of Istanbulite Kirkor Arakelian

He came to America with two gold Ottoman liras and three *mecidiyes*. But that wouldn’t do him much good in New York. Although he was a very clever guy, he wound up flat broke in New York. He worked in vineyards for a long time and picked peaches in orchards. Back then, when he had saved up a little money, he had bought a huge tract of land in the vicinity of Fresno for prac-

333 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 24, 1948.

334 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün,” *Hürriyet*, May 31, 1948.

tically nothing. He started growing grapes there right away. Let us admit that the Armenians are the hardest working people in the world. As a matter of fact, before they came, Fresno was practically a wasteland. Today Fresno wines are the most respected and sought-after in America, like Bordeaux or Malaga wines in Europe. And they are all in the hands of Turkish Armenians, among whom Arakelian is foremost. Furthermore, those who came from Turkey have won this very justified reputation even more than the best qualified and most expert at this business through their hard work.

For the biggest Italian wine firms flocked to the Fresno area. There's no need to point out how advanced the Italian winemakers are. Winemaking is a father, a monastery, a religious art there. In spite of that, the Armenians have beaten the Italians at winemaking all over America. That is no small triumph.

Furthermore, Arakelian has organized the whole California fruit industry. Now Indian maharajahs would envy his wealth. He has many close relatives from Turkey. But the only thing he cares about is his son. Young Vahan Arakelian was paralyzed as a result of a car accident. When all the treatments failed, he brought Avak from Iran.³³⁵

Hikmet Feridun Es happened to be in Fresno to witness the visit of Avak Hagopian, whom Arakelian *père* had brought from Iran for his paralyzed son, and who he said was a miracle worker, and he described what he saw as follows:

A big group of people had gathered on the street. As the minutes passed, the crowd grew with amazing speed. The police were roping off both sides of the sidewalk. Eventually, the sidewalks couldn't hold any more people. Then we realized what was going on. The famous Armenian prophet "Avak the Great," the aforementioned Avak Hagopian, who claimed to open the eyes of the blind and cause the crippled to walk, and who had been coming

335 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 17, 1948. The Petri family bought out the Arakelian family's wineries in 1949. See "Allied History," <http://www.alliedgrapegrowers.org/history.html>.

to the Dashnak church on the corner for each of the past four days, was on his way. And this evening too people were waiting for him. We came out to the street in front of the door carrying suitcases. We found a place for ourselves on the steps between the crowd and the church. It was known that the Turkish Armenian millionaire K. Arakelian had brought Avak from Iran by plane to care for his son.

M. Street was a sea of people. In order to get a glimpse of Avak, not only Armenians, but Americans and other ethnic groups were rushing to Fresno from all over. Sick people were waiting at the church door on gurneys and in cars.

Two cars with police escorts preceded Avak, and bodyguards and detectives accompanied him. The crowd surged forward, shouting. They wanted to touch him. The police were walking between the young man and the people.

I saw him pass before me. He looked like a very timid boy. He appeared as if some people had forced him into all this stuff. Or that was my impression.

His flowing black cassock, ebony-colored long hair, which had never been cut, and the sparse black whiskers on his chin and his cheeks gave his face a mystic expression. He had something like a hood on his head. Like a young Jesus, he moved forward among the outstretched hands.

Clothes, handkerchieves, and shirts poured into Fresno from all over the world to be read by Avak and returned. Later, I learned that from Istanbul too, many handkerchieves, buttons, etc., had been sent to be read and returned by Avak. After they had been read and breathed on, these would be sent back to Turkey, to Istanbul. But let me add that this was comforting to the terminally ill. We know that, other than in this regard, our Armenian citizens in Turkey always and in every way behave rationally. To tell the truth, it wasn't just Armenian citizens but members of other ethnic groups as well, even Muslims, who were sending handkerchieves to Avak.³³⁶

336 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 17, 1948.

The Story of Manok Efendi and Shamram Hanım

To say Fresno is practically the same thing as to say “a city where the *çiftetelli* is performed in every home. The *çiftetelli* is something that those who left Turkey and came to America have never forgotten. You run into some who have forgotten Turkish but still dance the *çiftetelli*... You’ll see plenty of people who make the effort every day, drenched with sweat, even when they’re working till night in the vineyards, pruning vines or picking grapes. They are dead tired half the night. You’d expect them to fall asleep or pass out, having collapsed somewhere from exhaustion. But you see a saz turn up somewhere. Right away, that half-dead man comes forward. The dancing goes on till dawn. Early the next day he’ll return to the world’s hardest job, working in the vineyard under the burning sun. Who cares?... There’s a saz, and there’s a *çiftetelli*... Have fun, whoop it up!...

In that regard Manok Efendi is precisely the Fresno type and a “four-armed dancer,” as we say in Turkey. He dances the *çiftetelli* every night at a different house. He married one of those “Istanbul Mari”s, who came to him from Turkey and sang American songs, danced American dances, and sometimes waited on tables. For Manok Efendi’s wedding he had fifteen sheep slaughtered and a hundred chickens roasted in our old way, and even in the Armenian Mecca the tale of that event is still told.

Manok danced *çiftetelli* at his own wedding continually for two days and nights. In Turkey the *çiftetelli* may not be dead yet, but it’s giving up the ghost; even so, it’s alive and well in Fresno.

There’s a well-known woman performer known as “Shamram Hanım” in Fresno. Shamram of Fresno dances at every wedding.

Another source states that when Avak came to the city in May 1947 to heal Kirkor Arakelian’s son, the handicapped, who expected a miracle from that visit, flooded into the city for weeks; the local press devoted a lot of space to the subject but doesn’t mention anyone’s actually having been healed. See Frank M. Bogert, *The History of Palm Springs: Fifty Golden Years*, <http://www.palmsprings.com/history/50years.html>. The date of 1947 given in that source is probably an error. What Es witnessed actually occurred in May 1948.

Thinking she was just as famous as Istanbul's well-known Shamram Hanım, the Turkish Armenians nicknamed her the "Shamram of Fresno."

Fresno Shamram doesn't perform just anywhere, only at weddings and wealthy homes for money. She is a widow. Sometimes she looks for work in factories, etc.

Two years before, Shamram of Fresno had gone to seek a job at Arakelian's. And Manok Efendi was among the applicants there.

However, they were so fully staffed that they didn't say yes to either Shamram or Manok. They kept saying "No jobs" till the long line of people coming from Fresno went back. But Manok said:

"Ms. Shamram...We've come so far. And there are no jobs... Let's have some fun here... Let's dance..."

After that, Shamram of Fresno and Manok started dancing a *çiftetelli* together. Right away, a big circle with people clapping and shouting for joy. At that moment, Arakelian, who was driving up in his car, stopped and watched them. He asked who those people were.

"They came to look for a job, but they didn't get hired. They decided to have fun anyway, since they'd come all this way...They are dancing..."

Astonished, Arakelian said:

"So they didn't get a job, but they were going to have fun anyway. Those are a couple of kooks... but give them a job."

They hired both of them.

Manok says, "If it weren't for the *çiftetelli*, I'd be unemployed."³³⁷

The Singer Hadji Hanım's Story

Among the Turkish immigrants to America, she is practically the most famous one in the entertainment world. She knows Arabic very well, and since she spent quite a bit of time in the Arab world, they call her "Hadji Hanım." But she's actually an

337 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Ermeni Kâbesinde 40 Gün," *Hürriyet*, May 27, 1948.

Armenian. However, lots of people think she's Turkish. Yet she sings off-color songs in Turkish and Arabic quite well. She played the oud beautifully.

Her toilette when she came out on stage was interesting. On her neck three strings of ornamental coins, on her arms about twenty gold bracelets, on her leg was a little gun she had stuck into the elastic of her rose-patterned stockings when putting them on!... Yes, dressed like that, "Hadji Hanım" was an odd singer indeed. And she sometimes used her gun as an oud pick. Her songs were so explicit that the police had taken her to jail once or twice. However, none of that mattered in the least to her.

She was a very licentious woman. As much as she loved being treated well, she got just as much pleasure from being hospitable. For example, you are a foreigner. You go into a bar and sit down. A glass of raki is set before you. If you ask, "Who is this from?" the waiter will reply,

"From Hadji Hanım..."

But maybe you don't feel like drinking. Hadji considers this the greatest insult, and a quarrel breaks out. She used to be especially popular among the Kurds in America. They had eyes for no one but Hadji Hanım, who surpassed all the American beauties, with her body weighing more than a hundred and twenty kilos (264 lbs.). When she played the oud, it was as if those plump fingers—every other one of which was covered with rings—were striking the hearts of the expatriate Kurds.

Later, Hadji Hanım's dancing of the *çiftetelli* captivated even the Americans.

Recently, America has been smitten by a handsome young Istanbulite rascal named Dimitri, who has won fame under the flashy name of "Hell-Raiser." Dimitri was a Greek thug running riot, and had become well-known for raising hell among Istanbul's unruly, wild hooligans. He had pulled off the same thing in America, first in New York and then in Detroit. He is famous for walking down Broadway with his cap pulled down to his left ear, wearing pointy boots, with worry beads in his hand, his jacket

taken off and thrown over his shoulder. He has even been arrested once or twice for yelling in Turkish in the street. Apparently, Dimitri is going from city to city with Hadji Hanım.³³⁸

The Story of the Phony Wrestler Parmaksızoğlu Agop, Also Known as Ali Baba

One thing that distinguishes Chicago among us Turks is that all the famous Turkish wrestlers who have come to America have had their most exciting matches there.

And now, hoping to take advantage of that reputation, the notorious bullshitter “Ali Baba” is holding all his wrestling matches there.

Our countrymen in America have even appealed to some government officials in an attempt to put an end to this Ali Baba’s disgraceful behavior[, such as] on one occasion, especially, when Ali Baba spread a prayer rug right beside the wrestling mat and started getting up and down as if he were praying.

He kept trying to get attention with his continual yells of “Allah” in a weird accent, and with his movements, which made the turban on his head bounce up and down.

While this was going on, one of the Turks who was sitting in the front row stood up and pointed at Ali Baba:

“That man is deceiving you with a lie. You may think he’s praying. I’m sure that he doesn’t know how to pray. If he wishes, I’ll test him... There are other Turks and Muslims here... They [should] ask a couple of us how prayers are performed. If he can answer just that one question, he can beat me up if he likes... He is insulting both you and us with those movements he’s making.”

On hearing those words, the audience starting yelling with one voice: “Test him! Test him!”

As for “Ali Baba,” as if his phony prayers had been interrupted, he just kept excitedly prostrating himself and getting back up,

338 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, July 6, 1948.

continually yelling “Allahüekber!”³³⁹ in a loud voice and with a menacing expression.

One guy got up and challenged the famous wrestler, saying:

“He’s performed more than sixty *rakaats*³⁴⁰ at one time. There is no prayer that has that many *rakaats*.”

When he said this, Ali Baba had to stop. A member of the audience yelled:

“Ali Baba... Let’s test whether you’re lying.”

Ali Baba replied with his usual braggadocious bullshit:

“The only way I’ll be tested is by wrestling. If anyone wants to challenge me, let him step up...”

When he heard these empty words, at last Mustafa from Harput, a strong man whom I’ve mentioned before, dashed forward, saying:

“Hold on... I’m coming...”

Now Ali Baba, seeing that things were turning out badly, started yelling:

“You can’t wrestle with me. You are not a member of any federation or any union... What gives you the right to come up here?”

And that’s how a fight started to break out between Ali Baba’s men and those who wanted to test him. The famous phony wrestler had a narrow escape.

Another time Ali Baba was shaking the huge tassel on top of the liver-colored fez he was wearing on his head up and down. When he prayed next to the wrestling mat in Detroit, Mehmet Malik, the then-President of the Turkish Red Crescent got so upset that they sent their appeals to the appropriate authorities. Now Ali Baba was running away from the Turks all over the place. And this became so well-known that everybody teased him, asking:

339 The Turkish pronunciation of the Arabic prayer “Allahu akbar” (God is the greatest).

340 Ritual bowing/prostrating movements constituting units of the Muslim prayers.

“Do you know Turkish? A ‘famous Turkish wrestler’...” That’s what they’d say to him. And in those situations Ali Baba would say:

“We’ll talk after the wrestling match, we’ll talk after the wrestling match,” and run away.

Even some Americans who didn’t know Turkish teased Ali Baba, saying:

“Let’s speak Turkish!”

They scared him with those words and made him run away.

Ali Baba’s real name was “Parmaksızoğlu Agop.” He was born in Syria, and now everyone in America knows that he has no connection with either Turkishness or wrestling.³⁴¹

The Story of Ida Mouradjian From the Village of Hadjin in Cilicia

Well, we went back to the ruins [of Hadjin] with courage to rebuild it. From 48,000 only 10,000 survivors had remained, which in itself is a miracle. Later on, the Turks, the new takeover Turks, killed those 10,000 too—and there will be many to testify to the truth of this statement.

But before this happened I wrote a letter in French to the head of the French Occupation,³⁴² who was a military man. He was surprised to find someone who could write French in this desert country. And he said, “I will help you go back to school if you will promise to come back and teach in the schools I intend to establish here.”

I said, “Hallelujah, that’s what I want.” Well, I did go back to my school, which had accepted me this time without tuition. They were so happy that I had survived. I stayed; then it took me three years to finish school.

I lost my family during this last, while I was at school—I lost every member of my family in that second murder. All my efforts

341 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, July 19, 1948.

342 After World War I, the French occupied Cilicia.

and my hard work—nothing. I don't know what they did to my mother and my older sister. I don't know to this day what their fate was, and if you think that's not enough to send somebody to the door of insanity, I've got news for you. I sometimes wonder myself how I did survive it and how I retained my sanity...

After that I was lucky enough to get a teaching job in an American-established, American-financed school for boys. This family of very famous rug manufacturers had made it their business to help on their own. They had adopted one hundred boys and gathered them in a beautiful building and saw that they were educated, nursed back to health, and so on. I was one of the first teachers in that school. I taught school there a year. I intentionally took that job because it was a boarding school and it would help me save my money. I wouldn't have to pay room and board elsewhere. I taught there one year. I was very happy at my job.

Everything was fine, but one morning I got up and the English navy had pulled out from the Bosphorus. I felt terribly unprotected and terribly angry and terribly afraid. The principal of the school called me. By this time it was June of 1922. And he said, "Miss Kazanian," that was my maiden name, "are you going to stay with us here?"

I said, "No."

He said, "What are you going to do?"

I said, "I am going to go as far away as I possibly can." Since I was fluent in French, France would have been the right place to go to. But France was swamped with Armenian exiles and they were already beginning to call the Armenians "Sal Armenian," which means "dirty Armenian." That hurt, that always hurts.

And believe it or not, I had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Lincoln was my hero, and I thought of a card my uncle had sent to Mother from Pasadena, California, which had said, "Dear Sister: This is Paradise on earth. Some day I would like to live and die here." And I thought, "Well, maybe not Pasadena, but maybe America. If there is a heaven in America in one spot, there might be another one for me." So I decided to come to America.

I am here through a series of miracles. It so happened that the principal of the school was a close friend of the American ambassador—they had their summer homes adjacent. By the way, the principal was not just a principal—not that the principal is always a great man—he was a medical doctor who had married one member of this family that founded the school. This man had given up his private practice to be a father to these one hundred boys, and he said, “Well, I don’t see that I blame you. And what’s more, I think I can help you. I will give you a recommendation to the ambassador, who is my personal friend and he will give you every possible help.” He did.

They were putting the ambassador’s baggage on a carriage because he was leaving in half an hour for England, for his summer vacation. But he did read my letter. He signed it and said, “Take it to the consul this very afternoon.” I took it to the consul. The consul was very angry because this was discrimination—there were many in line and why should I be pushed? But he couldn’t very well go against the order of the ambassador. This is how I got on a boat.³⁴³

The Story of Jeanne, Molly, and Miriam Assidian, Who Fled from the Genocide

JEANNE: [Our brother] Albert had another month to finish college, so my parents thought we would get him so that we could all go to America. We had our passports. We were in Smyrna about two months, I think, before we took our passage. The ship was at the shore. We had packed everything, ready to go. We were to board the ship on a Monday. But on Saturday, hell broke out. The Turks and the Greeks, this time, were fighting. They put practically the whole city of Smyrna on fire... Everybody was going towards shore. My father had us down in the basement, and again, he was saying: “Don’t worry. We are going to heaven.” And, you know, he prayed. And my mother said, “Oh, no. Let’s go upstairs,

343 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 89-91.

take your shoes off, and we will run for the American Girls College.” We got there, and the Americans had sent sailors to take the missionaries to the shore, and we followed them through fire and bullets, and we got to the shore. Being that my father was a minister, the missionaries knew him. We were put on an American battleship and, later on, transferred to a Greek freighter. And for three days, hungry, we arrived in Greece. We were there for a short period of time before we took our passage to America. We left everything. We had nothing but the clothes on our backs.

MOLLY: A good memory.

MIRIAM: Father would always say, “One day we’re going to America.” In our childish minds, we had equated America with heaven. So we just thought we were coming to heaven. After what we’d been through over there, America was heaven. So we all looked forward to coming.

MOLLY: After the burning of Smyrna, we were running away now.

MIRIAM: We had no passage money, but a missionary friend of my father sent us the money. We came steerage on the *King Alexander*, and I think it must have been Greek, but they served us spaghetti and macaroni the whole trip.

JEANNE: It was a Greek ship. We left from Piraeus. I think they had sent us enough money to go second class, but we couldn’t get on, everybody was escaping, and my father was so anxious to get us here, we took steerage. One big room. There was a very bad storm, and we were way down in the bottom, and it was horrible...

MIRIAM: Too crowded. But every evening the Armenians would gather in one little area, and we’d entertain ourselves. We’d sing. Somebody would recite a poem, and things like that. You know, we’d do that every evening to get together. I think we saw our first movie, a Charlie Chaplin movie, silent, of course. I think that was on the ship. I’d never seen it before.

JEANNE: We were detained at Ellis Island for two weeks, because my mother and father had problems with their eyes, and they took them to the hospital, and we were left to take care of ourselves. Except I had my older brother, Albert, to help out, but at night he had to go with the men, so I took care of the three, my little brother and the two sisters. But it was very lonely without our parents for two weeks. We didn't see them at all. We knew that they were in the hospital, and that's about all.

MOLLY: I know that Jeanne went and got blankets and pillows and things like that for us for the night to sleep on. On very crazy-looking cots. It was not very comfortable, but we were all together. At least that was one great thing.

JEANNE: I was used to the responsibility. Being the oldest girl, my mother always made sure I did what was necessary. At night, when we were ready to retire, I would go to the door. They gave us a cake of soap, a towel, a blanket, a pillow, and I remember those cots that were on top of each other. Bunk beds. During the day, there was not much to do. We talked, and we laughed. We were very good with each other, so I guess we passed the time that way. I don't remember physical exams. I don't remember that at all.

I remember the long tables in the dining hall. There were so many people, and the minute they opened the dining room door for everybody to go, they would grab at things, and if you weren't quick enough...children were left out. So Albert used to try to get something so that we could have it.

MIRIAM: But one thing I remember, at night, we'd be, the bunch of us, would be in a certain room, and the doctor would come in and say, "Anybody sick?" And we'd all say, "Everybody's sick." [They laugh].

JEANNE: Finally they brought our parents, their eyes were all right, and we were allowed to go. And we went to Buffalo.³⁴⁴

344 Coan, (1997), pp. 403-404.

The Story of Donik “Haji Bey” Yessaian

Haji Bey’s firstborn was a boy. They named him Garbis.³⁴⁵ We were all were overjoyed, especially the proud parents. As the months went by, your father thought more and more about his wife and baby, wondering what the future held for them. (...)

Armenians and Turks had lived together in peace for hundreds of years. In the 19th century, when the Empire began to decline, the troubles started. Maybe the troubles were getting worse, or maybe the people were just getting tired of bad government. In 1894-1896, there were large-scale massacres in many cities; 300,000 Armenians were killed. Efkerah, fortunately, was spared. Then there was the great massacre of 1909 in Adana, and that happened after the “reforming”. Young Turks came to power in 1908 and reestablished the abandoned Constitution of 1876. Armenians in Adana and surrounding villages were slaughtered like animals. What was going to happen next? Where would it happen? Would we be involved the next time? Why couldn’t the Turks and Armenians live in peace? Why did the Turks persecute Armenians? Haji Bey, in particular, agonized over these questions.

When your father returned to Smyrna from one of his trips to Efkerah, several months after the baby was born, he was very upset. I thought I knew what was eating at him, but I wasn’t sure. I asked him, “Is there something wrong back home?”

“No. I guess... everything’s fine... if you refuse to see reality and want to live in a dream world”. He leaned close and grabbed my arm. “Nazar! All our loved ones are sleeping! They think that things will get better between the Armenians and the Turks, but I can see clearly that they will only get worse.” His eyes flashed, his voice became an angry hiss. “Even you, Nazar! And Artin, Hovsep and Mardiros! None of you sees the storm gathering over our heads!”

345 Diminutive of Garabed, meaning “Forerunner”, in remembrance of John the Baptist.

I pulled my arm away. “Hold on there, my young impulsive brother! That’s not true. Your brothers and I have done a lot of thinking, too. It’s just that I, as the head of the family, hadn’t made up my mind yet about what we should do. Well, my dear brother Haji Bey, Mardiros and I are now ready to leave whenever you are. We’ve saved a few gold pieces and can afford the trip... so, let’s go!” I realized that by saying this to my brother, there was no turning back.

Your father was beside himself with joy. As for me, now that I had actually said we were going to go, everything seemed easier; I became optimistic. “Once we reach American soil and get ourselves settled, we’ll soon make money and send for our wives and children”.

“And if we can’t convince them to come, what then?”

“You leave them to me”, I said.

Haji Bey and I laid out a plan by which Artin and Hovsep would stay in Smyrna and run the business with the help of Bedri and young Hashim, while Haji Bey, Mardiros, and I would go to America and try to get established. Then we wrote back home and told our families that we had decided to take our fate in our own hands and that we were going to America. We would send for them after we were settled.

The letters started flying back and forth – for weeks and weeks. The family begged us not to go. We, insisted on going. Mama furiously demanded that we give up our foolish plan. Haji Bey insisted that it was the only thing to do. Oh, Nephew, we became so overwhelmed with everyone’s opinions and suggestions that Haji Bey and I just threw up our hands in frustration.

Even Sarkis Aga got into the act and tried to persuade Haji Bey to remain in Smyrna and take part in his new project to build a movie theater and show films imported from Hollywood.

There was no more time to argue with anyone. The smell of war was in the air. We figured that we had to go soon or we wouldn’t be able to leave at all. We rushed to make the arrangements. We got passports, visas, and booked passage.

Then the big day arrived. Haji Bey, Mardiros, and I said goodbye to Bedri and Hashim at the shop, and embraced them with tears in our eyes. Then Artin and Hovsep took us down to the harbor in a buggy, loaded with all our personal belongings, down to the ship. The sky was blue, the sea calm, yet our hearts were heavy. We wept a storm of tears as we bid farewell to our brothers. After final embraces on the pier, we climbed the gangplank and boarded the ship. We presented our tickets to a deck officer and were assigned sleeping quarters.

An hour later, we felt the vibrations from the huge engines below. The ship shook, started to move slowly from the dock, and gradually eased out of the harbor. Haji Bey, Mardiros, and I stood at the railing, watching as the city of Smyrna receded from our sight. The city pulled at my heart. "Don't go, don't go!" it seemed to be calling. "This is where you belong. This is your land. This is where your forefathers are buried."

Haji Bey's reaction was different. "Geography is an accident," he said. "A man has to go where his body and mind are free, where his heart can sing."

His words made me feel much better. I couldn't help thinking that fate had made a mistake: I should have been the younger brother, and your father the elder.

Our ship carried Mardiros, your father, and me smoothly to France where we boarded another to take us to America. It wasn't a difficult voyage at all. After our first few days abroad, we got our "sea legs," as they say. We constantly talked about what we might expect in America, what we would do, where we would go, and where we would live. We became acquainted with many of the other passengers, who were mostly emigrants like us. We settled into a routine of eating, sleeping, and talking. The days passed quickly.

Apprehension and anxiety began to build up in us as we approached New York. As we entered the harbor, everybody hung over the rails, waiting for the first glimpse of our new home. When we passed the Statue of Liberty, Nephew, you can imag-

ine the “oohs” and “aahs” coming from every mouth. She was so beautiful, that lady. Many of us men tipped our hats to her. All of us had tears streaming down our happy faces.

After landing on Ellis Island, the immigration officers herded us into the cavernous halls of a massive building. There we were given extensive physical examinations and many injections. Finally, we were allowed through the gates and taken to the foot of Manhattan Island.

We three brothers stood on the bustling streets of New York with our belongings in our hands. Our first task was to find a place to live. We managed somehow to hail a buggy. Since we didn’t know English, or anything about the city, how could we tell the driver where to go? I started to speak Turkish to the driver and then switched to Greek. What else could I do? To our amazement, he answered in broken Greek!

“When you live in New York”, he explained, “it helps to know a few languages. I don’t know them all well, but I manage to talk with guys like you. I’m a Jew, my parents came here from Russia, from Odessa, when I was two years old.”

And how did he like living in America, I asked. He laughed, looking around at all the activity going on in the streets.

“I like my life here. I can’t compare it to any other country, since I only know this one. According to my parents, this is paradise.” Since we had no idea where we wanted to go, the cabby took us to Astoria, to a Greek neighborhood where everyone spoke Greek.

We rode through the crowded streets, our eyes and ears filled with the unbelievable sights and sounds of the great city. Beeping automobiles rushed past horse-drawn carriages. Clanging trolleys screeched along on steel rails. Buildings as tall as mountains seemed to reach to the clouds. Movie houses with their bold marquees, one right after the other, lined the streets. Oh, Nephew, I can’t describe our happy feelings that day. Electric lights. Water faucets. Indoor toilets. All those modern miracles!

Irishmen, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Jews, Arabs, Greeks, Spaniards, Germans, Poles, Russians, Chinese, and Italians, all living

in harmony and going about their own businesses. Synagogues and churches of all peoples stood in quiet testimony to mutual tolerance. This was surely the land of freedom, the place they called "heaven on earth". The people back home would have to see this place with their own eyes before they would believe it. We hardly believed it ourselves, and we were right there!

The cabby let us off at a Greek coffee house. The fellows there recommended a boarding house run by a Greek lady as a nice place to stay. Our ignorance of English made it difficult for us to find decent jobs. A furrier finally hired us for ten cents an hour. We stayed with him for a few weeks but soon got sick of working for nothing. Financially, we had been much better off back in Smyrna. We hadn't come to America to be poor.

We heard of an Armenian settlement in Massachusetts, in a city called Worcester. And that, Nephew, is where we decided to go to seek our fortune.

When we arrived in Worcester, we went directly to the Armenian coffeehouse. We met a nice man almost immediately, a Mr. Bagdasarian, who was a supervisor in a local shoe factory. They needed workers, he told us. Then he invited us over to his house for dinner that very evening. We left our things in an Armenian rooming house and walked over to Mr. Bagdasarian's place.

Andranik Bagdasarian had come to the United States about fifteen years ago, after Sultan Abdul Hamid's massacres in the 1890s. "Our village was attacked the year before I left," he told us. "It was a terrible massacre. My father was killed before my very eyes, as were most of my relatives. My mother and I survived and I was determined to get out of Turkey before the next massacre began.

"I'd saved my money over the years while apprenticing in a leather shop. This money, plus what my father had left us, was just enough to get us to this beloved country. I was lucky, on ship-board I met and fell in love with an Armenian girl who was also emigrating. We were married by the ship's captain. She turned out to be a truly special lady, as you can see.

“I’ll tell you one thing, boys,” he went on, “if you have anyone left back there, get them out as soon as possible”.

We told him that was what we intended to do.

The next day, we went to the factory where Mr. Bagdasarian was employed. He arranged for us to be hired on the spot, and we were to report to work the next morning.³⁴⁶

9. Armenians in Turkish Memoirs

Information about the Armenians who emigrated from Anatolia can be found in the memoirs of Turkish journalists and bureaucrats who visited America at different dates. Fuad Gedik, who was sent to the U.S. in 1948 as a Ministry of Justice employee, related his encounters with Armenians as follows:

Armenians live their lives as if they were in Istanbul and Anatolia.

And when they are at home, all of them, including those who don’t like us, act as if they were in Turkey.

They cook Turkish foods.

They don’t drink cocktails, martinis or manhattans but smuggled raki. Most are not happy with their lives here.

Even the most successful of them miss their lives in Turkey.

Taking a deep breath, elderly, kindhearted Artin says:

“Oh, Galata! Oh, everything about that city was outstanding! Oh, God, where have those days gone! Those dear days.” When I was to leave New York, although I kept telling him and his equally kindhearted and pure wife not to cry, the lips of this great friend Artin drooped for a while like the lips of a child.

“My bones will be buried here,” he said, as he began to sob and shed hot tears.

346 Harry Yessaian, *Out of Turkey The Life Story of Donik “Haji Bey” Yessaian*, The Armenian Research Center The University of Michigan-Dearborn, 1994, pp. 107-113, <http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/armenian/turkey.out/entire.pdf>

Another one, a young Miriam who wanted to be introduced to me as a Turk, couldn't bear to watch as I got into the taxi, but buried her face in a handkerchief, withdrew to a corner, and started weeping. But the taxi driver, who seemed grouchy, pulled out right in front of the girl.³⁴⁷

The journalist Zekeriya Sertel, who was in America between 1919 and 1923, described his impressions of an elderly Armenian from Istanbul whom he met:

We met an elderly Armenian who had been in America for twenty-five years and had become Americanized. He was longing for Istanbul. He had made a life for himself and had a job. He lived comfortably. But he had an unsatisfied desire, a yearning: to go back to Istanbul, to play a game of backgammon under a big plane tree in Emirgân while sinking into the blueness of the Bosphorus, and to die there...

At that time the Armenians were forbidden to return home.

But with the passage of time, that prohibition was abolished. The elderly Armenian returned to his native Istanbul. He played backgammon under a plane tree in Emirgân and attained his desire, dying there.³⁴⁸

This is how the journalist Ahmet Emin Yalman recounts his experience:

At that time I had gone to Los Angeles with a delegation of the Turkish Air Force. An Armenian waiter came over to us and asked:

"Is any of you from Erzurum?"

Muhlis Yılmaz was with us. We pointed him out. Shaking hands with him, the waiter immediately asked:

"What neighborhood are you from, what street?..."

Muhlis told him his neighborhood, his street, and didn't they appear to be from the same neighborhood! The Armenian was fit

347 Gedik, (1948), p. 210.

348 Zekeriya Sertel, (1977), p. 108.

to be tied. Living in the midst of paradise—in Los Angeles, in Hollywood—he was moaning, “Oh, Erzurum!” He told Muhlis: “Since you are my countryman, I am your servant, your subject. How can I be of service to you?”

As long as we were in Los Angeles, he followed Muhlis Yılmaz’s every step like a shadow. I asked Muhlis:

“What does Erzurum have to make a man who lives in Hollywood feel so tied to it?”

After thinking it over, Muhlis replied:

“I don’t know. In Erzurum there are lots of poplar trees, and it has plenty of storks.”

He meant that Los Angeles’s peerless parks and gardens couldn’t make that man forget the poplar trees of Erzurum; stuck in his fantasy of storks, that man was indifferent to the Hollywood film stars and beautiful extras.³⁴⁹

(...)

Instead of a naval exercise, we did our touring in two automobiles furnished to us by the Chicago City Council. Those were no taxis either; they were two grand-looking Lincolns, each with room for seven people.

The driver of one of them attracted my attention. His type was familiar... I wondered, where had I seen him? When I paid a little more attention, I realized that I didn’t know him personally, but I knew his type. He was absolutely an Istanbulite Armenian, and furthermore the sort you see in Kumkapı...

While touring the camp, I sat down beside him for a while. Speaking Turkish, I asked him point blank:

“You must be from Istanbul, you know Turkish, don’t you?”

“You’ve got that right,” he said.

“So why didn’t you speak Turkish with us? Why didn’t you let us know?”

349 Ahmet Emin Yalman, 1943, vol. 2, pp. 136-137.

"I didn't know how you would react to me. This car is mine. I use it as what's called a private taxi. Whenever the Chicago City Government has guests, they always send for me. Yesterday I heard that I was going to be taking some Turkish journalists around. I was so happy, I couldn't sleep. Just think about it: I left Istanbul twenty-two years ago. I haven't come across a single Turkish countryman since. Today is a holiday for me, I've met some fellow countrymen."

With that thought, we parted. I had been invited to a dinner and debate at Chicago University. And that night my colleagues would be going to the Pacific coast. I had already been to the West coast three times, so I knew that area. However, since the days we were to spend in America were limited, I preferred to spend time in the program's office in New York and Washington, so as to obtain a better understanding of America's politicians and political thought, and to gather some ideas for future projects. That way, we could divide up our work profitably.

My colleagues were going to spend part of the afternoon touring Chicago's famous packing houses and doing some other sight-seeing. I wasn't going to spend this time with them, however, since I'd seen those things on previous visits.

I said goodbye to my colleagues. And they would wire what they saw thereabouts to our newspaper for me.

The Armenian driver wanted to take me to the hotel; I sat down beside him. Figuring that we had time for a little tour, we decided to see Chicago's new neighborhoods. Places like paradise... What lovely mansions were set within spacious groves of trees and beautiful gardens, what a nice time we had! I was thinking, "The people around here really know how to live!" As if reading my mind, my Armenian friend said:

"These people have no idea how to live. How terrible! Just look, they have so many beautiful places, but do you see a single café or bar on the lakeshore? We are men used to pleasure, we enjoy drinking in the midst of nature and look for the most beautiful places on the seashore. Think of Sandıkburnu, imagine you are

seeing Büyükada, Kalamış, Arnavutköy; remember Büyükdere... When people drink there, they don't get drunk, they have a good time. It opens people's eyes and hearts. Here, when people want to forget the world for a while, they run away from nature's beauty, going to places as dark as kennels where they down the demon drink as if it were poison, and they get filthy drunk in that gloom. The art of living is our talent. Nothing here has any flavor. Thankfully, I am working, I'm making money, I lack for nothing, I have a smile on my face everywhere I go, they treat me just like the richest guys, they shake my hand, they respect me, but it's all for nothing... Everything I enjoy got left behind in Istanbul. If I put anything in my mouth, I compare it to something similar from home, and I find it tasteless. The only good place to go for watermelon is Tekirdağ. For artichokes, there's no place on earth like Bayrampaşa; for eggplant, Langa; for romaine lettuce, Yedikule, for strawberries, Arnavutköy, the best peaches and chestnuts grow in Bursa. You won't find things like those anywhere else. Don't be fooled by imitations... Where else can you get our stuffed eggplant, the things we adore and enjoy, our water *börek*,³⁵⁰ our fish, our lamb, our sweets!...³⁵¹

The psychologist Belkıs Vassaf observed the following with regard to the Armenians she met in Detroit in 1936:

One day we went into a cafeteria. We couldn't find a place to sit. A man and woman were sitting at a table. We went and sat down beside those two people. While I was talking with Ethem, I guessed that the people next to us understood Turkish, and I said, "Our tablemates know Turkish, Ethem." Apparently, they were Armenians. They asked why we had come here and started praising America to us. And when we told them we were going back to Turkey, they said, "Why are you going back? Don't you like it here?" And I replied, "You know there's a saying in Turkish,

350 An exceptionally light pastry filled with cheese or meat. The dough is first cooked in boiling water, then dropped in ice water to stop the cooking; hence the name.

351 Yalman, (1943), vol. 2, pp. 108-110.

‘they put the nightingale in a golden cage, and it wept, saying Ah, to be home!’” As soon as I said that, tears began to drop from the eyes of the Armenian husband and wife.

In Armenian cafes, gatherings, and homes, they always played Turkish music. And at that time, a song written by an Armenian was very popular with all the Turks. It began like this: “Why did I go to America? I wish I never came, I wish I never saw it.” The Armenians sing the songs and make the recordings that best express the longing for the homeland.”³⁵²

The journalist Hikmet Feridun Es tells how the immigrants brought their superstitions to America with them:

You often see this kind of superstitious behavior among the minorities in America. For example, a while ago an Armenian got sick. They went from one doctor to another. The most important medical experts came. It was no use.

The patient said:

“You must melt some lead for me.”³⁵³ Tell me if I’m still sick after that.”

And they found someone who did it in America. They were melting lead on Broadway for a Turkish Armenian!...

The patient said: “I feel refreshed!” And then he got out from under the blanket.”³⁵⁴

Among the immigrants from Anatolia to America, the Armenians were the most numerous. The obvious reason for this was the genocide they experienced during the 1915 Deportations. Escaping from the massacres, the Anatolian Armenians risked everything to immigrate to the New World. Among the immigrants, for understandable reasons, no one ever thought of going

352 Gündüz Vassaf, *Annem Belkis*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), pp. 206-207.

353 A superstitious custom of melting lead and dropping it into cold water over the head of a sick person.

354 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, July 10, 1948.

back. A major portion of the Armenian immigrants from Anatolia harbored extremely bitter feelings toward the Turks and Turkey on account of the slaughter they had experienced during those times, and these feelings have persisted down to our own days.

GREEK IMMIGRATION

1. The Number of Greek Immigrants

Another group of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects who immigrated to America was the Greeks. Among them the most famous surely was Germir native Elia Kazancıoğlu, later known as Elia Kazan. The head of the Kazancıoğlu family, after living in Istanbul for a while, at the age of twenty emigrated from Kayseri to New York. He opened an oriental rug store there and his brother, George, obtained the rugs for him. In 1912 George, with his wife Athena and four-year-old son Elia, immigrated first to Berlin, and then to New York, where he lived with his brother.³⁵⁵

There are differing figures for the number of Greek immigrants. While Prof. Leland James Gordon gives the total number of Greek immigrants between 1900 and 1923 as 78,262,³⁵⁶ another source states that between 1821 and 1945, some 156,000 came from European Turkey and 205,474 from Asiatic Turkey, making for a total of 361,474 Greek immigrants to America until the end of World War II.³⁵⁷ The Greeks, like other Ottoman subjects who immigrated, struggled to keep Ottoman-Greek culture alive in

355 Elia Kazan, *A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), pp. 13-21. Kazan's film *America, America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1962) was based on his family's experience and would tell the story in the novel *The Anatolian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982). Years later, Kazan visited Turkey several times and gave a detailed account of those visits in his autobiography. See: Kazan, (1988), pp. 547-560, 616-624. For his 1978 visit to Turkey, see Jülide Ergüder, "Türkiye'den Elia Kazan geçti..." *Birikim* 7, 46-47 (January 1979), pp. 125-128.

356 Gordon, (1932), p. 308.

357 Stephanos Zotos, *Hellenic Presence in America*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Pilgrimage, 1976), p. 74.

the New World. Together with the Greeks who emigrated from Greece, they would introduce Americans to the choicest dishes of both Ottoman and Greek cuisine, such as gyros, shish kebab, stuffed tomatoes, stuffed grape leaves, rotisserie-roasted lamb, and *kokoreç*.³⁵⁸ Another Ottoman tradition that Greek immigrants would continue to practice in America was that of coffeehouses. The Greek immigrants also enjoyed putting on the Karagöz puppet shows.³⁵⁹ The subjects of the plays were usually the Greeks' War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire. Another popular pastime was gambling.³⁶⁰ The Greek immigrants, like other Ottoman immigrants, were nostalgic for the lands they had left behind. As *Vatan* editor Ahmet Emin Yalman wrote in an editorial, that nostalgia sometimes turned into a vocal examination of conscience:

We are in America, at a farm on the Hudson River. The farm belonging to Mr. Ateş from Konya. It serves as a guesthouse for fifteen or twenty Anatolian Greek families during the summer.

They all speak Turkish. Including the little children born in America... They sing Turkish songs, and while drinking peach brandy in the evening, they start dancing Turkish folkdances. They have plucked a little piece of home and brought it here to America...

We are drinking peach brandy with three old countrymen in the shadow of a big tree. Around us stretch the orchards of peaches waiting to be picked. They are the farm's main crop... They imbue the surroundings with a pleasant peach fragrance. Looking at the wooded Hudson and its flourishing banks in the distance, one feels that he is in paradise.

358 A dish made from broiled lamb's intestines.

359 Traditional Turkish shadow puppet shows, named after their main character.

360 Dimitris Monos, Sandra Stotsky, eds., *The Greek Americans*, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996), pp. 56-62.

One of the old countrymen, an airplane mechanic from Merzifon, put his hand on his chest and sighed:

“Yes, this is paradise,” he said, “we are lacking for nothing. I have a good job. I like my work, and everyone at my work likes me. My whole family is happy, my home is happy and comfortable...But I have a constant bitterness inside me, a wound that won’t heal. The reason is: why can’t I use the trade I have learned for the country where I was born and raised? Why didn’t we appreciate how blessed we were in time? Why can’t I breathe the air of my own homeland at this second?”

I have been in America for twenty years, I am about fifty years old. I went to night school here. I studied on my own. Now I look back in my mind, and I am ashamed of myself.

They called me up for the world war. I paid money. They put me on the staff of a hospital. Living at home, I was happy. I knew where to pay bribes and find ways to prevent my relatives from being drafted. I had a trade, a business, we were making money. Instead of using our money for the benefit of the country where we were born, we used it to undermine it.

There is no shortage of bad people in every country. They took our bribes and neglected to do their duties for our sake. And we lived like parasites. And we put a lot of effort into corrupting many honest officials with drink, with women, and with money. In that way we managed to get some of the government agencies indebted to us, so that they helped us out. And not just with regard to military service. We knew how to get out of paying taxes and customs and how to get out of the hands of the police. Some of the corrupt officials didn’t dare take bribes from the Turks, fearing that word would get around, but they didn’t hesitate to take them from us. Thanks to that, we enjoyed the status of a sort of privileged class. If you made a statistical study of the tax registers of that time, you would see that it was the Turks who bore the burden of taxation for our fortunes, while the taxes we paid were nominal. Yes, we paid taxes alright, but most of them were in the form of bribes to petty bureaucrats...

Back then, we used to regard those guys who took our money and did our business, those who cozied up to us, as “clever,” as good men. Now I think of them as evil and contemptible men.

Yes, it was we who wickedly corrupted them with our money. However, our actions can’t excuse what they did. They should have been dutiful, they should have resisted.

Longing for my homeland, today I am disgusted with myself when I think of all those things. For that beautiful land where I was born and raised, I would gladly serve in the army and pay taxes and customs duties, I would be an honorable man, I wouldn’t look for ways to get around the law. Today I would feel respect for myself.

Now I look back honestly, and I see that I and the people like me did the greatest harm to our homeland by undermining the country’s foundation with bribes. We did more harm to Turkey than all her enemies. And our punishment is to long for our homeland till we die, to be damned to suffer the torment of hell while living in the midst of paradise.³⁶¹

The “longing for the homeland” that Ahmet Emin Yalman witnessed among immigrants from Anatolia and Istanbul was like a fire that smoldered deep inside them, never dying out. That fire was rekindled when Greek immigrants met Turkish journalists, bureaucrats, or tourists who were visiting America. Both in memoirs and in the interviews appearing in the series of articles by the journalist Hikmet Feridun Es there are vivid examples of that longing.

2. The Greeks in Memoirs

Zekeriya Sertel

A Turkish fair opened in New York. The pavilion’s entrance hall was decked out from from end to end with beautiful photographs of Istanbul.

361 Ahmet Emin Yalman, “Eski Bir Vatandaşın Acı İtirafı,” *Vatan*, May 11, 1941.

One man came every morning without fail, got excited in front of a photo of a corner of Istanbul, stood there, and didn't leave till nightfall. The superintendent of the fair got curious, went over to him and asked him who he was and why he came there.

He was a Greek citizen from Istanbul. He raised his head and looked at the superintendent in amazement.

"Are you familiar with Istanbul? Have you ever been in Yeniköy?" he asked, and pointing to the picture he had been gazing at every day, he added, "That is Yeniköy," and plunged back into the picture.³⁶²

The Journalist Tarık Binat

In Detroit we often saw a former countryman of Greek origin who had immigrated to America forty-five years earlier. He was originally from Alaşehir. He had left the country toward the end of the War of Independence. He had been a boy back then, he'd gotten married in America and raised sons and daughters. They too had married and gotten their start in life. One evening we left the hotel and two blocks away, on a street where they said the Turks and Greeks lived, we were reading the signs on the shops and coffeehouses while walking and talking among ourselves. He realized that we were Turks from hearing us talk. He came right over to us and started speaking Turkish. He showed us a restaurant on the same street where they made Turkish food, and while we were eating, he sat and chatted with us. He told us about Alaşehir, Manisa, the vineyards, the gardens, the idealized lands of his childhood. And after dinner, he showed us a coffeehouse across the street run by a Christian Albanian. We drank coffee and tea there. He refused to take our money, and although he appeared to be poor, he insisted on treating us and honoring us.³⁶³

362 Zekeriya Sertel, (1977), pp. 108-109.

363 Tarık Binat, *Burası Amerika: Bir Geziden Notlar*, (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1966), p. 65.

Ahmet Emin Yalman, Editor of the Newspaper Vatan

A Greek from Bursa by the name of Manos, who runs a restaurant here, is giving us a dinner. He would have been offended if one of us hadn't come, but anyway after coming here, one can't help being curious about the restaurant of a man from Bursa and an alumnus of Galatasaray.³⁶⁴ I don't know why they call Manos "Marko Pasha." Seriously, Marko Pasha...³⁶⁵

It's impossible to explain what he wants. The air force attaché, Major Tekin, and his wife had also been invited, and I told them I wasn't going. On the telephone he said:

"It's impossible, you *must* go, the invitations were for the whole group."

We went together. It is San Antonio's most fashionable restaurant, a brightly lit place... People make reservations days in advance to get a table. If they don't get a table, they'll wait for hours till one is empty. There is no music or show, etc. They come there just to see Marko Pasha's smiling face and eat his delicious food. He's a curious guy, he runs all over the place, busying himself with customers, he thinks people are delighted to have him read them the menu.

He greeted us like longtime friends. Apparently whenever a Turk sets foot in there, he insists on welcoming him and showing him hospitality. He seeks out Turks in nearby cities, and when he finds them, he constantly invites all of them: is there any way they can come over for a while? If a Turkish consul is sent here, he will exert himself with equal enthusiasm. The fact that Galatasaray alumni have branched out to the four corners of the world made Abidin Daver,³⁶⁶ another Galatasaray alumnus, proud.

364 Located in Istanbul, the Galatasaray Lycée is one of Turkey's oldest and most prestigious high schools.

365 Marko Pasha or Marko Apostolidis (?-1888) was an Ottoman Greek soldier. Marko Pasha was a very patient doctor. He always cared to solve his patients problems and health issues. This Marko Pasha became famous in the Ottoman society and his name became associated with the meaning of caring for one's problems.

366 (1886-1941), Turkish journalist and politician. Abidin Daver was a co-found-

In addition to our group—Colonel Williams, Major Tekin, and their guests, our host, Marko Pasha, had brought three Turkish students. They were serious young men studying in this area at the expense of the Directorate of Mineral Research. Anyway, I found out that one of them was someone I was looking for. I had brought him a letter from his family that I had received through the intervention of Mr. İzzet, the Assistant General Press Secretary.

The meal began with *rakı*. It went on like a feast from the Thousand and One Nights. Marko Pasha had been unable to get snacks and so forth from our part of the world since the war started, but he brought out *pastırma*,³⁶⁷ sausages, pickled eggplant, and Kal-amata olives that he had set aside for special occasions.

Since this place is near the Mexican border, he had concocted a dinner that blended the Turkish way of preparing food with the Mexican one, using lots of red pepper and spices. He had created a specially designed appetizer for each course, so as to refresh the appetite as we ate. After the *rakı*, he served a selection of wines and liqueurs... Marko Pasha didn't sit down at the table, but he drank with us. Happy, jolly... He never stopped laughing. His establishment had a guest book. Many famous people had written in it and autographed it... And he had each of us write something. Then, searching his memory, he looked through some notes in his pocket notebook and read poems in Turkish. Tevfik Fikret³⁶⁸ himself had been the headmaster when he was at Galatasaray.

Other than a peppery soup, full of pieces of shrimp and lobster, followed by a delicious baked fish, don't ask me what else we ate at this dinner. As for Marko Pasha, he himself didn't eat any of the foods we had ingested. His stomach was too full and swollen.³⁶⁹

er (member number eight) of the Galatasaray Sports Club, one of Turkey's leading soccer teams, and served as President of the club in 1929-30.

367 A pastrami-like dried, salted meat cured with a paste containing red pepper, fenugreek seeds, and garlic.

368 (1867-1915), well-known Turkish poet, considered the father of modern Turkish poetry.

369 Yalman, (1943), vol. II, pp. 154-156.

Mehmet Çınarlı's Michigan Memories

We were talking with each other in Turkish as we tried to choose our food in a cafeteria we had gone to at noon. When the lady who was the boss of the cafeteria found out that we had come from Turkey, she said, "Please come as soon as you've finished eating. My husband will be delighted to talk with you. He's been looking for an opportunity like this for so long. He just went to get some meat, he'll be right back." As the woman had requested, we waited for her husband to come back. The man welcomed us very excitedly. He got even happier when he found out that at least one of us was from the Bursa area and knew the village where he had been born and raised. There was nothing he didn't ask our colleague. I was touched when he asked whether the juniper tree at the fork in the road going to and from the village was still there. The elderly Greek, who was suffering from a great longing for Turkey, sighed and said: "We got along very well with the Turks. More of my friends were Turks than Greeks. May those who spoiled our friendship and made us emigrate go blind!"³⁷⁰

Fuad Gedik's New York Memories

The owner of the "Apollo" restaurant on 42nd Street was a Greek from Beykoz. He had painted "Greece, the Cradle of Democracy" in yellow paint on the walls and had hung up pictures of the Parthenon and Athens. That Greek, who knew very little Turkish, was a spirited craftsman. He was particularly fond of music. But could that excessive fondness for music open a window to the past for him? Always, he listens to Greek tunes. They are distant memories for him. Distant, very distant memories. It is a restaurant with all the character of the Orient. Almost all the customers are easterners. The foods they eat are Turkish. And their names are in Turkish. For example, they serve Beykoz calf's foot, stuffed lamb, tripe soup, and rakı. The Turks in New York

370 Mehmet Çınarlı, *Altmış Yılın Hikayesi*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1999), p. 268. Çınarlı went to Michigan in 1961 on business for the Finance Ministry.

go to that restaurant. One day on the radio, during the “Greek hour,” the Greeks were playing a Turkish record. It was the first time in a long while that a Turkish song had been heard in the restaurant. And it was a Turkish woman singing. Something strange happened. All the customers, who were all Greek, forgot about their food. Setting their knives and forks aside, they began listening to the song. Some of them buried their heads in their hands, forgetting themselves. At one point, I saw the boss coming straight toward me, trying not to make any noise. I was eating, he must have thought I wouldn’t notice.

Looking at me with feverish, tear-filled eyes, he whispered:

“A Turkish song is playing.”

I nodded my head, as if to say “I know.”

Yes, and all of them—men, women, and even the young—were listening to the song.

That was a tune their grandfathers and grandmothers, and even their fathers and mothers had mentioned so often.³⁷¹

3. Life Stories

From the Pen of Sara Korle

We had quite a few friends among the Greek-Americans who lived in New York. One of them was the well-known wholesale furrier, Mr. Emil Murat. Emil Murat had had less than ten dollars in his pocket when he came to America with his mother about thirty years ago, but over time his situation had improved, and he had married a Greek girl from Anatolia. At home—even including the children who were born here—they speak Turkish, they eat Turkish food, they drink Turkish coffee, and Turkish customs prevail. His wife, who only knew Turkish and English when they got married, learned Greek from her mother-in-law.

(...)

371 Gedik, (1946), pp. 209-210. Gedik went to New York in 1946 on Ministry of Justice business.

It was from Murat that I learned of the existence of the Istanbul Club and how that club, was founded in 1944 by people from Istanbul who missed their country. Murat is the club's hands and feet: its everything. He is in charge of keeping order at their meetings and preparing food. One day he said:

"This week we're going to have a cocktail party. We'd all be very pleased if you would come. You won't feel like a foreigner, though, because that evening everyone will be speaking Turkish." We were happy to accept his invitation, and I went to the MacAlpin Hotel for the gathering with my husband, Sinan Korle, and our friends Ferit and Cemile Güngören.

As we went into the hall where the gathering was being held, the first sound that came to our ears was the song "I'm Waiting for the Brunette with a Hazelnut, I'm Waiting for the Brunette with a Pistachio." The entire hall was festooned with balloons. Murat welcomed us at the door, took us right to our table, and introduced us to Mr. Karanikola, who sitting at the same table. Mr. Karanikola spoke perfect Turkish, having graduated from the American College in Bebek in 1902, and begun practicing law after coming to America. When he saw us, Mr. Karanikola, who had been practicing law for forty years, greeted us like old friends and started asking us if we knew any of his Turkish friends from Istanbul.

On the table was spread an array of Turkish snacks, ranging from *pastırma* to *piyaz*,³⁷² from salted bonito to pickles. Bottles made in California, but which looked like bottles of Turkish raki, were lined up on the table. Turkish conversations could be heard from left to right, almost all of them were speaking Turkish to each other.

(...)

When they found out we were Turkish, they started coming to our table. Although some of them had left the country thirty, thirty-five, or even forty years ago, they spoke excellent Turk-

372 A cold bean salad in vinaigrette dressing.

ish. All of them were nostalgic for their homeland. When a man named Peter Klones from Burgaz said he would be going to Istanbul in about three or four months, his eyes were smiling and he was very excited.

“Oh, I’m counting the days. And if I go sooner, I’ll be able to enjoy my homeland to my heart’s content,” he was saying.

Almost all the waiters spoke Turkish, and they didn’t know how to treat us. A waiter named Aris Rejis, who said he was from Kadıköy, wept as he told us:

“I have come to the age of sixty-six. After saving up a little money here, last year my wife and I went to Istanbul. I can’t tell you how excited I got when our plane came over Istanbul. I could hardly breathe. As soon as I got off the plane, I lay down and kissed the ground. My wife was shocked. “What’s the matter?” I asked her. “Do you object to my kissing my native soil?” But since my visa was only for three months, I left without enjoying my land to my heart’s content. Now I am old, with one foot in the grave. Whether my wife wants to come with me or not, my only desire is to die in my homeland.”

Aris Rejis wasn’t the only one shedding tears as he told us this; like him, many of the others were burning with longing for the homeland. (...) All evening, we listened to Turkish songs from the violinist Yani. We watched men and women from seven to seventy dancing the *zeybek*³⁷³ and the *çiftetelli*. But grandmothers and grandfathers who were from Istanbul and even six- and seven-year-old children were dancing the *zeybek* perfectly, adjusting their feet to the *Laz*³⁷⁴ melodies.

During an interval, an old woman came up to me and said these words in an unmistakably Anatolian accent:

“All year long, I don’t spend any money on entertainment, but whatever I do, every year I come to this gathering. It’s a great joy for me to get together here to remember our homeland.”

373 A folkdance from southern, central, and western Anatolia.

374 From the Black Sea coast.

One can gather from those words the deep longing people from Istanbul feel for their homeland, and one can easily see why these people try to get together like that at least once a year.³⁷⁵

From the Pen of Hikmet Feridun Es

When the Turkish steamship *Çoruh* docked in New Jersey, a little delegation appeared on the shore. The captain on duty wondered who they were. The members of the delegation were coming straight toward the ship. One of them, speaking Turkish but with a foreign accent, asked who the captain was. The captain on duty went right down beside them. He wanted to know what they wanted. The leader of the group very excitedly replied in Turkish: “We came to see the Turkish flag!”

Since the accent with which they spoke Turkish was different, the captain on duty went on inquisitively:

“Who are you, sir?”

“We are Greeks from Istanbul. We have a society in New York. Its name is the ‘Society of Istanbulites.’ When we heard that a Turkish ship was coming to New York, we came right away to see the ship and the flag!”

Among the Istanbulite Greeks who came were the well-known Sava Bey and Mr. Fodiadis, both of whose names were no strangers to our city.

Before my very eyes I saw one of those Turkish Greeks who live in America full of nostalgia for home. He could at least catch a glimpse of faraway *Rum*.³⁷⁶ I had come across some Greek countrymen who are elderly, financially comfortable, and act like Americans, but shed tears when they talk about Tarlabası, Beyoğlu, and even that run-down Hammalbaşu Avenue.

The so-called “Society of Istanbulites” that the Greeks from Istanbul had founded was one of those very wealthy organizations.

375 Sara Ertuğrul, “Amerikadan Vatana,” *Vatan*, November 20, 1952.

376 Byzantium, the name the Greeks use for Turkey.

Almost all the members are from Istanbul. They get together very often and talk only about Istanbul at their meetings, pouring out their homesickness. They give balls and hold cocktail parties at Central Palace 840. They seize upon every opportunity to be connected to their homeland. You've recognized their leader for quite a while, but you don't know his real name, because everyone calls him "Murat" or "Murat Bey." They are also profoundly interested in Turks who come to America. They are people with happy lives, with businesses and comfortable incomes. The Greeks in New York have three theaters—two that are continually open, and one that is only open in the season—and four newspapers.

And among themselves the Turkish Greeks show off their wealth to each other, saying, "We are Turkish!"

On the Pacific coast, in the city of Los Angeles, they have certain gatherings they call "Turkish Sundays." Every week, on Sundays, all those from Turkey in the area meet at the Apollo coffeehouse. They talk for hours, play backgammon, and joke around.³⁷⁷

Istanbul Native Yordan Lefter's Story

A minaret repairman in America!... It sounds like a fez blocker in the Pope's Vatican City. But what can you do? It was the fate of the well-known minaret repairman Lefter Efendi to be dragged off to the Americas, where there's not a single minaret. (...) Let me tell a story about what strong ties Lefter Efendi has to his homeland: One day while Lefter Efendi was working in his shop, he got a telegram from one of our sailors in Norfolk.

The telegram read: "We've brought news of your sister from Istanbul." Lefter Efendi had a lot of orders to fill. But who cares? He took a plane and went to Norfolk... He took thirty-five of our sailors to dinner. He kept begging them till morning:

"Talk to me about Istanbul."

He lives in a completely Turkish area, on St. Antoine Street, adjacent to the Turkish Society for the Protection of the Children.

377 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 30, 1948.

When I went to his workshop, as soon as he found out that I was a Turk, he practically declared a holiday. He took some baklava out of the cupboard.

This is how he told me the story of his life, which was like a touching novel:

“They call me Lefter from Istanbul, but I am actually from İncesu.³⁷⁸ And Yordan Lefter is my proper name. I grew up in Istanbul since I was three years old. My father was a grocer in Zircirlikuyu. And I was his apprentice! At the same time, I attended the little Vefa school. I cared nothing about the grocery business. I particularly wanted to study art. However, my father wouldn’t pay my expenses. I finally went to work for a lead maintenance man in Karaköy. I wasn’t getting paid. Every day I would walk from Istanbul to Galata. Since I didn’t have a *kuruş*, I started sneaking across the Galata Bridge. Since I was always sneaking across the bridge, the toll collectors got to know me by name. And they sarcastically called me “the rich customer.”

They used to tease me, saying “Hey, Lefter, pay the toll at least once a week...” Those men were like fathers to me. When I was sick for two or three days and didn’t go to work, and of course didn’t go to the bridge either—or rather, sneak across it— they were worried about me. They would joke with me, saying, “Hey, Lefter, where were you? Have you started flying over the Bridge, or swimming under it?” Oh, my dear boy, I sacrificed myself for mankind, for the people of Istanbul.

Mr. Lefter’s eyes filled with tears, then he asked:

“Are they still charging a toll for the bridge?”

“They stopped a long time ago.”

“Too bad...I mean, I’d pay what I owe... I’m indebted to the bridge. I promised the toll collectors: ‘When I get rich in America, I’ll come back to Istanbul and pay all the tolls I owe in a lump sum.’ That means I won’t be able to keep my promise. My beloved bridge... At least those Bosphorus ferries...”

378 A town in Kayseri Province in central Anatolia.

Have you ridden one of those Bosphorus ferries here?"

Seeing how surprised I was, he smiled and added:

"I've found Bosphorus ferries here. Or rather, I nicknamed them 'Bosphorus ferries.' They operate between Detroit and Canada. Have you taken one? They're just like our Bosphorus ferries. Except they have one extra story below deck. I go by myself every Sunday morning, saying, 'Let's take the Bosphorus ferry.'

Moreover, the metal work on those boats, which really does recall the Bosphorus ferries, was done in our "Lefter Metal Work" shop.

Since I compared the ferries to the Bosphorus ferries, I did the work with all my heart and did it so beautifully that people were amazed. Anyway, let me get on with my story: doing metal work—what they call lead maintenance in Istanbul—I started repairing minarets. That work really appealed to me. I worked on the domes and the tops of the minarets at the Kariye Mosque, and the Fatih, Selimiye, and Beyazıt Mosques. Then I went to Bursa. I worked there. I did the repairs on the top of the Yıldız Palace Mosque all by myself.

Since I was involved in lead work, I also made little ship models for myself. During the work on the Yıldız Palace Mosque, I made an exact model of the *Hamidiye*. I put a propeller in it. I got permission to sail it on the pond in the Yıldız gardens. At the time, that almost became an issue. Several months before I went to America, there was a repair job in Galata. I went and applied for the job. They asked, 'Are you a European?' I told them I was an expert workman. They didn't hire me. That upset me. What did they mean by 'Are you a European?' I went to another place at that time wearing a hat. I told them, 'I'm Hungarian.' They gave me the job. I'd put on the hat when I went to work and take it off when I came back to my neighborhood. I was ashamed of this situation.

Finally one day I ran into our beloved teacher İhsan Efendi. With a hat on my head! "What's that about, Lefter?" he asked. I ex-

plained. I complained about the condition the country was in at that time. The next day, I saw a ship at the dock. Making my mind up at once, I went over to the ship. There was no one there... I yelled, and finally a sailor came to me. I asked where the ship was going. He replied: 'To America.' I immediately made another decision: I was going to go on that ship! I ran to Hadji Efendi. I explained. I borrowed five gold coins. And I had a few *kuruş* of my own. I boarded that ship and came here. The ship was called the *Themistocles*. We were able to cross from Istanbul to New York in thirty-six days. I couldn't repair minarets here, but my skill brought me a lot of work. Thank God, I could count on my metal work.

He paused. He has lived as a bachelor for forty years. His has a beautiful voice.

"One evening in a restaurant where they didn't know I was Turkish, a few people were singing a song in Turkish in a corner. And I was drinking beer. I was overcome with homesickness. I couldn't contain myself.

I sang a gazel!... Then I started a song. They were really shocked, but... Oh, for those days!... My homesickness wells up every night, and I dash out to the street. I need to tell someone how I feel. I tell the American policemen on night duty my story at great length. They feel sorry for me and say:

"Don't worry...You'll see, one day you'll go there."

God willing. To go to the bridge I used to sneak across when I was broke and on my way to my first job...Then I'll drink some *boza*.³⁷⁹

I looked at Lefter as he was bidding me farewell. His eyes were tearful!³⁸⁰

379 A drink made of slightly fermented millet.

380 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler, *Hürriyet*, June 30, 1948.

Istanbulite Maurides Alyanakoğlu's Story

I was invited to a wedding in Nevada. There is a peculiar reason why old Turkish cigarette fiends would recognize the host of the wedding. At one time there were cigarette papers that came in a little booklet with the name "Double Eagle Cigarette Paper." The man who owned them, Maurides Alyanakoğlu by name, was a Greek countryman from Istanbul. And the man who was marrying off his daughter in Nevada was none other than the cigarette paper magnate himself: Maurides Efendi.

He was a very typical guy. Short, chubby, bespectacled, as if not made of skin and bone but of joy and laughter. I hadn't come across anyone in the past few years whose laughter came from so deep inside him. As if his family name, Alyanakoğlu, meant that his cheeks³⁸¹ were like Amasya apples. They were so fleshy that they practically swayed when he walked. Although he had forgotten lots of Turkish words, he certainly remembered how to say "at your service." He always introduced himself saying,

"Maurides from Pangaltı, at your service!..."

If you heard him say the words "at your service," you would think he spoke Turkish beautifully. However, I suppose that since his Turkish hadn't been very strong to begin with, thirty-four years had considerably weakened it. He had such a memory and had so many acquaintances in Istanbul that he could list every of his friends from Harbiye to Pangaltı and from there to Bomonti one by one.

He didn't know that the Osmanbey casino had been demolished and replaced by a gasoline depot, etc. When I told him about that, it was the first time in our entire conversation that the smile vanished from his face. And he slapped himself on his chubby cheeks.

"What have you done?" he asked us. Then he added:

"They tore down that lovely Osmanbey casino?... Now it's a beautiful gas depot?"

381 *Al Yanak* means "red cheeks" in Turkish.

He was as sad as if he had heard some bad news about his own son or daughter.

When I said, "What can you expect?" etc., he replied:

"What? Whenever you speak of what you think of life in Beyoğlu in those days, in the areas from Harbiye upwards, the memory 'Osmanbey casino' comes to mind. That casino was the only thing that gave a certain liveliness and excitement to the upper portion of Beyoğlu. In those times, if it hadn't been for the Osmanbey casino, nobody would have gone up from Taksim. The upper part of Beyoğlu would have had nothing to show in the way of entertainment. I'm really sorry..."

The last time I saw that garden, I was twenty-one years old. But I haven't stopped thinking about it in the past thirty-four years. I had this idea that when I became a millionaire, I'd go there and drink some ice-cold mugs of beer."

I felt coarse and was sorry to have destroyed Maurides *Efendi's* dream.

So that's what Maurides Efendi Alyanakoğlu, who was marrying off his daughter in Nevada, was like.

Coming to his daughter, Mademoiselle Froso... Maurides Efendi had gone to America before she was born. For twelve years Froso had lived with her mother at Number 71, Elmadağ Avenue in Pangaltı... Since her father's business had prospered considerably during that time, he had sent them money, and after twelve years, Maurides Efendi's daughter had set out for America with her mother.

A lot of Greeks from Turkey had come to the wedding, which was being held at the Greek Hall. Among them, for example, was a middle-aged woman who had spent her youth in Büyükdada.

"Oh, the fish in Istanbul... Do you think there's fish like that anywhere else in the world?" she asked in an inimitable way.

Everyone around, including myself, stopped and swallowed. It seemed that such enthusiastic propaganda for our fish had aroused the appetites of the guests, even the Americans. Even a pilot said, laughing:

“I should ask the War Department to send me to Turkey on business sometime.”

Mademoiselle Froso’s American friends were really amazed that she spoke Turkish fluently.

(...)

“What made you think of coming to America to plunge into the struggle for a new life when you were were making money selling cigarette papers in Istanbul?”

Alyanakoglu let out a guffaw:

“I was working for my father. He actually started the business. I was twenty-one when he died. When we audited the books on account of his death, we found that we had something else to cry about!... We were up to our necks in debt!... The creditors were at the door less than a month after my father’s death. I couldn’t come up with the money to pay them. Sell off! Sell off! There was nothing to do but liquidate the business. Within eight months, everything was paid off. I had lost everything, all I had left was twenty gold liras. Besides which, I was married. Can you start a new business with twenty gold liras when you have a child on the way?...

I saw that that wasn’t going to happen, and one day I told my wife: ‘I’m going to play the lottery...’

That’s how I brought up the subject of America. She started crying. She really didn’t want anything of the sort.

‘Okay, but only if you take me too,’ she said.

Taking a pregnant woman with twenty liras to a place we didn’t know!... It wasn’t going to happen. Thank goodness, my father-in-law was a very reasonable man. He lived near us, at Number 71, Elmadağ Avenue in Pangaltı. I went to him. I broached my idea to him. He thought it over.

‘You deserve it. Give it a try, and I’ll take care of her. Don’t worry about the house,’ he said.

One night I brought my wife to her father’s house. And with great difficulty we persuaded her to move back with my father-in-law.

I already had everything ready.

‘Okay, when are you going?’ she asked, very fearfully.

‘Tomorrow...I’ve already bought my ticket.’

And I took off the next day.

(...)

I soon found out that coming to America to get rich wasn’t as easy as I had thought. On the contrary, it was quite difficult.

Since there were a lot of pipe and cigar smokers here, cigarette papers had never taken off. When I told a friend about my idea, he laughed and said:

‘You’re right, here nobody but cowboys uses cigarette papers, because they roll their own cigarettes. If that’s what you have in mind, go to Texas...’ he said as a joke.

I suppose you think it’s strange that before that, I had started my life in the cigarette paper business as if I couldn’t do anything that didn’t have to do with cigarettes. Lots of people thought that way. However, I realized later that it’s not such a bad thing.

As I was passing through New York’s lower city streets with these thoughts in mind, I saw a little shop. A bunch of people were wrapping cigars in there. For heaven’s sake!... My business... I stuck my head in the door... Yes, they were wrapping cigars, but without paper!... That is, they were making cigars by hand. And even today this business is all the rage in many of America’s cities.

I entered that shop and said:

‘The cigarette business was handed down to me from my father. I don’t know what you’re doing, but I’m eager to learn. Will you take me on as an apprentice?’

The man was a Mexican. He accepted me as an apprentice practically working for my board.

After having been the boss of a little factory back home, it was very strange to be an apprentice in a shop here. But I grinned and bore it. After three or four months, I became the foreman in that shop.

Two years went by. I found an empty shop. In fact it was as big as a closet. But it was big enough for me. Then I opened a workshop. I saw that Cuban cigars were popular in America. I started importing them... Besides the fact that I was excited about this cigar business, it really involved me. So you could say that I got my start in life by paying for my journey and my first days of wandering in New York with my capital of twenty Ottoman gold liras.”

Laughing, he added:

“I’ve never lost my joy in life, even in America, even in the days when I sometimes went hungry... But I’d be happier if that Osmanbey casino were still there. Maybe I wasn’t meant to go there, even if it were still open... But what can you do?”³⁸²

The Story of the Grocer Panayot Gamlioğlu from Kuledibi

He is the typical Greek grocer and runs exactly the same kind of Greek grocery store that you find in Turkey in Samatya, Tatalva, Ortaköy, Bebek, and Pangaltı... Shall we go inside? The smell of a barrel of sardines is all around... If you even glance at the *kaşarpeynir*,³⁸³ before you know it, he’ll have sliced off a thick piece and held it up to your mouth on the end of a fork:

“Pasha, may I offer you some *kaşarpeynir*...Marvelous!...,” he says, wanting to make you taste it like the typical hospitable grocer.

There were many remarkable things about the minorities—Greeks, Armenians, and Jews—that came to America. After meeting you, he takes out a sheet of paper and writes something in the old Arabic alphabet, laughing all the while. At least among all his doodles are one or two sentences and names. You can see that even among the most uneducated people to have come to America. How did they learn that difficult Arabic writing, the Arabic alphabet? How have they not forgotten it thirty to thirty-five years later?... That is an especially bewildering issue. As a matter of fact, Panayot held a packet of papers in front of him.

382 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, July 18, 1948.

383 A mild, pale yellow cheese made from sheep’s milk, similar to Kashkaval.

And he started writing those Arabic letters with ease. I asked him where he learned to do that. He went to a neighborhood school in Kasımpaşa... He'd leave his house in Kuledibi and go to school, selling biscuits on the way. And at school he'd sell biscuits and study at the same time. Later, in the evenings, he's go back from Kasımpaşa to Kuledibi, again selling biscuits! It was in those times that he saved up the money to go to America...

At the same time that he's talking with me, he's roller skating inside the store and practically falling over a bunch of noisy, curly-haired Negro kids who've all come to buy sodas.

He's been in the grocery business here for forty years. He points outside.

"What business didn't I do on that corner...Back then, I didn't have a store. At first I sold roast chesnuts on that corner. The way we did it in Turkey. On perforated iron braziers... I saw that in this area there wasn't much business for chestnuts. I went down all the way to Times Square. There I made quite a bit of money. But the winter winds were really cold!... I know that lots of times, the wind blew my brazier over..."

After getting rid of a group of customers, Panayot Efendi went on:

"Sometimes I'd get a letter from my homeland. It would be a letter from one of my relatives, saying 'You are the luckiest people on earth.' If we could tell one-by-one all the things we went through, how we struggled, wearing ourselves out, everyone's hair would stand on end. We made a life for ourselves. We did-but at what cost!... When we left home for New York, we were eleven people. Believe me when I tell you that three of us are still alive. What we did wasn't work, it was really wrestling... It's true that they say that America's paving stones are gold. But it takes people's work to turn those stones into gold. And what a job that is! ...They must have forgotten what I said!..."

"What made you think of becoming a grocer?..."

Panayot laughs.

"I apprenticed for twenty-one months in Şükrü Efendi's grocery store in Kasımpaşa. Şükrü Efendi told me:

'If a smart grocer isn't getting rich, his apprentice must be stealing from him.' That's how he was telling me that with a little intelligence, a grocer can make some money.

When I was leaving Turkey, he said: 'When you go to America, make sure you work as a grocer there too...' And he gave me a magic charm as a gift. It's lasted me to the end.

And I hung it in the store in New York."³⁸⁴

The Story of San Francisco Florist Grigor, Otherwise Known as Dayı Bey

"Sir, my real name is Grigor. Grigor the Florist, one of the Dayıoğlu family³⁸⁵ from the village of Horsan in Sivas ... The Dayıoğlus are well known not only in Sivas but in Istanbul as well. You can ask when you get back there. Since I am one of the Dayıoğlus, ever since I worked at the Güzelhan in Galata, I've been known as "Dayı Bey." I came here. But I haven't given up that Dayı Bey here either."

"Did you spend a lot of time in Istanbul?"

"I spent my whole youth there. I worked in office buildings. During my last days there, I worked for steamship companies. Anyhow, it was that job that brought me here."

Since Dayıoğlu is among those who have been here the longest, he is very well known. And his work is very well thought of. Very young, very beautiful San Francisco women continuously come to buy flowers from him.

Dayı Bey smiled momentarily.

"When I heard that a Turkish delegation was coming to San Francisco and staying in this hotel, I was delighted. 'They will surely buy some flowers from me one day,' I said. I waited. And I

384 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 10, 1948.

385 *Dayı oğlu* means "son of the [maternal] uncle" or "cousin" in Turkish.

got to know the delegation by sight. I saw that it didn't seem like they were going to buy any flowers from me. This time, whenever one of them passed in front of me, I started yelling '*Lâleler...Sünbüller...Karanfiller*', the way they do in Istanbul, '...'³⁸⁶

The first day I got very excited before shouting. Because I didn't know what they would do when they heard when they heard me yelling "*Lâleler!...Sünbüller!...Karanfiller!*" in Turkish. It excited me to think how shocked they would be.

However, I yelled they paid no attention. I was shocked. 'Maybe they didn't hear me,' I said. I shouted again with all my might. They didn't look. I said to myself,

'Grigor, is it that they don't understand your Turkish?'

That night I went to a cafe. I found some other people from Turkey. I said '*Lale*.' They understood. I said '*Sünbül*.' They understood. I said '*Karanfil*.' Again they understood. So there was nothing wrong with my Turkish. After that, every day I yelled the Turkish names of flowers after them, but they still didn't buy.

I said to myself, 'It's not that. I wonder, have our Turks become cold?' One day when I was getting ready to yell again in Turkish like that, didn't an acquaintance who was passing by tell me that it was a different delegation? Thinking they knew Turkish, I had been yelling after them every day in vain!...

So later, one day two people asked me for white carnations. I gave them to them. One of them said to the other in Turkish:

"Let's get some red ones too. But the man won't give us the fresh ones because it's too much trouble!"

I changed the carnations right away. And I put the freshest white ones beside a bunch of red ones. When they looked at me with astonishment, I added:

"Red, white... They go together, don't they?"³⁸⁷

386 Turkish: "Tulips...Hyacinths...Carnations."

387 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerika Kazan Ben Kepçe," *Hürriyet*, August 26, 1948.

The Story of Hadji Harry from Bozcaada Island

Harry from Bozcaada Island, a Greek who lives in Detroit, is the owner of a nightclub with music that is very popular with both Greeks and Turks. This is how the journalist Hikmet Feridun Es explains how a Greek woman who used to live in Istanbul, Roxandro from Fener, gave the nightclub its lively atmosphere:

When a sailor suddenly started dancing a *çiftetelli*, with lightening the woman pulled the fragrant cigarette from between her painted lips. When she stood up, the man asked her in English where she was going. The woman replied in Turkish with a delightful Greek accent:

“I’m going to dance.”

Throwing off her mink coat, she sprang up. After tossing some coins to the *saz* player, what a dazzling *çiftetelli*... How she wiggled her body in that low-cut evening gown... As she waved her fingers in the air, she made the huge diamonds in her rings sparkle. One would never have thought that that tempest from Tata-³⁸⁸vla was a typical American woman dressed in the latest Hollywood style...³⁸⁹

Later, Es describes him in general terms as follows:

A Greek from Bozcaada Island, every night his arrival in one of his nightclubs in a beautiful and completely crazy way brought more pleasure to the customers than to himself; he must have adopted spreading joy as a life principle. When he spoke Turkish, he pronounced his “ş” as a “s,” with a typically Greek accent.

“Whenever you’re not having fun, you’re not really living! ... Ever since I first left Turkey, this is what I’ve been doing. And I’ve done it here too,” he said, and then he started giving orders to those around him. Behind him he mobilized a bunch of the most beautiful American waitresses. He sometimes showered every table

388 A residential neighborhood in Istanbul, formerly inhabited mostly by Greeks, known today as Kurtuluş.

389 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 25, 1948.

with treats for hours at his own expense, bombarding them with bottles. And sometimes he got completely carried away.

Saying, “all together!” he would send beer, whiskey, and rakı to all the tables at once at his expense. You’re probably wondering: Was Harry spending everything he made there on those treats?

The Turkish communities—especially the Red Crescent—were delighted with him. When it was necessary to raise money to send to Turkey, whether on account of the Erzincan earthquake or for any other reason, the Greek from Bozcaada Island always responded with great generosity and eagerness.

He is a beefy—even fat man with a rosy face. In his youth he was extremely good looking. When he came to America, he started fights among the nightclub performers!... He really loves to tell those stories. For years he lived as a bachelor. Recently he married a rich widow. Anyway, he had money of his own. When those two fortunes came together, Harry really pulled out all the stops. Every night he literally goes wild and spends money like water.

“Let me live like a sultan. Let me enjoy myself like a sultan. Let me die like a sultan!” He laughs as he says, “His excellency, Sultan Harry the First!...”

That’s how he introduces himself. On one hand, this boundless joy contributes a bit to the financial side of his business. Because this way all his customers have a good time and spend their dollars like water in his nightclub. They call him “Hadji.” So one of his names is “Hadji Harry.”

Can a Turk come to America and visit Detroit without going to Harry’s? Impossible! As a matter of fact, if a Turk came to America and visited Detroit without introducing himself to Harry, he’d be offended and fight with him. He just has to talk to every Turk who comes. Some evenings, his wife and stepchildren come to listen to the *saz*. Now and then, Harry gets excited and jumps up and dances the *çiftetelli*. And he doesn’t stop at that, he makes his very prim, dignified wife dance the *çiftetelli* too. And he pulls his stepchildren from behind into the circle. They all start dancing

together. And the boss showers handfulls of money on the *saz* player. Then he says to himself:

“One of these days, I’ll die dancing the *çiftetelli!*”

He owns several Greek nightclubs in Detroit—the Venizelos Club, the Istanbul Club, and the Izmir Club.³⁹⁰

(...)

A big crowd of men and women were sitting almost knee-to-knee. In addition to Turks, there were Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis, Egyptians, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Iranians, or rather, the entire Balkans and the Middle East and the Near East were there. And some Americans—playing the role of tourists in their own country—had come there out of curiosity...

First, we were interested in our surroundings and the stage. It was a veritable *saz* convention. America’s most famous Turkish-style violinist, “Kemani Papaz;” Garbis from Bursa, considered the New World’s leading *kanun* virtuoso... Amalia Hanım, whose records are advertised all over America as featuring the “unique female singer,” and several other famous performers...

The singers were much more interesting than the band. What they call singers in America is very different from what we mean by the word. For example, some Turkish-style maestros came here from the Egyptian palace, but since they couldn’t get work and were unsuccessful, they went back where they had come from. They couldn’t compete with the singers in America.

On the stage a woman was singing the song “Son, son, Hug my neck!...” in five languages. First, the verses in Turkish, then Greek, followed by Arabic, Jewish... And of course, she had to please the American tourists. Naturally, she had to include English as well. But her talent didn’t quite extend that far. Basically, on these stages the songs were like appetizers. The real burden for singers is dancing.

In America the singers have certain *çiftetellis* that belong particularly to them, and they are sure to sing every song with them.

390 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 26, 1948.

Do you want skirts in the shape of pomegranates? Do they shake their shoulders a lot? So many different kinds of neck ruffles and chest movements!... They did their dances in what they call Burlesque and striptease in America, with a set of very violent movements, shaking like mad, sighing, crying “oof,” and wiggling their bellies. The movements of the Turkish-style singers around here challenge those of the hottest queens of Burlesque. Don’t their heels hit the wooden stage quickly? They raise their breasts as if they were going to take off.³⁹¹

The Story of the Singer Amalia Hanım and Her Daughter Diamond

The story of the Greek singer Amalia Hanım, whom Hikmet Feridun Es met in Detroit in 1948, is rather interesting. Amalia was actually a Jew born in Ioannina, and her name was Mazaltov (Molly) Matsa. In 1912, when she was fifteen, she left Ioannina and came to New York by herself on the ship *Kaiser Franz Josef I*. During the examination on Ellis Island, she was denied entry because she didn’t have fifty dollars. An aunt of hers who lived in New York heard about this and sponsored her, and she was allowed in. After settling in New York, Mazaltov started working as a dressmaker, and a year after her arrival she married her countryman Jack Saretta, a manufacturer of silk flowers for women’s hats. That marriage had been arranged before Mazaltov left Ioannina. Coming from Ioannina, Mazaltov had experienced Jewish, Turkish, and Greek culture. She had learned to chant laments for the dead, the only official or semi-official occupation open to *Romaniote*³⁹² Jewish women in Ioannina. Mazaltov committed the melodies of those laments to memory. Mazaltov sang songs throughout her life, and her talent was “discovered” either

391 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 23, 1948.

392 The Romaniotes are Greek Jews, distinct from both Ashkenazim and Sephardim. They have lived among Greeks, in Greece and Asia Minor, for over 2,000 years

when she was sewing in a factory or hanging out the wash. Beginning in the 1920s, she started singing in Greek coffeehouses and Turkish clubs under the name Amalia. Her first recording, made by the Parsekian Record Company, contained eight Turkish songs. Later, she recorded six Greek and Turkish songs under the name Amalia in Chicago for a company belonging to Greeks. Amalia's having become a singer and her insistence on doing as she pleased broke up her marriage. Her husband divorced her, since the singers who worked in coffeehouses in Ioannina were considered prostitutes, and he sent one of their two daughters, Ester, to Greece. Her second daughter, Diamond (Elmas) stayed with her and continued singing with her. According to Diamond, Ester "was kidnapped." In 1926 Mazaltov, or Amalia as she was known professionally, converted to the Greek Orthodox religion and married Gus Bakas. By 1940 Amalia and Diamond were singing in a club-restaurant in a Greek neighborhood in Chicago.³⁹³ It was in those years that Hikmet Feridun Es came across her:

There was an important reason why such a big crowd had gathered that evening in a cafe-music hall: Amalia Hanım from Istanbul and her daughter Diamond had come to Detroit. For years the mother and daughter had been America's best known singers of Turkish songs. Especially Amalia Hanım had long been thought of in America as a sort of Turkish-style Mistinguett.³⁹⁴ Furthermore, the Amalya-Diamond duo dance a very lively *çiftetelli*. Hardly anyone in America surpasses them when it comes to Turkish-style performance.

Amid applause, the mother and daughter appeared onstage. They were both wearing bright red. Their shoes and handker-

393 Brochure prepared by David Soffa to accompany *Amalia! Old Greek Songs in the New Land, 1923-1950*, Arhoolie Productions, California, 2002, CD 7049. For a short biography and discography of Amalia see "Amalia Bakas", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalia_Bakas

394 (1875-1956), French actress and singer whose real name was Jeanne Bourgeois. She was at one time the highest paid female entertainer in the world. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mistinguett>

chieves were the same color. They had red Mexican combs on their heads. Although Amalia Hanım had become famous for her records and stage performances of songs a long time ago, she looked as if she were about the same age as her daughter. If you didn't know they were mother and daughter, you'd have a hard time believing it. They started singing and dancing together. Maybe they had especially chosen the first song they sang: it was "Anasını istemem, kızını da ver bana!" ("I don't want the mother, give me the daughter!)... As Amalia Hanım sang that chorus, one could hear men shouting at the stage in a Greek accent:

"Who said that? Who said that?"

Actually Amalia Hanım, who twisted her body and lowered her eyes languorously while performing, was livelier and more flirtatious than her daughter. And since, like Mistinguett, she had very beautiful legs, she doesn't pass up any opportunity to do figures that make her skirt lift way up in the air. Since her songs had never been popular in America, she adapted them, sometimes beyond recognition, to their taste. Though her records were first released twenty-five years ago, she is still very fresh!...

Amalia Hanım's family was originally from Ioannina. She was born in Istanbul. She sang in Kadıköy and in the Yorigancı Garden in Harbiye. Then she went to Syria. There she sang Turkish classical music. After Syria, it was Egypt, and then one day she found herself in New York. She opened several nightclubs and a big casino and made a lot of money. Then she ran through all the money. Holding out her right hand to indicate the money she made, she says: "It came from here," and then indicating her left hand, she continues: "and it went from here!..."

She started speaking Turkish, then switched to Greek, and ended up in English, waving her hand to mean: "I don't care."

And finally the mother and daughter dashed out on the stage leaning their heads together and wiggled from one place to another as they began singing a coquettish song.³⁹⁵

395 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 24, 1948.

The Story of Hadjapoulos from Istanbul

Hadjapoulos' bosses "translated" his name to Harry to make it easier for them to say.

And Hadjapoulos, who comes from Aynalıçeşme, speaks a little Turkish.

Anytime I go to Broadway and Hill Street in Los Angeles, where he works as a traffic cop, I'm sure to hear him call out from a distance in Turkish: "Merhaba!..."

And that's about all the Turkish he can speak.

And the American policeman from Aynalıçeşme had a beautiful and curious adventure. While he was working as a traffic cop in the Huntington Park area, a middle-aged man with a woman beside him approached him. They asked him about a street that wasn't in that area and that Hadjapoulos had never heard of. As any other American policeman would have done, Harry, in order to find out the location of that street he had never heard of, immediately took his city guidebook out of his back pocket and began to get bewildered. There was no such name there.

The traffic cop told the foreign questioners: "You must be mistaken."

At that point the woman told the man in Turkish: "You wrote it down in your notebook, show him..."

When she said that, Hadjapoulos's language came back to him, he spoke Turkish, and the people he was talking to were extremely shocked.³⁹⁶

The Story of Vasil, the Baklava Baker

When I decided to go from Antalya to America, I had one gold Ottoman lira and my horse named "Clear Girl." And one day I climbed on my horse and set out. I was going to America on horseback! I went from Antalya to Iskenderun on horseback. There I sold Clear Girl. I got fifteen five, ten liras for her. Then

396 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 8, 1948.

from there I went to Aleppo. Everywhere I went, I worked. Sometimes I walked, sometimes I rode in a cart, and sometimes I rode a horse. In that way I got all the way to Egypt. I was traveling just like a nomad or a vagabond!

When I got to Alexandria, I was hungry and exhausted. First I went to a cafe. I stayed there for a while. I didn't eat, I didn't drink, I was saving some money. Steamships left Alexandria for America almost every day. When I had saved enough money, I bought a ticket.

I went from Egypt to New York. The year was 1908... However, as happened with all young men who came here, from the first day it dawned on me. Contrary to what they had told us back home, the stones, earth, and sidewalks in America were not made of gold. Today I have quite a bit of property and money, but I admit that in New York, in spite of all my struggles, I went hungry for exactly three days.

I saw that things couldn't go on like that... Just as when I left Antalya I had come all the way to Egypt partly on foot, partly on horseback, and partly by cart, in a similar way, I got all the way to the shore of an ocean, another ocean, working along the way, and looking for work, I ended up in San Francisco. And the conditions of life were the same here too.

All of a sudden, I got an idea. Back when I was at home in Antalya, I used to make very nice *lokma*.³⁹⁷ Why couldn't I make them here? I rolled up my sleeves right away. Some nice flour and plenty of sugar. I fried some delicious *lokma* dough in hot oil. Then I put it on a big glass plate. I stuck a toothpick in each *lokma* so that you could put it in your mouth without getting your hands dirty. Carrying the glass plate in my hand on a huge tray, I wandered from cafe to cafe and from nightclub to nightclub. I went to the Turkish cafes first, then to the Armenian and Greek ones. From place to place... I had some people who ate ten or fifteen *lokma* at one time. I sold one *lokma* for two cents.

397 A small, round, syrupy fried cake.

Back then, two cents was very good money... And I know I sold 1,000 to 1,500 *lokma* a day. That is, 3,000 cents...Thirty dollars. Five dollars, or maybe ten dollars of that, went for expenses. So that left us twenty dollars. To improve business I started going to the train stations, crowded bus stations, sporting events, the gates of stadiums... Up to then, San Franciscans had never eaten a sweet like that *lokma*. Some people just tried it out of curiosity. They got to know me so well in the city that they published a cartoon of me in a sports newspaper, along with the cartoons of the games, players, and spectators. I became known as “Vasil the *lokma* guy.” However, as time went by, they gradually got tired of *lokma*. The number of people eating *lokma* per day started to dwindle. But I was used to making plenty of money. Moreover, I had brought my bride from the old country. We were setting up housekeeping. We needed money.

That’s when all of a sudden I thought of baklava. If it hadn’t been for *lokma*, I would have starved to death. It had improved my situation. And maybe baklava could make me rich. But--Dammit!--I didn’t know how to make baklava...

We knew an Armenian woman from Turkey who really couldn’t be beat when it came to making baklava. My wife told me:

“Vasil, I’ll go every day and take lessons from that Armenian woman.”

I laughed and replied:

“In what school did you hear that they’re teaching baklava lessons?... Can something like that really happen?”

We couldn’t get the idea out of our heads, however. Every day I sent my wife to the Armenian woman’s house to take baklava lessons. I kept abreast of the progress she was making with concern and kept asking her:

“What’s up, woman? It’s been fifteen days and you still can’t make baklava?...”

And she would answer: “Patience, patience!” At last one day the good news came:

“Alright! I’ve learned...” “Then let’s see you make some baklava,” I said. She made it. Perfect!

We opened a little shop for baklava. However, once again I went to the nightclubs, train stations, and bus stations. It was a big hit. We sent boxes of it to the small towns and cities in the area. We sold it to restaurants.

Thank God, we were not ashamed of our baklava. In the old country they used to say beans were a benefactor, but in our case, it was baklava. At that time a guy from Antalya came to our shop and patted me [the interviewer] on the back, saying: “Write, *Beyefendi*, write...You’ve built three apartments from baklava. Vasil’s baklava is that famous in the area...”

Two years before, on Republic Day,³⁹⁸ Turkish students from Stanford University in Palo Alto and from Berkeley traveled for miles to learn how to make Vasil’s baklava.

Then we made them eat a plate of baklava. We wandered around the shop, which was like a factory.

I was struck by how thin the *yufka*³⁹⁹ was.

“At first I couldn’t find an *oklava*.⁴⁰⁰ And anyway, even if I found one, I couldn’t have rolled out the dough. Both of us got used to rolling out the dough thinner than an *oklava* could have done by pulling and stretching it. We discovered what they call ‘pulled dough’ on our own. If anyone had told me that one day I would make money and even get rich from making baklava at the back of beyond, I wouldn’t have believed him... Not to mention learning how to make baklava by taking lessons...⁴⁰¹

398 October 29, the anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

399 Paper-thin dough, similar to phyllo, used in making baklava.

400 A long, thin rolling pin used in making *yufka*.

401 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 7, 1948.

The Story of Andon Merdjimekoğlu from Aydın

When I got to New York forty-four years ago, after being tossed about at sea for three and a half weeks, I had a few gold liras in my waistband. I exchanged them. And among the money I got were a few bright yellow, sparkling, newly minted pennies. Back then, when we exchanged one lira for five dollars, those pennies weren't even worth ten *paras*. But I didn't know the American money I had gotten. Those pennies were so shiny, I thought they were worth a quarter of a gold lira.

That night we found four friends, four comrades. No matter what it took, we wanted to really fill our bellies. We had hardly eaten anything during the three-and-a-half week steamship voyage. That night we ate, we drank. At last, when the check came, I gave two of those shiny "quarter liras" to the waiter. "Bring me the change," I said, but it was a good thing he didn't understand me, since I had said it in Turkish.

Seeing the two cents in his hand, the waiter thought we were joking. He started laughing out loud. But when he realized we were serious, he shook his head. I said to myself, "It must not be enough!" I took out two more of those shiny gold pieces (!) and gave them to him.

When he shook his head again, I got mad.

"I'm not going to give him practically everything I have," I said. "They must have figured out that we are immigrants."

When my friends, who had come before, explained that the four coins I had tried to pay for an eight-person dinner weren't even worth a *kuruş*, I was terribly embarrassed...

The people who are coming from Turkey now are extremely clever. God keep them, they understand these things. But was it like that in our day? Forty-four years ago, Turkey and America were much more different from each other than they are today. That's why people coming from there were very bewildered.

If you add the struggle to make a living to that bewilderment, you can easily imagine what it was like for those first immigrants who came here (...)

In those first times we were so broke that we had days when we really had to use our heads to keep from going hungry. Thankfully, in those days there were a lot of things that American people didn't eat. Like sheep's heads, to cite just one example. Lots of people thought they were just nauseating. If they saw them roasted, they'd get sick to their stomach. Americans learned to eat sheep's head after the First World War. And in many places they didn't eat lungs, kidneys, and brains until World War II... They learned to eat those things after the Second World War. And even to love them... But back when we first came, nobody but Mexicans and immigrants ate sheep's head or even touched it. Do you know what we used to pay for a head back then? I went and bought one every day for five cents. I would boil it. The broth, the meat, the brain, the tongue... Sometimes I ate it with bread. Sometimes without... Every day a sheep's head!... If Americans *had* eaten sheep's heads, I don't know what I would have eaten.

I still remember seeing the sheep's and lamb's heads in the butchers' windows in those days.

However, my landlord was an American. And he hated sheep's heads. So I had to wrap up the sheep's head I'd bought very carefully before bringing it into the house. The only problem was carrying out its bones to throw them away after I'd eaten the head. I had to do it secretly, almost as if I were concealing a murder (...).

A family of cowboys we met in Oklahoma invited us to their farm. We went, but there were a lot of cowboys. They sang us their own songs. They danced their dances: One of their women told me:

"Let's see you dance our dances too!..."

And we were four *zeybeks*.⁴⁰² Four guys from Aydın!... We got up and did a harvest dance for them!...

They liked it a lot. They danced one of theirs. Then we did a dance. Then it was their turn. We went on dancing like that, not stopping till morning. I could believe I would dance a *zeybek* in

402 A swashbuckling hero of western Anatolia.

the mountains of Aydın, but it never occurred to me that I'd do a harvest dance in the Oklahoma mountains.⁴⁰³

The Story of Yianni Baresoğlu from Antalya

I am from Antalya. In Antalya, we lived in Yenimahalle, in house number nine across from the well known "Kanlioğlu" garden. Our surname was Baresoğlu. And my name is Yianni. My father and that famous Kanlioğlu were very good friends. In those days Kanlioğlu was Antalya's best gardener. He raised the earliest fruits and vegetables, before anyone else. He made very good money. My father had the idea of making me a gardener like that, but this was far from what I had in mind. What happened is obvious!... I did not want to be a gardener, tied to that garden as if I had put down roots there. I set out from my father's house one night in the middle of the night with just one shirt. My adventure turned out to be a long one. After Egypt, Italy, and France, America... Still, in six months I was able to come to New York. I remember very well writing in a letter to my father, "I'll be a millionaire before ten years have gone by, and the first thing I'll do is send you 100,000 liras." I still have to send them.

All my efforts came to nothing. We didn't make money, and that's that. Those who came with us and didn't hope to earn even five dollars, since they didn't know any languages, filled their coffers and their pockets. We remained a barber. (...)

The years changed everything, but this stomach of mine didn't change. I got acquainted with my better half before we got married. She had lots of good qualities. One day I brought up the subject:

"Yes, I understand. Those qualities are important, but do you know how to make stuffed peppers?" I asked.

She was horribly shocked. She had never heard of stuffed peppers. However, my longing for stuffed peppers was like a craving. She hung her head:

403 Hikmet Feridun Es "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 14, 1948.

“What’s that?”

“It’s a Turkish food that I love very much,” I replied.

She laughed.

“Then I’ll try to learn. First, tell me what they’re like.”

I told her. She listened very carefully. She took notes in English. The next week, she invited me to dinner. What she had cooked was nothing like stuffed peppers. Looking my future life companion in the face, I added:

“That’s not it!...”

She wasn’t daunted. She started trying again. And I kept checking on whether what she had made qualified as stuffed peppers or not. After I gave her stuffed peppers ten points, we went to City Hall and got a marriage license...

Several years had passed since I came to America. I had given up my hopes of getting rich and become a barber. I was new and inexperienced at the art. I was working at a place in West Virginia. One day a customer came to the shop. Since there wasn’t anyplace else, he sat down in my chair. I soaped up his face. I started shaving him. I was surprised to see a pimple on his right cheek. We were speaking English the whole time I was shaving him. All of a sudden, when I accidentally cut his pimple, didn’t the man start saying in Turkish:

“Damn it! Watch what you’re doing!” And I immediately replied in Turkish:

“I beg your pardon!...”

When I replied with those words in Turkish, he forgot all about the blood that was running through the soap on his cheek. One shock after another!...⁴⁰⁴

The Story of Michael Pappas from Istanbul

I was born in a little village twenty miles outside of Constantinople. My father was dead. In 1913 there was the Balkan War.

404 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 12, 1948.

I was only sixteen years old and they tried to draft me in the army. The mayor of our town knew they were going to try to get us, so he told us to have our birth certificate with us. That way I could prove I was only sixteen, not twenty-one—which was the age when you had to go into the Turkish army. But one day I was standing in a street in my little town, and a cop came over and grabbed me by the neck and took me over to the coffeehouse. I saw there another fifty boys, all my age, all sixteen and under. At the same time, my mother found out that they got me. She came to the coffeehouse crying, so the Turk captain asked the mayor who she was. They told him that I was her son. He said, ‘Why is she crying?’

“She is crying because her boy is only sixteen.”

The Turk told the mayor to call me up by name. So the mayor said, “Michael Pappas, get up!”

I got up and the Turk captain said, “Sit down: you’re in the army.” Then he told one of the guards to get this woman out of the coffeehouse. They got her out and I was told to sit on one side. It was September, drizzly outside and getting dark. So the captain told the mayor to notify the parents of the boys to bring clothing, underwear and a piece of bread or something, because we would have to walk all night, walking to Constantinople.

Right back of this coffeehouse was the house of my grandmother. So they notified my grandmother and she brought me a little valise—not a valise, actually, but a little towel with a piece of bread, a little cheese and everything. She hugged me and she kissed me and she looked around and said, “There is no Turk around here. Why don’t you quit?”

This coffeehouse was narrow and long and had two doors, one in the front and one in the back. The one door on the front was guarded by policemen. On the back, there was nobody. So I saw there was nobody, and she told me where to go.

I went to a house where only girls were living, because the Turks were going and breaking down the doors of the houses that had

boys-men. This house had only three girls. They were surprised, so I told them all about it. They let me stay there.

At five o'clock, the captain gave orders to call out all the boys. Everybody came out of the coffeehouse and they called the names – no one answered to my name. So they knew I was missing. The captain said, "Go out and search. Find him'. They started to blow the whistle all over town looking for me while I was hiding in this house. But they couldn't wait for me, so they went on to Constantinople. The next day the local cops were looking for me all over but they couldn't find me.

Now my grandfather had a nephew who was captain of a sailboat he had ten boats that sailed from our little village to Constantinople every day, bringing grapes, vegetables and everything from Constantinople. That was the only place for me to go. The cops were watching the sailboats. And all the roads were blocked. But they hid me in a basket and got me on the sailboat. It took us nine hours to get to Constantinople.

At Constantinople, a Russian, our patriarch – you know, a patriarch is our religious leader – had fixed it up with the Russian Embassy to help protect us boys who weren't army age. The Russian Embassy and the patriarch had come to some kind of understanding with the Turkish government, so they could let us leave Turkey. One of these Russian representatives was there at the pier where all the sailboats parked. This embassy man asked the captain, 'Daniel, you got any boys with you?'

Daniel said, 'Yes, I got one boy'.

So I got out. I was scared, you know. The embassy man told me, 'Don't be scared. The Russians will protect you. Get in line'. There were about one hundred boys all my age. All Greeks. They had three or four buses, and they put us all on the buses into Constantinople.

You know, in 1884, there was a war between Turkey and Russia, and the Russians reached outside Constantinople. When they signed an agreement, the Russians built a big monastery. They called it San Stefan, and it is still there now, I think. Well, they

took us over to that monastery. They had beds and they had the kitchen ready for us. The man said, 'We will keep you here, you will stay here, eat here, sleep here, until we have a boat from Russia or Rumania. Then we will put you in the boat and then you go to Greece'.

And sure thing, after a week there was the *Queen Olga* from Russia with the Russian flag. They took us to the boat. As I said before, two guards were watching all the people who used to go on the boats. But we were all fixed up so they let us go in there. It took us a day or two maybe to cross from Constantinople to Piraeus – that's the big port of Greece. On the boat I met four other boys from my village – but they were grownup, about thirty-five or so – that were going to America. One of them was my godfather. We stayed in Piraeus two days and then we had to go to another port, called Patras, to get the boat for America. We stayed in Patras for a week and then the boat came from America to Patras and was going back. The name of the boat was *Martha Washington*, Austro-American Line."

When did you decide you wanted to go to America?

Well, the Russian Embassy had my tickets all ready. The arrangements were made by them.

In other words, the Russians were sending you to America?

The Russian patriarch. They bought the ticket – everything was ready. A few of the boys came to America. The rest of them stayed in Greece. But myself and a few other boys, we got tickets for New York.

Why did you decide to go to New York?

They advised me to go. Greece was poor – I had no future there. It was better to go to New York which was in those days, like we know, the richest country in the world, with more chances, more future. I was only sixteen. That's why I decided to come to America.

Did your mother know that you were going to America?

Oh, yes. They notified her. And you know, when I had been hiding in the town for three or four days, it was all fixed up that I

had a few dollars. My mother, she had nothing, but my grandmother had a few dollars – so they gathered the whole thing. They told me, ‘You’d better go to America because you have a future there. You are a young boy. It is better to go to America than to go to Greece’.

What happened to the boys that went into the Turkish army?

None of them came back. All got killed, died. I came to America in 1913.⁴⁰⁵

The Story of Doukenie Papandreas from Kirklarelli

In 1918, a man came from America. He knocked at the door. I opened the door, and he said, “Where is your mother?” My mother had a brother in America who became lost or disappeared. I went after my mother. He said to her, “I brought you a letter from your brother.” She opened the letter and found twenty-five dollars. In 1918, twenty-five dollars was a lot of money. She was so happy, not for the money, but being that her brother was alive.

So in a few days I wrote him a letter. Mother said to first thank my uncle for the money. Then I told him about my dream of coming to America. After you finish the high school in Kirk Klisse, you had to go to Constantinople to finish. So I wrote that father will never be able to afford to send me to Constantinople. To please bring me to America to finish my schooling, because I hear in America the schools are free. There we had to pay the teachers.

My uncle was a heavy gambler. I found out later, the night he got the letter, he was playing poker with a man who was a boat agent. He sold boat tickets to America. My uncle said, “We’ll play one round for my niece.” And he won. He said, “We’ll play another for the expenses.” And he won.

A month later, I got a letter from my uncle with the ticket and I was so excited. My mother was happy for me. When my father came back from work, I said, “Father, I got the ticket to America.” He said, “Never a child of mine will go away from my arms. I

405 Brownstone, et al., (2000), pp. 70-72.

went to Russia, and I know what I went through. I went to Bulgaria and I know what I went through. Child? Fifteen years old? Never!" For three days I begged him, saying, "Dad, trust me, trust me. Give me a chance."

Meanwhile, I heard that the family of a classmate of mine was going to America. Without saying anything to my father or mother I went to my friend's house, and I said to my friend's mother, Effie, "I heard you're going to America. Can you take me with you? I got my tickets, too." She agreed. My father agreed. "All right," he said, "as long as you're going with a family and not alone." And then he took me aside, gave me advice, and said, "I know you're going to be desperate. One thing I ask you. Don't ever dirty my forehead." Just like this. I can see him now. And then, "Don't ever let any man touch you. I raised two daughters and they are pure. I want them pure married. I'd rather see you drown than come back touched."

I said, "Dad, you have nothing to worry about. Just give me the chance to go"

The day me and that family got the train, the whole town was at the station to say good-bye with their handkerchiefs. I just looked at them, and I remember thinking, "Where am I going? What have I started?" But I asked God to give me the opportunity and here it was. I had to go through with it.

I took one small, old valise. One coat that I had, clothes, panties, and a few stockings. That's all. We went to Athens and then Piraeus. We were going to take the ship *Magalia Hellas* or "Great Hellas," but something was wrong with the boat. It got replaced with a new boat called the *King Alexander*. But we had to wait forty days for it to arrive from Germany. We stayed in a miserable one-room, rundown hotel in Piraeus.

Meanwhile, my money finished. Effie said, "Write to your uncle to send you more money." But I didn't have the nerve to call. The man already sent me so much money. So I asked Effie to lend me the money, which she did.

The *King Alexander* was a beautiful boat. I slept with them in one room. There were four bunk beds. But Effie got very sick, and instead of second class, because she had money—me and the three girls all moved to first class and a better cabin.

I remember playing mandolin. I used to go to the deck and play mandolin. One time I gave an impromptu concert.

After thirteen days, we finally came here and I was so happy that I was now in America. I saw the Statue of Liberty. And I said to myself, “Lady, you’re beautiful. You opened your arms, and you get all the foreigners here. Give me a chance to prove that I am worth it, to do something, to become somebody in America.” And always, while I was here, that statue was in my mind.

(...)

My dear, I saw tears on Ellis Island. I saw tears with happiness, but I also saw tears with pain. Many people had to wait, and they were living in an agony. Next to me was an Italian woman with three children, and one of the children got sick. Pneumonia, I think it was. The child was coughing. The mother was holding the child and singing. All of a sudden, a doctor and two nurses took the child away. The mother couldn’t speak English. And they’re talking to her in English. They were saying that the child had to go to the hospital. And they took the child from her arms, and the mother was crying, and I was crying with her, too. I was praying so hard for her, for me.

The guards were all Irish people, and they used to go, “Come on, come on.” Like lambs to slaughter, we used to go upstairs to the rooms to sleep. One Sunday it was a beautiful day, but the pain was still in me. I couldn’t enjoy nothing. I was afraid they were going to send me back. And I was dreaming that if they try to send me back, I’m going to fall into the river and die. I couldn’t go back. I promised everybody that someday I’m going to come back as a doctor. Finally, the third day, my uncle came to take me.⁴⁰⁶

The Story of Stephen D. Stephanides, Owner of the Prudential Lines Company

The second Turkish friend I ran into in New York was Stephan D. Stephanides, owner of the Prudential Lines Company. This millionaire, owner of twelve big ships that travel all over the world, was born in Istanbul, in Fener.

Our friend Feridun Demcekan took us to this individual's office. As soon as you came through the door, you saw posters of the Bosphorus and Turkey issued by the Directorate General of Press and Information. We encountered the word "Turkey" on every side. We introduced ourselves to Stephanides. He shook our hands very cordially. He said, "Welcome." Right across from the desk where he was sitting was a picture of a ship passing through the Bosphorus. Apparently, it was one of his ships. The Captain had it specially made as a gift for his boss when he came to Istanbul. And he had it framed and hung facing him.

After a pleasant five minutes, he invited us to a businessmen's club in the Sheraton Whitehall for lunch. "It's not just a place to eat, we'll also be able to talk very comfortably there," he said.

Since it was a huge, thirty- or forty-story building, we entered one of that club's many elevators and went up. On the walls of the first room we entered, telegraphic letters spelled out the latest stock market news. Businessmen were nestled in armchairs across from that wall, reading their newspapers while at the same time keeping an eye on the changing stock market reports.

Leaving that room, we went into the dining room and then into a private room. A table had been prepared there for Stephanides's guests. The room's huge windows looked out over the Atlantic. As soon as we sat down, he brought up the subject of Istanbul again. He had been born in Fener. He still owned a big lot there between the Bulgarian church and the synagogue. He no longer had any relatives in Istanbul. They had all immigrated to America. His father had moved to Arnavutköy in his last days and had died there. Naturally, we asked him how he came to America and how he got rich.

“When I left Istanbul in 1904, I was the son of a fairly wealthy family involved in the jewelry business. My brother John graduated from Robert College. The American government had opened a consulate in Harput. My brother went to work as an assistant to the consul. Then he went to America. And we followed in his tracks one by one. When I came to America, the first thing I did was finish my high school education. Then I started working for the director of the Y.M.C.A. library, and during that time I went to New York University. Then I started working for a railroad company. That was when Greek refugees started coming to America. They gathered on Ellis Island, and spread out from there into America. And I was there to give those Greeks who were going to America information about this country, and I sold them tickets for the places where they were going.

So that’s how I earned a bit of money. Leaving the company, I founded an independent shipping firm. After three years, my ships were slowly accumulating. Today our company has twelve ships. Three of them make regular trips to Turkey.”

“Do you mean you were operating a shipping firm during the First World War?”

“Yes, let me tell you something strange. In the First World War the first ship sunk by the Germans was my ship the *Algon Queen*. The first dispute between the Americans and the Germans grew out of the sinking of that ship. Things quickly became violent. The Americans issued a serious protest, charging that the Germans had begun sinking American ships. The Germans countered that since the owner of that ship was a Turkish citizen, the *Algon Queen* could not be considered an American ship, and that incident finally led to America’s entering the First World War...”

Mr. Stephanides—who was around sixty and very distinguished—was looking for an opportunity to change the subject back to Istanbul while he was telling us these things. I asked whether he had ever gone back to Istanbul. When he got married in 1920, he had spent his honeymoon in Istanbul. Now he had a twenty-six-year-old daughter. He has decided to go to Istanbul next year. He was making arrangements.

He said there was considerable sympathy for the Turks in America. Such a sympathy is worth millions. You have to take advantage of it. Now is the right time for Turkey's business to spread into America. In Europe the American people are only familiar with the Mediterranean countries as far as Italy. They are just beginning to know what lies beyond—Turkey, Egypt, and Greece. The sympathy the Americans feel for Turkey will make your work very easy. Send your businessmen here, here you can benefit from Turkey's friends. We Americans like to work with everyone. And that's why we never ask anyone where they are from. It's the reason why we are successful. Since the Turks' consider this a faraway country, their fainthearted behavior is making them lose profits they could easily obtain. We friends of Turkey really regret this.

Hardalupas, manager of the Hellenic Trust Bank, and Stauridis, section manager at the Prudential Lines Company, who were also at the luncheon, totally agreed with these ideas. They regretted the opportunities Turkey had missed.⁴⁰⁷

The Story of Charles G. Taylor, Owner of the St. Moritz Hotel

Leaving Marmara Island, Mr. Taylor came to New York in 1907. He has forgotten Turkish. He only remembers some words and enjoys repeating them. He is an extremely likeable man, the kind who looks you affectionately in the face.

"Didn't you ever see Istanbul?" I asked.

"I went there once as a child. I remember very little," he said, and when I asked him, he told me about his life.

He began by saying, "There must be Turks on Marmara Island who remember my family. We were a family that earned our living as fishermen there. My life's most shining memories are of

407 Şevket Rado, "Fenerde Doğmuş Bir Amerikalı Armatör S. Stephanidis," *Akşam*, July 24, 1950. Stephanides passed away on April 11, 1955. At the time of his death, he had a fortune of approximately one billion dollars. Source: "Tanınmış armatör Stephen Stephanidis öldü," *Milliyet*, April 12, 1955.

the days of my childhood, when I wandered around barefoot on Marmara Island's cliffs and caught fish. I was a Christian. On Marmara Island no one cared about the differences between Christians and Muslims. We were just as excited as the Turks when the drums announced the Ramadan holiday festivals, and the Turks liked Easter eggs just as much as we did.

Immigrating to America

One day, with thoughts of getting rich, my brother and I came to New York. When we came here, there was a depression in America. We first went to work as dishwashers in a hotel. And at the same time we started learning English at night school. We spent days full of great hardships. On those days when our hopes were dashed, I sat across from my brother and sobbed very bitterly. Today when people who are having problems in their lives come to me and tell me about the troubles that have piled up on them, I remember those days. But our determination soon reduced our struggles. It was determination that made us successful. Our life struggles lasted exactly thirty years. At first we bought a little, 50-60-room hotel, then we became owners of another hotel with 125 rooms. We bought the Buckingham Hotel. And at last in 1930 this 33-story, thousand-room hotel was ours. We paid nine million dollars for the St. Moritz Hotel and the land it stands on. Just the furniture inside it is worth a million. Today the total worth of the hotel is seventeen million. Every room comes with a bath, telephone, and radio. We had televisions installed in many of them as well. 750 employees work in it. Our hotel is the only one in New York with a coffeehouse under it...

It's actually a French-style sidewalk café called the Café la Paix that is under the St. Moritz Hotel, and in the evenings it is packed until 3:00 a.m. There is no other sidewalk café of that sort in New York.

Mr. Taylor has two daughters, one fourteen, the other eleven. His brother recently died. Moreover, he has a school at Cornell University training waiters for the hotel business. "I'll gladly take

people coming from Turkey. I know how Turkey needs hotels. But unless you have people who are trained to know the hotel business, there's no point in opening a hotel," he says, and he turns the conversation back to Turkey at every opportunity.⁴⁰⁸

4. The Attorney Süreyya Ağaoğlu's⁴⁰⁹ Impressions

One of the topics about America that is of interest to Turks is the non-Muslims who earlier went from Turkey to America. A large portion of them are still very much interested in us. Although they are American citizens, they consider themselves Turkish. Turkish customs prevail in their homes. They eat Turkish foods. I have come across several of them. And at a banquet given in my honor in New Haven, they wanted me to talk about Turkey. After my talk, a young girl came over to me. In a delightful Anatolian Turkish she said, "Please, let's go, my mother would be happy to meet you." That child was Armenian. Her mother and father were from Antep. Although she was born in America, she knows Turkish very well. I asked where she learned it. "My mother speaks Turkish, she sings Turkish folksongs and weeps. Then I feel the stone of Antep's mountain so much that I know those places as well as the people who live there. Please come and let my mother cook you a nice meatball." What a pity that I didn't have time to go and see that child's mother. I also came across a Greek girl in New Haven. She was from Istanbul. She told me not only about her mother and father, but also about the pilaf and stuffed grape leaves they cooked in their homes. And she too knew quite a bit of Turkish. And both of them said, "Come what may, we'd like to come to Turkey sometime and see all that."

408 "İstanbulda Türk Bir Amerikalı Milyoner Geliyor," *Akşam*, July 1, 1950. A biography of him appears on the Shelter Island website, stating that his name was S. Gregory Taylor, and that after his death, he bequeathed Taylor's Island to the Shelter Island Town Board. (Source: www.shelter-island.org/summer-series-2006/taylor-one.html). On July 11, 1950, Taylor visited Marmara Island, and the newspaper *Akşam* reported on his tour.

409 (1903-1989), Turkish writer, jurist, and Turkey's first female lawyer. Daughter of Turkish Nationalist Ideologue Ahmet Ağaoğlu.

In New York my friend Miss Kleri took me to a furrier. And she introduced me to the furrier as “my Turkish friend.” And apparently that dear man was a Greek from Nigde. When he heard that I was Turkish, although he was sixty years old, his eyes filled with tears and he said, “Oh, how I’d love to see my homeland; will I not have the good fortune to see it once more before I die?”

And afterwards, “you see my dear wife, and we have money, we have wealth. When I was back home, I was a grocer in Langa. I became a furrier here. And I have a summer home and a winter home. But what can I do? If you ask me, there’s no life here for me. My wife in particular has never gotten used to it,” he said. And then he said, “Whenever they give us permission, we’ll go and see our homeland, even if it’s only for a couple of months.”

This man’s son, who was five years old when he left Turkey, his daughter-in-law, and even his daughter worked in the store, and they all spoke Turkish. And they spoke of their great longing and love for Turkey.

When I was in Ann Arbor, one evening the Turkish students took me to the home of someone named Vefik Kalern in Detroit. This man is an Armenian who had left Turkey when he was six months old. His wife is American. He opens his home to Turks, and his wife said, “My husband is a Turk, and I love all Turks.” This man speaks Turkish beautifully. And he is from Siirt. He speaks with a clear Siirt accent. He told me, “When I was a child, my mother and father were Turkish citizens, but that doesn’t affect me. I applied to the consulate. I wanted a Turkish passport. I am a Turk, and I want my child to be a Turk too!” And I assume he really did apply to the consulate about this, but I don’t know what came of it. What did this young man know about Turkey, what? He had lots of Turkish records. Most of them were Anatolian folk songs. It appears that his mother nursed him on Turkey and perhaps she also wept now and then. This guy has a lovely home that we could only dream of, a car and surely plenty of money and comfort. He wants to leave all those things behind to come here. At least “temporarily,” he says. “And the first thing on my agenda will be to go to Siirt. I will smear my face with its

soil," he said. There were a picture of Atatürk and a Turkish flag hanging in his house.

When the Jewish friends I have met from Turkey heard that I was coming to Turkey, their eyes filled with tears, and they said, "how wonderful for you; the same thing should only happen to us!" And they were people with both status and money. They asked me longingly about the Bosphorus and Istanbul. And all these people I have mentioned were extremely sensitive about everything concerning Turkey.

And I also saw the exact opposite of this. For example: What questions did an Armenian journalist in Boston ask me?

He was a young and passionate boy. I trust that he was under the influence of the latest Russian propaganda. We can cure this young man and others like him. All that is needed is for us to tell them that we feel no hatred for them. If their mothers and fathers want to see their homeland, let's give them a visa. It would be both fabulous propaganda and a source of foreign exchange for us. Anyway, let's take advantage of their affection for us. The fewer enemies we have, the better off we'll be.⁴¹⁰

Due to the scarcity of sources, concrete data are not available concerning what sort of lives the Greeks who emigrated from Anatolia to the New World led or the difficulties they encountered. As we have seen in the limited number of memoirs and interviews appearing in the book, the Greek immigrants, like all other immigrants, would face extraordinary struggles in building a new life in new lands whose language they did not know, and most of the time they would succeed. The Greek immigrants did not have to cope with loneliness and isolation as much as the Muslim Turkish immigrants did, because a considerable number of Greeks had also emigrated from Greece. The solidarity and cooperation of their fellow Greeks would be instrumental in helping them make an easier adjustment to their new lands.

410 Süreyya Ağaoglu, "Amerikaya kendimizi tanıtmalıyız!", *Tasvir*, April 10, 1947.



CHAPTER THREE



THE IMMIGRATION OF MUSLIM TURKS



1. The First Turkish Immigrant: Hadji Ali, the Camel Driver

The first Turk to immigrate to America was Hadji Ali, who came with the camels he had purchased for use in the recently founded U.S. “Camel Corps”. It was envisioned that these animals would provided transportation and postal services for the American Southwest, which possessed a similar desert climate to that in parts of Arabia, the Levant, and southern Turkey. After the United States Congress adopted Senator Jefferson Davis’s view advocating the use of camels in the Army’s transportation services in 1855, allocating thirty thousand dollars to the Department of Defense “for the purchase and introduction to the country of breeds of camels and dromedaries to be used in military affairs, courier and reconnaissance” service, the American Sea Captain David Porter set sail from New York with the ship the *U.S.S. Supply* on June 3, stopping first in Tunisia, then in Egypt and Izmir. His purpose was to buy camels. In Izmir Porter was assisted in purchasing the camels by a person named Gwinn Harris Heap. Heap gathered his contacts for buying camels—saddlemakers, packers, and camel drivers—in the shop of Mimico Teodora next to the old Arched Bridge, and introduced them to Hadji Ali . Hadji Ali, who would come to be referred to as “Hi Jolly” by his American friends, wanted to provide the camels himself. He told Heap there was only one way he could do this. That was for him to go to the New World along with the camels he supplied. Heap agreed to this, but said it would only be possible the next time the ship came. On February 11, 1856, the *Supply* returned with the thirty-three camels Hadji Ali and the Greek cameldriver George Caralambo had collected from Anatolia, three Egyptian camels, two Turkish packsaddle

makers, and the translator Alexander Aslanyan. A bit later, Porter came back to Izmir to buy more camels. This time Heap kept his promise to Hadji Ali. The *Supply* returned with forty-four camels, along with eight cameldrivers that Hadji Ali and the Greeks from Izmir—George Caralambo, Mimico Teodora, Hadjiyatis Yanako, and Anastasio Coralli—had found. Hadji Ali first set foot in America on February 10, 1857 at the age of twenty-two. The American Army began using the camels to transport mail and provisions, and Hadji Ali was responsible for driving the camels. Although the camels performed these services very successfully, when the Civil War began in America, the Army discontinued the Camel Corps. Some of the camels were sold, some ran off into the desert, and some were killed. Hadji Ali hid several of the camels and started his own transportation business. But that business didn't work out, and he set the last camel free, releasing it into the desert. He became an American citizen in 1880 and later married a Mexican girl in Tucson. Hadji Ali spent the remaining years of his life prospecting for gold but never finding any, and on a December night in 1902, an elderly gold prospector told Hadji Ali that he had seen a camel with a red tongue that glowed like fire wandering alone in the desert. Hadji Ali began searching all alone in the desert for that camel that he had lost many years before. Some inhabitants of Quartzsite found him dead a few days later, with one arm clinging to the “fire-breathing” camel and half his body buried in the sand. Hadji Ali was buried in a little graveyard in the Arizona desert's Quartzsite. In 1935 the state of Arizona would erect a pyramid in memory of Hadji Ali, placing a copper model of a camel on top of it. The following words are written on a plaque on the pyramid:

The last camp of Hi Jolly, born somewhere in Syria about 1828. Died at Quartzsite December 16, 1902. Came to this country February 10, 1856. Camel driver, packer, scout. Over 30 years a faithful aid to the U.S. government.

On the back of the monument in a copper case were the contracts Hadji Ali made with the American federal government, letters indicating his services, and his entire worldly goods, which amounted to 65 cents. Also in the monument was an urn containing the ashes of Topsy, one of the camels Hadji Ali had loved so much, who had died in a zoo.⁴¹¹

2. Early Twentieth Century Immigration

Between the years 1900 and 1914, immigrants descended on America by the millions. In 1907 a million-and-a-half people arrived at Ellis Island, and among them were a small but significant number of Muslim Turks.⁴¹² According to official American statistics, between 1900 and 1925, 22,085 of those coming to the U.S. were registered as “Turkish,” of whom 20,652 (93.51%) were males. The majority of those coming were between the ages of fourteen and forty-four, and most were illiterate.⁴¹³ According to Frank Ahmed, whose father was a Turkish immigrant, the reason why no Muslim Turkish women immigrated to America up to the end of the Second World War was that men were the masters of their homes in Anatolia, America represented a “very remote Christian nation,” and Muslim women didn’t know what sort of life awaited them in America.⁴¹⁴ Nevertheless, the fact that their non-Muslim former neighbors and friends--especially the Armenians from Harput--had immigrated to America and found a

411 Eva Jolene Boyd, *Noble Brutes: Camels on the American Frontier*, (Texas: Republic of Texas Press, 1995), pp. 39-40, 66-67, 191-198. Roanna H. Winsor, “...Hacı Ali,” *Son Çağ* 11 (May 1962), pp. 23-25, 29. For additional information on this subject, see Muammer Kaylan, “Amerikan Tarihine Geçen Deveci Hacı Ali Destanı,” *Hürriyet*, April 5-14, 1970.

412 Frank Ahmed, *Turks in America: The Ottoman Turk's Immigrant Experience*, (Maryland: Columbia International, 1993), pp. ix-x.

413 Bilgè, “Türks,” pp. 909-915, in Levinston & Ember, eds., (1997).

414 Ahmed, (1993), p. xviii.

better life there would also influence Ottoman Muslims, leading a number of them to emigrate as well. Some ran away to America to evade the draft or to avoid having to go to jail for crimes they had committed.⁴¹⁵ Almost without exception, the immigrants had no interest in low-paying farm work and set their sights on working in factories.⁴¹⁶ When they set foot on Ellis Island, the Turkish immigrants naturally tried to stay together. They watched anxiously how European immigrants were processed. The biggest problem for Turkish immigrants was that, almost to a man, they didn't know English. Turkish was a new and unknown language for the inspectors who examined immigrants in those years. That's why the inspectors who examined the immigrants employed non-Muslim translators in order to be able to deal with the Muslim Turkish immigrants. If they had no health problems, what worried the Turkish immigrants most was the fact that they didn't know the procedure for accepting immigrants.⁴¹⁷ Just like non-Muslim immigrants, the Turkish immigrants lived in rented bed/sitting rooms with their countrymen and prepared their own food.⁴¹⁸ At one time the Turkish population living in Peabody, Massachusetts reached two thousand, and 101 immigrants were found to be living in one of the houses rented by Turks. Continuing to practice the same customs in the U.S. as when they were living in Anatolia, the Turkish immigrants opened coffeehouses where they spent their free time.⁴¹⁹ Sephardic Jews from İstanbul also settled in Peabody between the years 1911-1914. The first im-

415 Ahmed Emin [Yalman], "Amerikada Türk Muhâcirler," *Darülfünun Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 2, Year 1 (1332-1334), pp. 179-188. The first transcription of this article was published by Naki Konyalı in the August 2001 issue of *Toplumsal Tarih*.

416 Ahmed, (1993), p. xix.

417 *ibid.*, p. xxii.

418 *ibid.*, p. 29.

419 *ibid.*, p. 33.

migrants were Leon Eskenasi and Meir Benatar who arrived on *SS Atlantic* in September 1910. They also established the Sephardic congregation *Tifereth Israel* in February 1922.⁴²⁰

Most of the coffeehouses in the city were on Walnut Street. It was a place where, besides the Turks, Greek and Armenian immigrants hung out in the coffeehouses, smoking hookahs, drinking coffee, playing backgammon or cards, and buying an assortment of foods, all giving it the atmosphere of being an Ottoman street.⁴²¹ Fuad Bey, General Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Children, who visited a coffeehouse in Peabody during his American tour, related his impressions as follows:

One of the owners of the coffeehouse was Mustafa Efendi, the other was Riza Efendi. In New York owning a coffeehouse—or more precisely, a restaurant—is quite a profitable business. Mustafa and Riza are happy with their position.

On the restaurant's walls were hung pictures of his Excellency, *Gazi* Mustafa Kemal Pasha, as the [Turkish] nation's Commander in Chief, along with [the portraits of] other people. Those pictures were treated with reverence and devotion.

Our countrymen gathered there, chatted, and talked about things concerning their homeland. When they weren't at work, they spent their time there. There are four Turkish coffeehouses in New York.⁴²²

Sometimes fights broke out between the Turkish and Greek immigrants.⁴²³ Since they didn't know English, the Turkish immigrants were at a disadvantage in comparison with the European immigrants. And hence they generally worked at the most menial

420 Marjorie J. Short, "Salud, Mazal, Bueno que Topas-The Sephardic Jewish Community of Peabody", 2009, www.jhsns.net/Sephardic-Community-Peabody.html

421 Ahmed, (1993), p. 66.

422 Mehmed [Umay], (1341), p. 32.

423 Ahmed, (1993), p. 31.

jobs. Since they came from rural areas, their employers, who obviously wanted skilled laborers, wouldn't hire them for that sort of jobs. The immigrants usually worked in factories where a fellow countryman had introduced them to the boss, and they were hired as long as there was a need for new labor. Turkish workers were employed in leather goods factories in Boston, and in the small Massachusetts towns of Salem, Peabody, and Beverly Lynn, where they worked under the most difficult and unhealthy conditions. Peabody was also a center of the leather industry, and was known as the "leather capital" of America, and possibly even the world. In addition to Boston, significant numbers of Turkish workers began moving to Detroit, the center of the automobile industry, and to Worcester, Massachusetts, where there were wire factories.⁴²⁴ Their weekly wages ranged from eight to twenty-two dollars. Dr. Fuad Bey recounts his impressions of a wire factory he visited during his American tour as follows:

A significant number of the Muslims in Wooster [*sic*] work in a wire factory. The work of manufacturing wire is very hard and dangerous, and I toured the largest wire factory to see how my unselfish and patriotic countrymen, who empty their wallets in a second or two, earn their money.

Among those working there, it was Yasin Efendi who won first place for zeal.

The assistant manager gave me a tour of the main part of the factory. This person had entered the factory as a manual laborer. He was promoted to assistant manager due to his hard work and intelligence. In America there is sure to be advancement for reliable and conscientious workers. If a person makes himself liked in a company, it won't take him long to attain prosperity and happiness. His worth and value are appreciated.

While taking the tour with the assistant, I asked him what he thought of the Turkish workers. "They are our finest workers. We are delighted with them. During your three-day visit, they didn't

424 Ahmed, (1993), pp. 69-74.

come to the factory, because they were observing a holiday. We gave them the time off. We didn't hire workers to fill their slots. They work without complaint and are persevering. They behave very conscientiously," he said.

Since the specialized workers work long shifts making wire, there is no doubt that it is beneficial to make the workers feel important and to make them happy so that they will work permanently in the factory.

Among the wire makers, there are some that make such thin wire that you can't see it without getting up close. These expert workers make as much as fifty liras a day. And our Yasin Efendi also sometimes earns twenty-five liras. However, because the work is so hard, it's impossible to work that much all the time. In American factories there's no difference between night and day. The shifts change every eight hours. If you can rely on the energy of someone who's working eight hours a day, the night shift also does its part. They are paid by the hour.⁴²⁵

While studying sociology at Columbia University between 1919-1923, Sabiha Sertel personally observed the living and working conditions of Turkish workers:

Altogether nine thousand people—Turks, Kurds, Tartars, and Albanians—were working in factories producing soap, furs, phonographs, electrical appliances, and automobiles and in the steel foundries.

The kinds of businesses they were most involved in were shoe manufacturing, hat cleaning, operating laundries, making electric batteries, opening grocery stores, and working as import-export agents. There was a silk factory in New York that belonged to a Tartar, and a soap factory in Worcester that belonged to a Turk, Hafiz Efendi.

Working conditions were very harsh. They didn't know English and had to work at very hard jobs, since they were unskilled workers. At least the lives of the Turks and Kurds who worked

425 Mehmed, (1341), pp. 84-85.

at the Ford automobile plant in Detroit were hellish. Since they didn't have today's technological advances in America back then, a worker in the steel foundries went into the open hearth furnace, next to the fire, where he couldn't stay for more than a few minutes at a time. Workers who changed their shirt every time they went in learned from experience what hell on earth was like. There were some who worked ten- to fifteen-hour shifts at the factory. Most of them worked nights and slept during the day. Hence the sun was something those night shift workers didn't see for months on end. Many of those who worked in the chemical and tobacco industries came down with work-related illnesses. Their pay was high compared to that of European workers. But the workers became so robotic that even those high salaries didn't guarantee that they could live like human beings.⁴²⁶

This is how Sabiha Sertel recounts her impressions of a visit to a Ford auto factory:

This was a huge building. Suspended from bridges, the finished automobiles came down one per minute. The workers worked like robots, not standing idle even for a second. They were so fast that in production every second counted. The exploitation machine was working at full speed. Foreign workers earn half of what American workers do, and it's hard for them to find jobs. Since the immigrant workers are not unionized, the bosses exploit them ruthlessly.

In the factory when we came to the steel smelting department, we really saw this up close. The steel smelting hearth was a little, glassed-in room. When the steel melted in the hearth, it flowed like a stream of red fire, and they were throwing coal into the hearth non-stop. They said it was so hot in there that Satan's fire burning in hell couldn't have been hotter. No workers of any other nationality could go in that glass room, only Kurds could go there. The workers went into the hearth naked as wrestlers, and they only spent a minute inside.

426 Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi, 1919-1950* (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969), pp. 52-53.

The workers who worked under those harsh conditions were not unionized. They lacked any sort of social assistance. They were ignorant. They didn't even see anything wrong with their situation. When I brought up how they needed to join the union, they all objected at once:

"We won't go on strike. When there was a strike, the factory was surrounded by Ford's private police and soldiers. Ford had a private army to use against its workers. We came to work in the factory under their protection," they said.

I understood how the capitalists take advantage of the ignorance and lack of consciousness of these naïve, hardworking people and exploit them, using them as strike breakers against their brother workers. But it was hard to explain to them how harmful this was. I thought that might only be possible after starting an organization with a lot of work.⁴²⁷

After seeing the situation of the Turkish workers, Sabiha decided to organize them and raise their consciousness in order to better protect their rights. This was a difficult process:

When it came to organizing Turks, two things were absolutely necessary. We were obliged to do what little we could to help the War of Independence from a distance. We arranged that we would go to Ahmet Osman⁴²⁸ at night.

It was a winter night. It was drizzling. We passed through the Bowery's⁴²⁹ dark streets. We stopped in front of a dilapidated

427 *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

428 Sertel describes Ahmet Osman as follows: "Ahmet Osman was a tall, dark man from Eğin, whose eyes blazed with intelligence. And he had come to America to look for work, but had been unlucky, struggling to stave off hunger after being unemployed for years. Together with a former Turkish civil servant named Refik Bey, he had opened an electric battery workshop." (p. 47).

429 Sertel describes the Bowery as follows: "In those days it was an area in the lower part of New York inhabited by the homeless, wretched immigrants, and the unemployed. You could kill a man there if you gave the police five dollars, and the crime would never be solved." (p. 49).

wooden building. Stepping on the creaky wooden stairs, we went up to the second floor. When we went through the door of the coffeehouse, we really couldn't see each other for the smoke. Since they knew I was coming, they had cleaned the stone tables. Ahmet Osman introduced me. He brought up my concern about how they were living.

They listened. Nobody responded. I had to break the silence. I stood up:

"I have come from the old country. Now they are fighting a war of independence there. Our brothers in Anatolia are risking their lives for that cause. They are fighting against the Greeks and seven states. And we need to help them from here too. The help can't be merely financial. We can help them in different ways. We can send our old clothes. We can help by putting on shows. But first of all, we must get organized. This organization will help those here live better lives and also enable us to help our homeland.

Once again, not a sound was heard around me. There was some mumbling between the tables. Finally a swarthy man of average height stood up. That man was the head of the workers there and the owner of the coffeehouse. He spoke in a hoarse voice:

"Our sister has come from the homeland. We welcome her, we are delighted to have her here. She is interested in how we live. Good for her! She has talked about organizing us, improving our living conditions. I'd be glad to see those things. But I don't see how. How can our sister help us? Can she find us jobs? Is that possible? Can she help us get our wages raised? What can she do? We know these do-gooders very well. They come, they take an interest in us for a few days, then they don't even see us any more."

They wanted me to reply to this with concrete suggestions. I said that before I could help them, I would have to know what their needs were.

"After getting organized, we can solve the problem of finding jobs," I said.

Several voices were raised at once:

“Our needs are vast...First find a solution to our cemetery problem. Then we’ll discuss less important matters.”

I didn’t know what cemetery problem they were referring to. A white-haired old man stood up:

“Every ethnic group that lives here has its own cemetery. We are scattered like pebbles. They bury our dead in Christian cemeteries...We turn into infidels, faithless to Allah. Save us from this disgrace.”

I thought for a second. I decided that I could solve this by way of the school. I said decisively:

“I will solve your cemetery problem.”

They looked at me with surprise.

“It’s not a matter of money, sister... No one will sell us land.”

“You find the money, and I’ll find you the land,” I said.

They didn’t believe me... But we parted in a very friendly way. They walked me to the door. They said they hoped to see me again.

Those poor people...Stuck in a dead end of America, unemployed, hungry, languishing in poverty, and what upset them the most was being buried in a Christian cemetery...

The cemetery problem was easily solved. I told my advisor, Mr. Walter Pettit, about the meeting and what they wanted. He phoned city hall. We had to file an application with a petition. They prepared the petition. And I got it signed by the community leaders. A month later—I don’t recall where, I think it was in Brooklyn—they were sold a piece of land reserved for Turks, surrounded by an iron fence.

After that beginning, my reputation went up among the workers, which made my work easier. Now they came to the meetings with enthusiasm. I detected the weak points. Detecting those weak points was the most important aspect of organizing that community. However, it wasn’t very pleasant to hold the meetings in the coffeehouse. We needed another meeting place. I solved this, too, through school channels. They gave us a sizable

room in a community center. Now the meetings began to take on an official character. One by one, the workers poured out their problems. Workers in other cities in America heard about our work, and they too wanted to organize. That soon included all the workers in the provinces. We conducted a sociological survey to find out how many they were and what sorts of jobs they were working at. Affirmative replies to our questions poured in from all sides. At the end of the survey, a stunning result emerged. (...) The Turkish workers participating in the survey had held meetings in the cities of New York, Detroit, Worcester, Lawrence, Youngstown, Pittsburg, and Philadelphia. After this survey and a successful continuation of the operations in New York, young people like Rahmi Kolçak, who was studying at New York University, the engineer Seyfi, and the cinema operator İsmail Hakkı joined the organization. The name of the organization was changed. It became "The Turkish Assistance Association." Some of the members objected to its being called "The Turkish Assistance Association." They wanted it to remain "The Ottoman Assistance Association." The Albanians and Kurds insisted that it be "The Ottoman Assistance Association." But they accepted the decision of the majority.

After we started working to keep the association going, we also rented a building. This building was presented as a "social center." Some of the workers were saved from the coffeehouses. Language classes were opened for those who didn't know English. Lectures were given keeping the workers informed about the old country, examining working conditions in America, and raising class-consciousness. It took a long time to connect the workers to unions. They didn't want to join unions. They said the bosses were quicker to fire union workers, and they wouldn't rehire immigrant workers after they had been fired.

They were given examples from life of how harmful it was for them to stay outside the union. They were informed of the benefits they would receive from joining the union. The workers in New York joined the unions to a large extent. But most of the Kurds working at the Ford factory in Detroit were not convinced.

And after founding outside organizations, with the dues paid by members, we published a weekly newspaper called *Birlik*.⁴³⁰ Zekeriya and other students at the New York Teachers College took on the work of the newspaper. This newspaper helped establish connections with the workers and organizations in other American cities.⁴³¹

Sertel also recorded her observations concerning the private life of the Turkish immigrants:

Very few of them had started a family life. Most lived as bachelors. The yawning gaps between two races and two religions were obstacles to starting a family life in America for those groups. Some Turks even got married by sending for a girl from Turkey with a photograph. These “photograph marriages” were very common in America. Other ethnic groups that had not adjusted to social conditions in the new world also got married by sending to their own countries for girls with a photograph. For that reason as soon as a steamship approaches the port, a marriage official comes to the ship with a notary to marry the bride who has just arrived in America to the groom who is awaiting her, who fell in love with her photograph. That is why the Turks have not established a family life in America.⁴³²

3. The Tour of Dr. Fuad Mehmed [Umay] Bey, General Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Children

Dr. Fuad Mehmed [Umay], General Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Children, came to America between March 25 and July 29, 1923, visiting the cities where both Muslim and non-Muslim Turkish immigrants lived, and raised about a hun-

430 Turkish for “Unity.”

431 Sabiha Sertel, (1969), pp. 45-54. For a study of the Turkish Assistance Association, see Veysi Akın, “New York Osmanlı (Türk) Teavün Cemiyeti,” *Atatürk Üniversitesi Kâzım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi*, Year 1, number 1 (1991), pp. 238-250.

432 “Amerikada Türkler,” *Resimli Ay*, July 5, 1930, pp 34-35.

dred thousand dollars in donations for the children orphaned or left fatherless during the War of Independence.⁴³³

The couple Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel, who were students at Columbia University in the 1920s, witnessed Fuad Bey's efforts and described his activities in colorful language in their memoirs:

Sabiha Sertel: Rumi Efendi, Head of the Red Crescent Society, wanted their affairs to be discussed at a separate meeting. At the meeting today, he proposed taking up a collection for the homeland, the children, and Mustafa Kemal Pasha's soldiers. Everyone was very happy to approve that proposal. The collection turned out to be a sort of competition in generosity and virility. If one man said, "I'll give fifty," another—so as not to fall behind him—said, "I'll give seventy-five." And that's how over fifty thousand dollars were raised at the meeting of the "Red Crescent" Society. And close to the same amount at the meeting of the Turkish Assistance Association. After returning to New York, we spoke of inviting a member of the board of directors from Ankara to America. Someone coming from inside the fire would be very useful. We told the Ankara "Red Crescent" Society what we were thinking. The Central Committee decided to send the society's president, Dr. Fuat Bey. Fuat Bey came on the ship *Gülcehal*. That was the first Turkish ship to come to America. All of the organizations sent delegates to meet the ship. The arrival of the *Gülcehal* in the port of New York was an important event. And not only Turks, but Greeks, Armenians, and Jews who were Turkish citizens turned out to see the ship's captains. We prepared a ceremonial program at a meeting in a hall in the Astoria Hotel for the day when Fuat Bey came. We decided which cities Fuat Bey would visit during his tour. They decided it would be

433 Dr. Veysi Akın, *Bir Devrin Cemiyet Adamı Doktor Fuad Umay*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2000), p. 88. In Veysi Akın's book he discusses Dr. Fuad Umay's visit to America in detail (pp. 79-100). See also the following articles: Prof. Ercüment Kuran, "Türk-ABD İlişkileri Başlarken: Dr. Fuat Mehmet Bey'in Amerika Gezisi," *Yeni Forum*, vol. IV, number 108 (March 1984), p. 11.

convenient for me to accompany Fuat Bey on his tour as his companion and interpreter. The first meeting in New York was held in a large hall we had rented. Fuat Bey explained the deplorable conditions in our homeland. I gave a talk appealing to their feelings. He read poems. People couldn't stop weeping and sobbing. At the end of the talks came the donation period. The tabletops filled up with piles of dollars. From out of the crowd a middle-aged man of medium height, with thick black eyebrows and a mustache that reached his ears very slowly approached the table. This man was the Kurd, Sergeant Yusuf Gülabi. First, he kissed Fuat Bey's hand.

"You have brought me the scent of the land, of my village. Thank you, bless you. Those children languishing in hunger are surely my children too. I've been working in America for twenty-seven years. I have worked in the mines. I have worked in the automobile factories, in the North, in the Fruit Company's orchards. I have slept in garages, in parks. I have ten thousand dollars I have saved up. Now I have decided to return to my homeland. I'm giving you all my money. Just buy me a ticket on the ship. And help me find a job there. Here is my gold watch. Her is my gold belt buckle. It's all for my country."

Everybody was weeping. The money raised was over a hundred thousand dollars.

In every city I visited with Fuat Bey there was a Sergeant Gülabi. They poured out the money they had earned with the sweat of their brow, facing the fire, in a foreign land, on the tables as if it were pebbles. But they wanted their photographs hung in the children's homes and hospitals that would be founded with that money in their homeland. It was impossible not to feel humbled before their nobility.

The money that was sent to the homeland at the end of those efforts in America totaled more than a million Turkish liras. The first children's palaces, homes, hospitals, and kindergartens founded by the Society for the Protection of Children were built with that money. But they didn't find a job for Sergeant Yusuf

Gülabi. The photos of workers were not hung at the head of the children's beds.⁴³⁴

And here is Sabiha's husband, Zekeriya Sertel's version of the events:

The Turks in America were not rich people. There were a handful among them who had money. But they were very few in number. Their incomes were unstable and limited. Even so, all Turks wanted to participate in the War of Independence, even if from afar. If they couldn't be alongside those who were giving their blood and lives, they wanted to do their duty to the nation by helping monetarily. In order to achieve this goal, we contacted the newly founded "Society for the Protection of Children" in Ankara. We started sending that organization the money that was raised in meetings. The work grew from day to day; all over America, when the Turks and Kurds heard about the efforts being made by the organizations in New York, they went into action, founding their own organizations. Thus countrymen who until then had lived without any contact with each other found an opportunity to establish such contacts and at the same time to renew their ties to their homeland.

A competition in patriotism began among the Turks and Kurds in different cities. At every meeting the amount of money raised to help the Anatolian orphans increased. The Society for the Protection of Children, seeing how much assistance was being sent, was constantly corresponding with us. As a result of this correspondence, it was decided to invite Dr. Fuat Bey, the Head of the Society for the Protection of Children, to America. And Fuat Bey's arrival gave a boost to the enthusiasm of his countrymen in America. Touring from city to city, Fuat Bey established close contacts with all the Turks and Kurds, told them with what great sacrifices the War of Independence was being fought, and in two weeks informed them of the deplorable situation of the thousands of orphaned children he had left behind. So, as the War of Independence went on in Anatolia, the countrymen in

434 Sabiha Sertel, (1969), pp. 62-64.

America got a taste of the sweetness and honor of participating in that war.

Fuat Bey came to America in 1922. That was the last year of the War of Independence. During that time he excitedly followed the War of Independence and kept his countrymen abreast of the latest news at meetings. Finally, while Fuat Bey was in America, the news came of the great victory when the Greek army fled into the sea at Izmir. We invited the countrymen to an extraordinary meeting to celebrate that great holiday. Those attending the meeting were so happy and thrilled that they competed with each other to broaden the help they were offering. As their enthusiasm reached fever pitch, one of the listeners stood up and started walking slowly right up to the dais. He was a swarthy, forty-year-old Anatolian guy with a handlebar mustache and a sunburned face. He wasn't one of the New York Turks. It was the first time we'd seen him among us. Silently, he approached the dais. All of our eyes were staring curiously at this unknown countryman. Hesitantly, he began speaking in a shy and insecure voice:

"Friends," he said, "I have come from Detroit. I am going back to the old country. This is the first time I've attended one of your meetings, and I've heard the tales of those who are giving their lives and blood for the War of Independence. I've learned about the babies who have been orphaned, and that's why I'm speaking. I have been working in America for eighteen years. And here's the money I've saved up in that time (taking a wallet from his pocket, he left it on the dais). Here is my gold watch and chain (taking a watch on a thick gold chain from around his neck, he put it on the table). Send them to the orphaned babes of those martyred brethren of ours in Anatolia. And buy me a boat ticket to Istanbul. I want nothing else."

We were all shocked. We all hugged and kissed this lofty example of patriotism. He had dropped that money he had earned working in a thousand and one hardships in the open hearths of the automobile factories in Detroit in America on a wooden table. That patriotic scene brought tears to many of our eyes.

When his money bag was opened, eighteen thousand dollars came out. That man must have saved up that money a dollar at a time by going without eating and drinking. With that money he would have gone back to the old country and bought himself a business. We wanted to give him back part of the money, but he refused to take it and considered that insulting. He had given everything he had.

A ticket was purchased for him, he was given some pocket money, and that unselfish worker went back home penniless. When he found out that his whole family had been killed during the war, leaving him all alone in the world, he returned to Ankara. He hoped the Society for the Protection of Children would give him a job. But the Society for the Protection of Children, to which he had given everything he had, did not help that man or give him a job. He often came to tell me his troubles. Then he returned to Istanbul, where he found a job as a watchman in a warehouse. That's how he spent his last years. That unknown hero's name was "Sergeant." He saw no need even to give us his real name. Since he had worked in America for eighteen years, no one knew him. But after that lofty and noble act, he became a friend of all of us. Everyone spoke of him with admiration and reverence.

There were not a few Turkish and Kurdish countrymen in America who followed his example closely, even if not to the same degree. In our opinion there were no more than a few thousand of our countrymen in America. Most of them worked at hard jobs and earned little. Nevertheless, within two years those countrymen sent a hundred thousand dollars to the Anatolian orphans. The Society for the Protection of Children had not collected even half that much money in Turkey. The building of the Society for the Protection of Children in Ankara and the children's home in Keçiören were built with the money sent by the Turks and Kurds in America.⁴³⁵

435 Zekeriya Sertel, (1977), pp. 104-107.

From the Pen of Dr. Fuad Mehmed Bey: His Visit to Peabody

Passing through big avenues, we came to Salem, and then to Peabody. In the hall I was excited to find myself among over two hundred countrymen, who were cheering with great enthusiasm. Weeping, one of the clever children from Dersim said:

“Oh, sir, your presence brings good fortune to us today. We don’t know how we have managed to live here, how we’ve wandered until now. Wherever we went, the damned Armenians confronted us, made fun of us, and poisoned our lives. There were streets, and even whole neighborhoods, that we couldn’t go to. And we couldn’t establish contact with the Americans on account of the propaganda they spread among them, because they insulted us. Today, thanks to your coming here, we have taken revenge on them. We made a big parade in those areas, maybe you saw it, the Armenian shop owners were closing their curtains. So as not to see us having this happy time, they withdrew inside their shops. Now it’s our turn. You have not only saved glorious Anatolia, you have saved us as well.”

That was his speech.

Some of the people, most of them from around Dersim, were also weeping. Those poor folks, who had been inwardly crushed for so long under the venom of those vipers that we had nourished in our bosom, now saw themselves free and vibrant, as if they had come into the world anew. They regarded my presence among them as a great source of strength. They were so happy that they didn’t know what to do. Some of them hugged me, some spoke a word or two, some only expressed what they were feeling with the tears in their eyes, and some (against my wishes) kissed my hands.

After spending several hours among them, we went to a hotel (Lebgen House) in Salem. In the evening we ate dinner at an *iftar*⁴³⁶ table at a restaurant suggested by some countrymen. Some of our countrymen were fasting properly during Ramadan. Delicious foods with the exact flavor of home were being consumed.

There was nothing those poor people didn’t do to make their

436 A meal eaten to break the fast during Ramadan.

guests happy. In fact I was embarrassed. However, there was nothing to do but follow their wishes.

At six that evening I was explaining the situation facing our homeland and the orphans back home and the purpose of the trip at a meeting of two hundred and twenty people in the hall. I put up some pens I had been given for the benefit of our orphans for auction, and, very moved and excited by the plight of those Anatolian children, in the space of an hour or two, they donated \$6,678.

Fatma Reshid Hanım, who was studying medicine at a university in the Boston area, attended the meeting with two Serbian friends. The Serbian girls admired how in a minute or two those dear people gave up the money they had earned by working for days with the sweat of their brow. Such a self-sacrificing class of people hadn't been seen in any other nation.

There were up to six hundred of our countrymen working in Peabody. Most of them were Kurds. They were working in the leather factories and making good money. Regrettably, they didn't all come to the meeting. There was dissension among them.

I discussed how it was particularly necessary to unify the work in remote areas. I added that everyone should join the existing organization. They promised and said that they would make peace between the opposing groups.

At the end of the meeting, amidst fervent ovations, we left those unselfish people and went to the hotel.

5. The Immigrants in Turkish Memoirs

Views of Immigrants in the 1910s and the 1920s

Sabiha Sertel's Observations

The Turks didn't immigrate to America en masse. They came one by one, or in groups of three or four people. They settled in scattered places. That large influx began in Anatolia, in cities like Van, Erzurum, and Sivas, and spread to other cities, towns, and

villages. When the Armenians who had gone to America came back home, they said that everyone in America was rich, and that it was easy to get a job. When they returned to America, they tricked many people into going and took them with them. And some set out for foreign lands under the influence of letters they had received from friends. The number of immigrants increased during the First World War.

Just as there was no regularity in that group of immigrants, there was also no single definite cause. Some of them—Turks, Kurds, and Albanians—came to escape Greek oppression in Macedonia, while others came to make money. Those who came from Anatolia said they were landless and unemployed. Immigration to America increased in the year 1920. Most of those who came at that date were Cypriot Turks fleeing from English oppression.⁴³⁷

Ahmet Emin Yalman's Observations

General Impressions

Since the number of immigrants coming from cities was lower, I shall first discuss the lives of that portion in their new environments. Most of those coming from the cities preferred to live in big cities. They made a living there by selling things like candy, fruit juice, ice cream, boiled corn on the cob, and chestnuts on certain streets. Slowly, one or two of them became shop owners. A number of others, who had come to America with the hope of getting rich easily, were obliged to endure the hardship and vexations of factory life. After struggling for a while to finish their education in trade schools and other schools, they found jobs, learned English and broadened their general knowledge as much as they could by going to night classes, then set education aside but managed to earn a successful living. There were some young people who knew English and, with the help of their families, seriously pursued their studies of agriculture and other subjects at different universities. Some other people studied at free mis-

437 Sabiha Sertel, (1969), pp. 51-52.

sionary schools, and some of them converted to Christianity in order to get that education. And mixed in with the workers coming from Anatolia who earned their living from labor were some urban youths who had gone to school.

(...)

Since the Turks have only been in America for ten years, and had come from village environments comparable to that of the Slavs, for example, in backwardness, they have managed to produce one or two individuals who have gone far. One of those, an individual by the name of Hasan Efendi, who lives in the city of Manchester, New Hampshire, and who had done farm work in the old country, started out working in a sawmill when he came to America and pleased his employers so much that he was soon promoted to foreman. He then managed to open a bakery, while at the same time he started buying real estate in partnership with the proprietor of a Greek coffeehouse, and finally in ten years accumulated a fortune equivalent to fifteen thousand Ottoman liras. Hasan Efendi won the complete respect of his countrymen. When one of his countrymen got in trouble with the police and the courts in Chicago, Hasan Efendi immediately rushed to Chicago; when he found out that one of his countrymen in Lowell had quit his job and was getting drunk, he went to Lowell. When one of his countrymen had just arrived in America by ship and needed permission to enter the country, Hasan Efendi rushed to New York to try to persuade the immigration inspector (at Ellis Island). Two or three years earlier, this individual had brought his nephew, who was still ten years old, to America, placing him in an American school. Although the boy didn't know Turkish, since he was fighting with Greek boys every day at school on account of the Balkan War, his uncle placed him in a boarding school farther away. When I visited there, I was amazed to see that the boy was in every way the leader among his American friends and had endeared himself to everyone. A study conducted of immigrant boys' relations with the local boys in American schools showed that the immigrant boys were very rarely leaders in games and other areas, only boys of very strong character succeeded at that.

Both among the workers coming from Rumelia⁴³⁸ who opened grocery stores, as well as among the factory workers, there were some people who were curious and learned things other than their jobs. For example, among those working in the shoe factories, there were some who could explain every procedure a shoe went through in the factory, had acquired every skill needed, and could explain how the different tasks were assigned.

The behavior of the railway workers in Chicago was similar to the thriftiness and lifestyle of the factory workers. They were constantly moving their homes from one old railroad car to another. They deliberately put four or five people in every car, as if in a room with one stove, bed and tables. The foremen were all Turks. Since they were in the middle of the countryside, they lived almost as if they were in a village. If they could get off in Chicago one day a week, they took advantage of that leave, since the noise of big city life was not at all appealing to them.⁴³⁹

Impressions of Peabody in 1911

When I visited the Anatolian workers in Peabody in 1327⁴⁴⁰ [1911], I found them in a very bad state. No other category of workers had jobs as hard as those in the tanneries. In exchange for that, their average weekly wages were five or six dollars, which was less than even children doing light work in factories were paid. Their health suffered as a result of working in damp, stinking places. They complained a lot about their conditions. They had no other goal or thought but the fear of getting sick in a foreign country and the hope of earning a little money so that they could someday go back home. If one of them bothered to learn English and get to know America, they put him down with sarcastic and bitter words, accusing him of thinking of staying in America. In spite of that, there are some people among them who continue going to

438 The part of the Ottoman Empire that was in Europe.

439 Ahmed Emin [Yalman], (1331-1334), pp. 179-188.

440 Muslim 'hijri' year, which was still in effect in the Ottoman Empire.

night school and learning English. Those people are as fanatical and violently opposed to learning English as to eating in American restaurants, where pork can be found, but they exert little pressure on their comrades who drink and give free rein to the different vices of the big cities. As happens everywhere among workers, there are also some among them who wander from city to city, not working steadily anywhere and treating vagrancy as an occupation. Nevertheless the majority of those in the country endured a life full of privation to raise money for their family and someday leave America with a little money. Many slept on the floor in narrow rooms, ate simple things, and did their own laundry. Their entertainment consisted of going to coffeeshouses and sitting under trees. They had very little interest in their new environment. Instead of attempting to understand it, to interact with it, they reduced their opportunities for engaging with their environment to the lowest possible level. For example, they didn't dare go in person to a shop that was only one block away to buy whatever they need but instead would hire an Armenian shyster to do the shopping for them. There were only two grocery stores and one bakery among them. Although they numbered close to a thousand, they hadn't opened a coffeeshop and continued to go to the coffeeshop of the Greeks. There was a museum in the area belonging to the port of Salem that contained rare and beautiful things that sea captains had brought from different countries for centuries. It had a Turkish room in it. All sorts of curious foreign workers came to that museum, but up to that time, not a single Turk had been seen there.⁴⁴¹

Impressions of Peabody in His Memoirs

When we got off the train, we felt as if we were in a Turkish town. All the signs and instructions in the station, hung there by orders of the city, were written in English together with Turkish. It was obvious that the Turks, who predominated among the town's population, felt the need to proclaim their everyday needs

441 Ahmed Emin [Yalman, (1332-1334), pp. 179-188.

in their own languages rather than a language they didn't fully understand.

Men wearing black bowler hats and simple outfits passed by, strolling along the town's main street; they were speaking Turkish loudly. We went up to them and introduced ourselves. They showed a profound interest. They took us inside one of the buildings where they lived, and hundreds of our countrymen nostalgic for home crowded around us. This is what they told us:

"Most of us are from Harput. And among us there is no lack of people from Sivas, Malatya, and Samsun... Around us we saw Armenians who had gone to America for business. Since jobs were scarce back home, we asked them to tell us about that business too. When the first ones who came found jobs, they sent for their acquaintances, relatives, and kinsfolk. As days went by, the Turkish community grew. But none of us intended to settle permanently here. Our intention was to save up a little money from business, go back home and rejoin our wives and children. As you can see, none of us came as a family and intended to live here... We don't bother to learn this country's language, just because we're not thinking of settling here. We don't approve of those who learn it, we try to stop them. Our work is hard, it is labor in the tanneries. It is a dirty, miserable job... Very few people want such jobs, so they take care of us, we don't go hungry. We take turns cooking our food, we look for ways to save money, and we send it home."

Ahmet Şükrü [Esmer]⁴⁴² and I were appalled at the spectacle of their ignorance. Because they didn't learn the language and avoided participating in the life around them, they didn't progress; having come to a distant land with so much sacrifice and struggle, laboring in menial jobs they couldn't get out of, they were learning nothing in the New World, they were really out of luck.

We were wearing straw hats. Of course, we were wearing them because the season was summer. Apparently, according to the many boundaries their ignorance and fanaticism had drawn to

442 (1893-1982), Turkish journalist and political writer.

avoid contacts with their new environment, those straw hats were taboo.

Staring at our hats, one or two of them told us:

“We understood your coming to study here, gentlemen. But how could you give in to the infidels by putting those straw hats on your heads?”

We replied:

“And what the hell is going on with those black bowler hats on your heads? They are both more expensive and inconvenient in the summer; instead of protecting your heads from the sun, they absorb the sun’s heat and make you uncomfortable.”

They thought it over, and in the end this is what they said:

“Fine, but we are all accustomed to black hats. We think they’re nice. But we aren’t accustomed to straw hats; we all think they’re weird.”

In spite of that comment, they didn’t pursue the discussion of straw hats but brought up another issue:

“Our biggest fear here is unknowingly eating pork, or swallowing some food that was cooked in a pot that had been used for pork... So that’s why we don’t set foot in American restaurants. We are careful to cook our own food. And you? Since you are all alone, you can’t do something like that. We know you are careful not to eat pork and come in contact with it. But can you be sure that the food you ate in the restaurant you went to wasn’t cooked in a pan that had been used for pork?”

We said that we were as careful as we could possibly be, and that we ate some of our food in restaurants that served Turkish-style food. And after a heated argument about restaurants and pork, don’t you know, some of the workers took us up on the following offer?

“It’s hot...Let’s go to the saloon on that corner, and I’ll treat you to a cold beer.”

The place I had referred to as a saloon was a regular tavern. In American taverns the snacks are free. Pork sausages are an important, central part of those snacks; the men drinking liquor were filling their bellies with them. Of course those fanatics who

had shamed us for eating in a restaurant were among the ones who went to the tavern. They were modifying their fanaticism, not in accord with intelligence and logic, but just for pleasure and enjoyment. That was strong evidence that hypocrisy and fanaticism go hand in hand.⁴⁴³

Impressions of Peabody in 1913

In 1329 [1913] I visited the Anatolian workers again. Besides stopping by Peabody once more, I toured the cities of Wooster, Chicago, and Providence. And I saw great changes in Peabody. In the first place, the Balkan War had been a means of breaking down their usual apathy. They had subscribed to the Istanbul newspapers in order to get news of the war and at the meetings they held to read those newspapers together, they had come up with some very impressive ideas.

Later, they had been somewhat energized by some lectures an Anatolian Greek youth had given on workers' rights among them, and the factory owners, fearing that the workers had run out of patience, raised their wages. Besides that, two Turkish youths from Lesbos who lived among them for a while had gone to high school, and they brought out a Turkish newspaper which they printed with a mimeograph machine, and used different means to publicize new ideas. Thanks to this, they abandoned their former bigotry and lost their terror of their new environment. On Sundays the attendance of Turkish workers at the Peabody Museum was noteworthy.⁴⁴⁴

An "American Adventure," as Told by a Grain Merchant from Uzunköprü

The World War was finished, and the Ottoman Empire was dismembered. We heard that people from the Harput area were immigrating to America. Hey, you! What are you waiting for? Get

443 Ahmed Emin Yalman, (n.d.), vol. 1 (1888-1918), pp. 136-138.

444 Ahmed Emin [Yalman], (1332-1334), pp. 179-188.

your rucksack, set out on the road, maybe there'll be a job for you too. The country is nothing but a ruin. Mustafa Kemal Pasha hadn't gone to Anatolia yet. So that's how we took to the road. The enormous ship we boarded was as crowded as the Last Judgment, the deck was full of people. We arrived in New York half empty, half full, and from there, headed for Detroit. I worked at the Goodyear tire factory in Akron, Ohio for a few years. Working at the machines from morning till night, the only entertainment we had was hanging out in the Turkish coffeehouses at night. The same old stories over and over. Some blew their money on women, others, like me, saved their money. Anyhow, I couldn't speak the language of the beautiful infidels. I saw that that wasn't going to work out. The national struggle was over, the Republic had been proclaimed. I left and came back. We were destined to make money in Uzunköprü.⁴⁴⁵

Views of Immigrants in the 1930s

The psychologist Belkıs Vassaf, who was in America for higher education, recounted her impressions of the Turks living in the Boston area in 1936 as follows:

Since Springfield is an industrial area, there were quite a few Turks there. The same was true of nearby Worcester, Massachusetts. Most of them came from Eastern Anatolia. Especially in Worcester, practically all the cafes were like those in Sirkeci [in Istanbul]. Although they had come there as workers at the turn of the century, during the time of Abdülhamit,⁴⁴⁶ and had been in America for 30-35 years and their clothes were identical in style to those of the Americans, their language and lifestyle were absolutely Eastern Anatolian. Once they went on a picnic in Cambridge with a family from Istanbul. The woman from Istanbul didn't want to eat with her hands. "How can there be a Turk

445 Turgut Tülümen, *İki Mülkiye*, (Ankara: Kavaklıdere Kültür Yayınları, 2003) p. 24.

446 Abdülhamit II (1842-1918), Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909.

who doesn't eat with their hands? Can there be such a thing?" they asked in amazement. They thought that the reformed Turkey of today was still the Turkey they had left behind.

They spoke Turkish with an eastern accent. Another thing I noticed was that whether they came from the East or from Istanbul, the Turks who had lived here for a long time had forgotten to say "evet" and "hayır." When they were speaking Turkish, they would say "yes" when they meant "evet," and "no" when they meant "hayır." It was as if they had just forgotten those two words.

When Ethem came to America, he was the first Turkish psychiatrist and one of the first Turks to have a profession. Most of the Turks who had come before him had come from Eastern Anatolia and had the hardest jobs in factories. They would practically sacrifice themselves if they saw a fellow Turk. They showed fantastic hospitality, offered accommodations, and extended invitations. They knew America inside and out. Ethem still wasn't driving a car. "Doctor," they told him, "you need to get a car. It's easy to get a driver's license. We'll get you a license for the price of a rooster." Most of them were bachelors. And there were some who had their own businesses. And all of them had succeeded by overcoming their problems in a particular way. They told us the story of a Turk. A Turk living in Rhode Island sold bread to homes. He needed to drive a car. He learned, but he wasn't a very good driver, he couldn't stop his car when he wanted to. He would throw the bread at one house and move on to a second house, so as not to have to stop in front. There was a traffic circle there. Our guy, paying no heed to the lights or the policeman holding up his hands, after throwing the bread at the houses turned and went around that traffic circle without stopping. Finally, the policemen caught him. "What do you think you're doing, how many times did you fail to stop when I told you to?" he scolded him. "How was I to know?" he replied. "I thought you were greeting me. How could I know you were holding up your hand to stop me?" And that's how he got the policeman off his back.

Among them there was a religious man they all called “Hafiz.”⁴⁴⁷ And he was practically the head or mufti of the Turks in Worcester. They consulted him, since they considered him very intelligent. He functioned as leader of the Turks.

Moreover, there were lots of Turks in Detroit. They worked in the automobile factories. Almost all were good people, and they supported each other a lot. What they all wanted was to save money and go back to Turkey. No telling how, one of them even got hold of some German marks left over from the Weimar Republic, which were no longer valid. He looked at them, showed us pile upon pile of marks, and said that in Turkey they would be happy to take that money, so he was always hoping to go to Turkey.⁴⁴⁸

In 1937, while Sabiha Sertel was in America visiting her daughter, Sevim Sertel, who was studying there, she told of the progress she saw in the Assistance Association she had struggled to found during the 1920s in order to organize the Turkish workers and immigrants:

In 1937, when I went to see my daughter Sevim, who was studying in America, I saw that the board of the “Assistance” Association was made up of young people. The other organizations had cut their ties to New York. Most of my acquaintances had scattered to other places, and some of them had died. The young people invited me to their meetings. I learned that some of the young people had joined workers’ unions, and others had entered socialist organizations. They took me to a meeting of a “Tenants” association that was being organized by the workers. Together we watched the film *Chapaev*⁴⁴⁹ that was showing in the association’s movie theater.

447 In the Muslim religion, a *hafiz* is someone who has memorized the entire Qur’an.

448 Gündüz Vassaf, 2000, pp. 205-206.

449 1934 Soviet film based on the life of legendary Red Army commander Vasily Ivanovich Chapaev.

They asked me about Nazım Hikmet.⁴⁵⁰ They wanted to know different things about him. They were reading Nazım's poems. Their friends back home were sending them those poems.

Several of the young people had joined the going from America to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War. These young people that I met in America in 1937 were no longer ignorant of how they were being exploited, no longer workers submissive to their fate. They had come to believe in the necessity of standing up and fighting for their rights. They took part in strikes, they were collaborating with workers belonging to every nation. I was delighted. The seeds we had sown were bearing fruit.⁴⁵¹

Views of Immigrants in the 1940s

When Ahmet Emin Yalman came to America during the Second World War, in 1943 he visited the Turks in Detroit:

In spite of the distance they had to travel, those villagers had invaded America just as they had invaded Istanbul; at first they had come—to use their own expression—“strictly for business.” That is, they intended to go back to their village after acquiring a certain amount of worldly goods. Therefore at first they clung tightly to each other, they lived in groups. Their only fears were dying and being buried here. If any of them tried to learn English, they would scold him, saying: “Shame on you, you mean to settle down here!”

Wars and crises intervened, they didn't go home in one or two years, as they had thought they would. The bolder ones among them moved away, scattered to different neighborhoods, learned the language, and moved up in their occupations. Some of them adjusted to America and got married, but for the most part they were amazingly loyal to their homeland. When Dr. Fuat came to America to raise money for the Society for the Protection of

450 (1902-1963), distinguished Turkish poet, painter, playwright, novelist, and memoirist, often described as a “romantic communist.”

451 Sabiha Sertel, (1969), pp. 65-66.

Children, they donated everything they had. They said goodbye to that money they had set aside by struggling for years so as one day to own some land in their villages, without even considering the possibility that tomorrow they might lose their jobs and go hungry.

Since Detroit is a big industrial center, there were at one time several thousand Turks there. And now Detroit is the place with the largest population of Turks in America.

They were planning a dinner for us. But it took an hour to get from our hotel to the restaurants, we were very tired, and the next day we were to tour the factory. Besides, after the dinner we would be meeting all our countrymen in a Turkish coffeehouse very near our hotel. It would be hard to go so far just to eat dinner.

Therefore we went as a group to a Greek restaurant. A Greek from Istanbul managed the restaurant. Most of the diners around us also knew Turkish. Since they had read in the newspapers that we had come, they came over to us with concern and wanted to hear news of their former homeland.

The street where the restaurant was located was a corner left over from the Ottoman Empire. Immigrants from many different lands in the Empire were there, all under the influence of nostalgia for their native soil. So there was a big store selling Turkish records, as well as grocery stores, vegetable and butcher shops, restaurants, and coffeehouses of the sort we are used to...

On the second floor of one building, a sort of Turkish club and café had been set up. Pictures of Atatürk, the National Chief,⁴⁵² and of our other great men, souvenirs, other kinds of pictures, Turkish flags...It was more like a place of national pilgrimage for Turks living in a foreign land than a café.

Types of villagers and people from small towns that we were accustomed to from Anatolia gathered there. However, they

452 The title given to Ismet İnönü when he became President of Turkey after Atatürk's death in 1938.

dressed as Americans do, and like Americans, held their cigars in their mouths—it was curious to see how somehow they all smoked cigars. Those cigars were for them a sign of how they had emerged victorious from their struggles on foreign soil. Everyone present came up to me and shook my hand to wish me a happy holiday. Since it was absolutely necessary to give the guest a gift, they each placed one or two cigars before me. As more people arrived, they followed the same procedure. Mountains of cigars piled up in front of me.

In such a cordial atmosphere, there were feelings of love and longing that really touched one's heart. Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın started speaking under the influence of that atmosphere. He explained how the country had flourished and progressed since some of them had left it in former times in the stormy days of the [Second C]onstitution, or in the painful moments after the Balkan War, or in the terrible days coming after the truce; how it had built new railroads, new schools, hospitals, and cities, and had won honor and esteem among the nations. They asked questions, he replied. We explained how the country had made new economic moves after the war, how it was going to need mature, experienced sons like themselves. They were all ready to come...

Early the next morning a huge tray of baklava came to the hotel. We passed them out to the Americans, chauffeurs, and ladies around us. They were all thrilled. When we returned to the hotel on the second day of our visit, we found our countrymen again prepared. They had left their jobs, their struggles, their daily wages to see us once more. Most of them had cars, and they took us to the station in their own cars.⁴⁵³

The main opportunities for the Turks in America to get together were the country fairs they held every year to raise money to send to the motherland. In his memoirs Frank Ahmed tells how the Turks living in New England held a country fair every year from the 1930s to the 1950s. When the Turkish families

453 Ahmet Emin Yalman, (1934), vol. 2, pp. 84-86.

held their annual country get-together, they raised funds for the Red Crescent Society and the Society for the Protection of Children. When natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes occurred in Turkey, they didn't fail to provide assistance in the form of blankets, medicine, tents, and money.⁴⁵⁴ The immigrants from Harput raised funds to donate an x-ray machine worth eight thousand dollars to the Elazığ War on Tuberculosis Society.⁴⁵⁵ At those picnics held outdoors, they roasted lamb, ate Turkish food, and played and listened to Turkish music.⁴⁵⁶ After the Turks in America got married and had children—especially girls—they kept close tabs on them, making them observe strict curfews and not letting them go out on the streets by themselves.⁴⁵⁷

5. Life Stories

The Story of Harput Native Hüseyin Kayma, As Told by His Son

My father was born in Harput, a sizable town of six thousand buildings and houses prior to World War I. Many Turks come from areas adjacent to Harput. In 1912 or early 1913, while drinking alcohol he took out a dagger and stabbed a man repeatedly. He had a violent temper, perhaps the man had looked at him with an extra squint in his eye, but it offended my father. He fled to the hills and became a fugitive. He joined the Army, but obviously did not tell them anything about his problems with the police back in Harput. One day he was summoned by his commanding officer who had a gendarme (village police officer) with him. The commanding officer said that the gendarme had a warrant charging my father with stabbing a man in Harput. The man did not die, but the incident brought great shame on my father's family. He could go back to Harput and face trial or stay with his

454 Ahmed, (1993), pp. 58-59.

455 Dr. Mehmet Tokmak, "Yabancı Diyarlarda Harputlu," *Elazığ*, no. 1, pp. 22-25.

456 Ahmed, (1993), pp. 60-61.

457 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.

army unit. He was advised that the unit was assigned for garrison duty in Yemen. Hüseyin Kayma elected to go to Yemen. Since the army held superior authority over that of the gendarmerie, Kayma's commanding officer told the gendarme officer that he could not have Kayma. That ended the question of jurisdiction. Soon Kayma's unit marched to a Black Sea port where they boarded a ship for Istanbul. In Istanbul Kayma and his buddy Veysi Kaplan decided they did not want to go to Yemen. They somehow changed into civilian clothes slipped away from their army unit and finally, in the spring of 1913, they boarded a ship to the United States. Kayma planned to join his brother who was living in Providence, Rhode Island.

The exchange between Kayma and the United States Customs officials was typical and indicative of the frustration of these officials and the immigrants, as they tried to translate these exotic names into English. Hüseyin became Sam, and Kayma changed his last name to Alli because he was worried about deserting from the Turkish Army, and was concerned about being traced by Turkish officials. Thus Sam Alli became the name used by Hüseyin Kayma throughout his life in the United States. He joined the Turkish community in Providence and later moved up to Worcester, Massachusetts, where he joined another group of Turks working in the wire mills. Sometime in the early twenties he moved to Detroit, where the automobile industry was booming and found a job painting cars for the Dodge Brothers.

He lived in a rooming house with other Turks. Later Alli met a young lady from Tennessee who had also come up to work in the automobile industry. They were married during the Great Depression in 1932. The young married couple were soon joined by a cousin, Kayma Mustafa Shisli. They joined thousands of Turks in Detroit's Turkish community located primarily in the St. Anthony and Lafayette Street, next to an area called Greek Town.

With the Great Depression in high gear many of the Turks began to rethink their original plans to stay in America long enough to earn enough money to insure their security when they returned

to their Anatolian villages. At the same time Atatürk, very much in need for additional manpower sent Turkish ships to the United States and offered free passage to any Turk who wished to return. Mustafa Shisli accepted the free passage immediately. Kayma expressed an interest also and broached the subject to his American wife. When she heard he wished to return along with their son Bill she put her foot down. “Not only will you not take Bill but I am not going either”, she declared. Twenty one years later Bill did go to Turkey and met Mustafa, who looked very much like Bill’s father. He was working in Mardin, as a technician. During this meeting Mustafa asked if Bill could help him return to the United States. Bill was a twenty one year old college student who was unable to help Mustafa.

“In 1935 when Atatürk made it a matter of law that all Turks have a last name, the Turks in Detroit decided to follow suit. Since there are no Turks named William, Bill became Alli Kayma, my sister whose name was Jandanma became Shyle Kayma. All the Turks went to the Red Crescent Society, there were two chapters in the Detroit area one in the city of Detroit, the other in Dearborn, where they registered their new name. There were also sizable Turkish communities in Buffalo, New York, and Wheeling, Indiana. When dealing with Americans or United States institutions the Turks retained their American sounding names.”⁴⁵⁸

The Story of Hasan from Erzincan

When the journalist Hikmet Feridun Es asked Hasan—who had immigrated from Erzincan and spent his life in Kansas, Colorado, Arizona, and, finally, California—“Hasan Efendi, do you know the song “There is a bird in Erzincan’?” his eyes filled with tears and he replied, “How could I not know it? I’ve never stopped thinking about that silver-winged bird”:

In our village we had Armenian neighbors. They went to America first. We saw how Artin, who had gone to America a little

458 Ahmed, (1993), pp. 45-46.

bit—maybe a year and a half—earlier sent his father six [gold] Napoleons. Kirkor went after him. He sent his mother the price of a field. Then the sons of our paternal uncle went. No money came from him, but he sent good letters. And a little later, he sent money too. We said, “What are we waiting for?” We saw America as a golden land. First I set out for Istanbul. There I worked quite a bit. And I had a few *kuruş*. However, my father sent me some more money. Traveling by way of Marseilles on the little boat *Atlanta*, exactly forty-nine years ago, when I was sixteen, I set foot in New York. I didn’t know a single word of English... My aunt’s husband, who had come to America before me, was supposed to meet me and take me from the immigration station.

I waited on Ellis Island with the crowd of immigrants. Find your uncle if you can! Night fell, the waters grew dark, everyone left, but he didn’t come. The lights came on in the huge city in the distance. The immigration officials asked:

“Where is your uncle?” I didn’t understand a word... I was still wearing a fez on my head, a quilted cotton coat on my back, *shalwar* trousers on my legs, light, flat-heeled peasant shoes on my feet, and my old quilt as a sort of rucksack on my back. And since I had been a steerage passenger, it had also served as my bed on the ship. Just look how I arrived in America...

The next day came. And don’t you know, our uncle again failed to show up? Anyway, I hadn’t seen hide nor hair of him in America. Finally they took pity on me and let me leave the immigration offices. Back then in America they only looked at your ID card. And since the ID card was written in the old alphabet, they couldn’t understand anything it said... They never asked about a passport, etc. And as a matter of fact, I had come without a passport.

I went out into New York, and oh, my God! It was nothing like Erzincan. It was really crowded!... Where would I go? ... In what direction?... What would I do?... I didn’t know a single word of English. The people around me were staring at my fez. In those days they hadn’t yet heard the name Turk. They were practically backing away from me. I saw that this wasn’t going to work out,

and I slowly removed my fez. As I stuck it in my pocket, a man came up to me.

Didn't he ask me in Turkish, "Are you coming from Turkey?" I wanted to kiss him... I threw myself on the man's neck. He asked where I was from. I told him I was from Erzincan.

"There is no home here for people from Erzincan, but there is a home for those from Erzurum. Shall I take you there?"

(...)

Such homes still exist now. But back then there were lots of them. Thirty or forty people from a particular province—or sometimes fifty or sixty—would get together and live in a home. There were homes for people from Bitlis, Mush, Diyarbakır, and Erzurum. Those who lived in those homes pooled their money to pay the rent. All the homes were organized in the same way. A president called the "Ross" would supervise all the chores. Additionally, the houses had a servant who was also in charge of cooking. They paid the cook, that is, the servant, a dollar and a quarter. The cost of the cook's food was deducted from that, and on the weekend the cost was shared. They usually chose these cook/servants from those who had just set foot in America. Because, since they were totally ignorant of the language, they couldn't find another job. They would work for their countrymen who had come earlier, and while on the job, as they cooked for them, they would learn a little of the language, get to know their surroundings a bit, and when they were ready to look for another job, a new servant would come. So I became the "servant-cook" in a house where sixty-two people slept. Sometimes I asked myself: "Is this what I came to America for? To work for sixty-two people every day and get scolded by them every night?" They would especially scold me at night, saying "this dinner is too salty, the other one is raw!"

Don't bother to ask how much I regretted it. Every Turkish immigrant went through that servant-cook phase as soon as he came to America. That's why all the Turks in America are very good cooks. First-class cooks. And what they cooked best and most often was bulgur pilaf.

(...)

But I didn't work as a servant for long. They hired me to work with a Greek cook from Turkey. I still didn't know the language at all. This was the biggest problem facing the Turks who came to America. Most of them didn't know how to read and write in any language, so learning English was the biggest hardship they endured.

One day I made a mistake that a New York policeman found both weird and disastrous. My boss was going to make *börek*. He told me:

"Go buy four pounds of *peynir*... *Peynir* is 'cheese' in English..." As he had said, I repeated, "I'm to look for four pounds of cheese." "Okay...But don't forget... Just keep repeating it on your way there," he said.

And on the way I kept repeating continually, nonstop, as if reciting a prayer, "Four pounds cheese! Four pounds cheese!" Nevertheless, as soon as I got to the store, I forgot. In America—at least in most grocery stores—women and young girls work in the cheese department. And in that store, I'll never forget, I found myself facing a beautiful redheaded cheese clerk. Damned if the word "kiss" didn't pop into my head instead of "cheese"!... And actually it was very appropriate... However, back then I had no idea of what the word "kiss" meant. Anyway, I'd never heard that word. I told the cheese girl:

"Give me four pound kiss."

The girl was chopping up salad with a knife in her hand. She straightened up, and staring angrily at the man who wanted four pounds of kisses from her, shouted:

"What did you say?"

I repeated, "Four pound kiss!..."

She blew her stack. The girl and her boss called the police. Thankfully, the policeman was a reasonable man. He sent for an Armenian translator. Pointing to me, he said:

"I've never seen a man who wanted so many pounds of kisses. He looks like a serious person. Ask him what he was going to do with four pounds of kisses."

I replied in a very natural way:

"I'm going to make *börek*..." and he burst out laughing. They pointed to the cheese. They understood what was going on. And from that day on, that girl gave us preferential treatment. Sometimes she even asked:

"Is it something like cheese that you want?"

And what was my mistake? In English "kiss" and "cheese" are not that similar, but what could I do?

"Four pound kiss" really became a famous story among the Turks in America... And its hero was none other than Hasan Efendi from Erzincan (...)

And one time I went to another grocery store to buy eggs. I went into the store. The word "egg" slipped my mind. Anyway it was always like that. And I was in a hurry to get to work. On top of that, it was very crowded! What should I do? I gestured with my hand in the shape of an egg. They gave me an onion. I said, "No." And it was a place like a department store. This time one of the girls said, smiling:

"I understand, I understand." She felt around in a cabinet. She took out a wooden implement in the shape of an egg used for darning socks. It really was very close to what I had described. I saw that they weren't going to understand me that way. Getting mad, I grabbed that oval-shaped wooden thing. I put it on the floor and sat down on it. I started shrieking "Cluck, cluck, cluck!... Cluck, cluck, cluck!..." First they were shocked. They were afraid I had gone crazy. Then, how they laughed once they figured it out!... Furthermore, they wouldn't let me pay for the eggs.

"You were a hen. You laid those eggs," they said.

After being a chicken once in my life, I really saw the advantage of being a person for the rest of my life...⁴⁵⁹

459 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, May 29, 1948.

The Story of Detroit's Nuri Ahmet Yardımcı

Nuri Ahmet Yardımcı from Elazığ, whom his friends called “Sergeant Nuri,” was the President of the Detroit branch of the Society for the Protection of Children. Yardımcı had started a fund-raising campaign among the people from Elazığ who were living in America to donate an x-ray machine to Elazığ. Hikmet Feridun Es, who commented that possibly more Turkish was spoken on St. Antoine Street—where Sergeant Nuri owned a grocery store and quite a few other buildings—than on Büyükdada or in Kurtuluş⁴⁶⁰—told his story as follows:

When I ran away to America, I was married. And I had one child. I wanted to make a better future for my wife and child. At that time there were many obstacles standing in my way. I had just come back from the army. In the situation I was in, I didn't see how my dreams could come true.

Finally one day I kissed my son. I bade farewell to my wife without telling anyone else. I set out on the road, keeping it a secret from my father. First stop, Istanbul!... And there I went to work for a while for a café owner named Şerif in Çukurçeşme; by going without eating or drinking, I saved up some money. The government was despotic. I only saw the possibility of making money and having a future on the other side of the Ocean. I took a breather in Marseilles while saving up the money for the steamship ticket. At that time my father found out where I was. He sent a telegram to some relatives we had in Marseilles, offering to pay all of my expenses if I would go back to Turkey.

So one midnight I just boarded an American ship to escape from Marseilles.

Saturday, August 17, 1912! At noon I first set foot on American soil. I hit the road right away, for I had promised myself on the ship not to spend even a day in America without working.

One of my relatives was a barber in Providence. Can you believe

460 Both areas with large Greek populations.

it? Two hours after I first set foot on American soil, I was in my relative's shop.

"Do you know how to be a barber?" they asked me. I replied:

"I do."

I wasn't lying. I was shaving myself.

"Let me see you give me a shave," he said.

I had never seen such a barber chair; it was like an operating table. Nevertheless, I worked very carefully. However, I came close to cutting off an ear. But I learned how to do that job in spite the fact that I cut an ear, a nose, or a cheek now and then. I worked a year for three dollars a week. Those who came with me and even after me couldn't take it; they went back home. Several times I was on the point of going back too. But I stuck it out. I had made up my mind: I wouldn't go back with empty pockets. Later, I moved to another, big barber shop. And from there I became a head barber in the navy. I was shaving 200 sailors a day. Finally I was appointed chief barber.

In the years when I came to America, I never went a single time to the movies or any other place of entertainment. I saved all the money that came into my hands. In 1919 I corresponded with my father again. And by then I had started sending money back home. I had a letter from my wife. I found out that my son had grown, he was going to school. For a while I even thought about going home and opening an herbal shop there. It didn't happen. In 1921 I started an organization to take passengers to Detroit. Then I started buying and selling buildings. Now I am doing very well, thank God... (...)

After living abroad for twenty-three years, I wanted to arrange to bring my wife and son to America, regardless of what it cost. How would we get along after twenty-three years of separation?... In 1932 I sent them almost five hundred dollars. Up to then, my wife and son had never set foot outside the village. They might get lost in the city. How could they come here? How would my spouse live in this crowded neighborhood, in this bustling country? Those were all issues we had to consider.

Initially, they had good luck. They found out that an American woman was going from there to New York, and they went to Istanbul with her. But that didn't work out. In Istanbul the American woman decided not to go to New York. And my family had set out. They boarded a ship from Istanbul, which would take them straight to America. I was waiting for them in New York. No one came. I received word that they had gotten off in Providence! I sent a telegram right away. I sent money. I begged the shipping agency officials to put them on a train to New York. But unfortunately this time there was a misunderstanding about the stations. They didn't come to the station where I was waiting for them. So I went to the station where I thought they would be. There was no one there. In a corner was a frail woman wearing a headscarf with a young man. It didn't even cross my mind that that huge young man could be my son. I went over to them and asked, in English of course:

"Do you know whether any passengers from Istanbul got off the train?"

The young man didn't understand any of what I had said. The woman beside him asked, "What is he saying?" He replied in Turkish: "I didn't understand... He is speaking English..." I still didn't catch on. When I heard that they only spoke Turkish, I asked the young man, this time in Turkish:

"Are you Turkish?" This time the frail woman nudged the young man beside her and said:

"Ziya...Your father... That's your father!..."

When she said that, I was petrified with shock. Because my son's name was Ziya. And I realized that in twenty-odd years, my wife had grown frail. We hugged each other. They must have found me very much changed. I had shaved off my mustache. I was dressed differently. I took them to my car in front of the station. My car was new and luxurious. I drove it myself. My son and wife were staring at me as if I were someone else, a new and foreign man.

My wife said: "I can't believe my eyes!..."

Finally we got home. Of course it was more comfortable than anything in the village. It's a big house. It has bathrooms, central heat, hot running water, a radio, and a refrigerator, and there was another car in the garage. It gave me enormous pleasure to show them a new life and new prosperity. Our only worry was whether my wife would have difficulty in coping with her new life, since she didn't know any English. Later, we married off our son. Our business gradually got better. Now we are happy with our life. Our only problem is homesickness.⁴⁶¹

The Story of Detroit's Mehmed Malik

In 1920 I was in my last year of studies at the Halkalı Agricultural School in Istanbul. I was going to be what they call an "agricultural engineer." However, at that time there were needs that our education at the Halkalı Agricultural School couldn't provide. At that time I was well known for arguing about everything in class. My classmates said: "Explain the needs of the school one by one to the Minister of Agriculture!" And I left. I said it all. The Minister listened and listened. He said:

"For heaven's sake, my child, you're wasting your breath. We can't even afford to buy a hoe for the school. Find a solution in your own head..." I was shocked. I almost gave up hope for the future. While crossing the bridge that day, I bought a newspaper. I opened it on the streetcar. There was an article about how agriculturists were being educated in America. Like a sweet dream!... What pictures!... I turned to the newspaper's advertising page. One ad jumped out at me.

They were looking for a steward for the ship *Gülcemal* for its crossing to New York!...

I felt as if a curtain had suddenly been lifted from before my eyes. The ship *Gülcemal* was going to America, and they were looking for a steward!... I kept repeating that statement to myself. But there were quite a few requirements for the steward position. It

461 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 1, 1948.

was as if they were looking for a movie star rather than a steward. Besides, it was months before the crossing...

I said to myself:

“I’ll make at least one crossing, I’ll see that civilized world up close. And I may even provide for some needs. Anyway, it’s vacation time...”

With that in mind, I rushed to the Shipping Company’s office that day. They verified that I was an intelligent man. From my clothing, my looks, and my behavior... I told them I was a student at the Halkalı Agricultural School. Finally I signed up to work as a steward on the *Gülcehal*’s trip to America. There were four of us: Ali (nicknamed “Captain”), the second was Mehmet Ali, Nuri (who wanted to learn to write for an American newspaper), and myself...

One day in 1921 we weighed anchor from Istanbul. It was the *Gülcehal*’s second voyage. We stopped to take on coal at Gibraltar. And in a short time—an absolutely delightful sixteen days—the *Gülcehal* came and docked in New York!... The land of our dreams!... After the last of the passengers had disembarked, we too went ashore at the first opportunity. We attacked New York, rushing here and there, as if it were slipping away beneath our feet. We wanted to see it all at once. As we tried to see today the subway trains, tomorrow the so-and-so building, the next day the such-and-such museum, the days rushed by like thunderbolts. And we found a lot of people we knew.

Finally it was our last day. The day came when the *Gülcehal* was to return to Istanbul. I’ll never forget that day when my friends from Brooklyn showed up. They told me:

“Buddy, today is your graduation day. The ship sails tonight. Come on, let’s spend our last day walking around.”

In fact, since we had been staying in Lower Manhattan up to then, we hadn’t seen Brooklyn thoroughly. Someone needed to go to the post office and a few other places in that time. I took them. I got off the ferry. On the way back from the post office, my companions said:

“We’re not leaving you in this world. Let’s have one last beer.” We sat down somewhere. After one, two, three, five beers, we were feeling pretty laid back. When I came to my senses, I said:

“Oh my God, guys!... The *Gülcehal*!”

We dashed out of the place. We left together. As soon as we could get a taxi, we crossed the famous Brooklyn Bridge.

My friends said to each other:

“Look, the *Gülcehal*!... It’s leaving!...”

You can imagine how I felt when I heard that. I opened the car door as if I could catch up with it. I dashed out. I walked straight to the shore. Bellowing smoke, the *Gülcehal* was sailing away over the Atlantic waves.

And I, a flat broke Halkalı Agricultural School student, had been left behind in a foreign city.

My friends said:

“Sorry, buddy. Maybe it’ll turn out for the best...”

“You’re not dead... And you still have your hands and feet.” They tried to comfort me with their words.

I moved toward the ship as if I could stop it. Then I waved my hands hopelessly. And I realized that whether I liked it or not, when I had missed that ship, an altogether different, very new path was opening before me.

They ate and drank till late that night, attempting to comfort me. I slept at a friend’s place.

(...)

Early in the morning, I got up. My head ached. My friend had apparently gone to work. I went out to the street. It was 1921. America was going through its worst, most critical years, with twenty million unemployed. Almost all of those twenty million unemployed had come back from the war, and considering the huge number of people who were also unemployed but were viewed as war heroes who were competing with me, how could I—a foreigner who didn’t know the language and, moreover, had

been their enemy in combat in yesterday's war—find a job?... I couldn't have picked a worse time than that to have come to the New World. When I went around the corner with an acquaintance, I saw a lot of people with pots in their hands waiting in line on the sidewalk front of a big building. I asked a Jew whom I had met the day before:

“What's that?”

He replied:

“A soup line!”

I didn't understand.

“What does that mean?”

He translated it into Turkish and said, “They are waiting in line to get some soup.”

He went to get his pot filled. Back then the soup lines—similar to our *imarets*⁴⁶²—were very well known. Seeing them really upset me. A smell like the fragrance of the meals from the *Gülcemal's* kitchen and dining room passed before my eyes. But they were no longer there. So I was obliged to forge a new life for myself in a new world.

At the time America was not familiar with Turks, and they looked them right in the face and said in amazement: “It's odd...They're just like us.” I had to find a job and start working to learn English right away. And, given my financial situation, that was essential. I went to work in a restaurant run by a man from Arabia. However, all the workers there were Arabs. And they knew neither English nor Turkish. Months went by. I had to learn Arabic in order to get along with them. Just look at what fate had led me to. Learning Arabic instead of English in America!... I saw that that wasn't going to work out. I left, I came to Detroit, I went to work for Ford. That was some introduction...It's been close to thirty years...⁴⁶³

462 An Ottoman soup kitchen, often part of a large mosque complex, or *waqf*.

463 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, June 6, 1948.

The Story of Salonica Native Fazil Ismail, known in Los Angeles as Fred Martin

I was flat broke when I started working. I was studying Law in Salonica. Exactly forty-two years ago... On the one hand, I was continuing to work at the bank. The thought of going to America hadn't even crossed my mind. I saw that three friends of mine named Asim, Rıza, and Aziz were whispering about some plans they were making in great secrecy. One day I found out from a steamship agency that they were busy making arrangements to run away to America. So *that* was the mysterious plan they had been keeping from me! I was very hurt. What did they think they had to hide from me? I went into action that very day. I was going to go to America just to spite them. And I had made another decision too. I would leave on the same ship and confront them there. I secretly prepared my passport and tickets. And they would surely almost die of shock when they found out that I was leaving on that ship named *Oceana*, and right across from them. So that's exactly how my sudden entry to America occurred. Thankfully, I knew several languages. On the ship there was a big crowd of Albanians who were running away to America for political reasons. They didn't know any languages. Quite a few had jobs with the ship's management. They weren't regular officials. And since I knew Albanian, I started earning a little money by translating for them during the trip. As soon as we got to New York—that is, forty-two years ago—my first job was working with a Jew to learn how to be a tinsmith. I made tin with big machines. In a week I became the foreman. However, back then I didn't like working for someone else. So I started working as a peddler, selling things on the streets of New York. I sold straw hats, socks, and handkerchiefs.

In those days the New York police wouldn't leave the peddlers alone! Anyhow, there was one burly Irish cop who kept bugging me. A corner of Elm Street was such a busy place!... But the man wouldn't give me a chance to stand there... By God, he wouldn't leave me alone. Every day he saw me from far away. We started playing tag. Unfortunately, I didn't speak the language. Because

I always lived with countrymen I had run into. We always spoke Turkish. I made a decision. I would leave my friends. And I would at least learn enough English to explain myself to those policemen who were chasing me. With that in mind, I started looking for a room I could move to in an American's house. In the places I went I paid more attention to how well they spoke English than to the rooms. I finally found a place I liked a lot. I gave them the money to rent it. That evening I took my stuff there. And that place was very close to my work, the corner on Elm Street I mentioned. Early in the morning, I left the room, taking my pushcart. I was walking through the entrance hall. Just then, a door to one of the rooms opened, and who should I see facing me but that huge, burly cop with whom I'd been playing hide-and-seek, dressed in his uniform, with his cap on his head and his billy club in his hand? We were living in adjoining rooms. And he was quite shocked to see me.

He took one look at my face and another at the pushcart I was holding. Laughing, he asked:

"Aren't you going to the corner of Elm Street?"

Later I learned that police sergeant Tom Caligann was the head of the family whose home I was living in. So it is to that family that I owe the fluent English I speak today. You couldn't even learn it that well in school... Though I must admit their way of teaching was like training a dog. Sometimes I got so mad, I almost left that house. However, I told them the first day I moved in:

"Whatever you do, teach me English," and they replied:

"You'll see how well we'll teach you." If I couldn't tell them in English that I wanted something like a glass or a plate, they wouldn't pay any attention to me. They would get very angry when I didn't know the name of something, and would yell from the distance: "Say the word in English!"

On top of that, my landlord let me stay on that busy corner, the corner of Elm Street, where I had no right to be. As I wished, my pushcart would empty out, I was doing a terrific business.

But I didn't stay there too long. I went to San Francisco. There I took a job cleaning the windows in a huge factory, which covered twelve blocks. And they paid pretty well... Then I opened the famous Cairo Café in San Francisco together with a friend. We intended for it to be a gathering place for Turks and Egyptians. We put in a Turkish-style band. The Turks even made rakı for the first time.

Americans came there too. However, at that time the 1915 Pacific-Panama Fair opened. I was carried away by dreams of getting rich there. I went. Instead of getting rich, as I had thought, I returned to America penniless..."

Fazıl smiles:

"Now I am fairly well off, but that money didn't come to me easily. At times when I was broke, I even worked as a waiter. Waiting tables was like being in the middle of an ice skating rink. And the customers were all rich. I made a good bit of money, but I got terrible rheumatism in my legs. I quit the job. And I finally opened a laundry. Along with that, I bought real estate. And now I'm really as well off as I ever wanted to be!"⁴⁶⁴

The Story of Ahmet Abdullah from Harput

Immigrating to America in 1900, Ahmet Abdullah at first visited the St. Louis World's Fair and later played the *zurna* there.⁴⁶⁵ He opened the first Turkish bath in America, and made his fortune from the chain of bathhouses he acquired. This is how Abdullah told his life story:

I didn't just stop at opening America's first Turkish baths in many places. I made what are today known as Turkish baths famous in the New World. (...)

It was an American named Stew, who had lived in Istanbul for a very short time, who first gave me that idea.

464 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 15, 1948.

465 For Abdullah's adventures at the St. Louis World's Fair, see pp. 43-46 above.

One day that guy told me:

“If I were to go back to Turkey, do you know what I’d do?”

Curious, I asked him:

“What would you do?”

“I’d go straight to the bathhouse. (Pointing to his belly) I’d melt this extra fat.”

All of a sudden, the idea of opening Turkish baths here popped into my head. As a matter of fact, some doctors had experimented with massage and weight loss places using that name. This would be the first time a Turk would open a Turkish bath. I first tried it out in Hot Springs, Arkansas. However, that place wasn’t my own. It was what Americans call a Turkish bath. Later, I opened my own. I had some formulas or sayings the doctors who had gone into that business before me had come up with—one of which, for example, was “Look Younger”—written on the doors. And another saying written in big letters declared that a Turkish bath would cure the common cold. And above all those sayings I put a sign that said: “Health Mecca.”

Clients flocked there!... Women in particular made appointments by letter and telegram. But in those days Turkey won its freedom. I had a great longing to see my country in that atmosphere. On top of that, I was homesick. I didn’t care that my business was making money. And anyway I already had a lot of money. I hopped on a ship and came to Istanbul. I found my homeland celebrating its independence with drumbeats. I hadn’t told my mother. From Istanbul I went down to Harput. I had exactly five thousand gold dollars with me. When I got to Harput, I found out that my father had died. Those were the hardest days for my mother. When I went through the door, she was so shocked to see me! I hugged her. I kissed her and left the five thousand gold coins in front of her. It was time for me to be drafted. I paid the fee in lieu of serving. When I had finished all of that, in 1909 I came back to America. The Turks in America welcomed me playing the drums.

That was when I went to the Pacific coast. I made the first Turkish bath on the lower floor of a hotel called Longshine. And I was fortunate that things went well there. One day they brought me one of America's best-known bankers, the great rich man Partz. That man had suffered a stroke. He couldn't use one of his legs. For four months I gave him steam treatments. For some reason the man got better. So this was the person who recommended me to the millionaire Kenfil. I catered to him for two hours in the afternoon. Do you know what he paid me per month?

A thousand dollars... He would get very tired at his own job. He told me that in those two hours he completely relaxed.

(...)

Later the Mack Senett film company put me on its staff as their official "massage doctor." I went to work there and was responsible for maintaining the equilibrium of the actors' bodies. My income was very appropriate. I was making a lot of money by sometimes slapping the world's most beautiful people and sometimes pummeling their bodies. On one side Wall Street's biggest banking tycoons, and the actors on the other!... And it was just at that time that the famous millionaire Doheny came to me too. From now on, at certain times, between the build-up of the day's smoke and the steam, our place seemed like a regular "bankers' club." From their conversations you could figure out right away which stocks and bonds they would be trading the next day, or what transactions they would be involved in the day after that. Anyway when Doheny emerged from the steam room on his way to the bathroom, he would advise me:

"Tomorrow buy this stock, buy this bond..." After I started doing as he said, within a month my head was spinning over the amount of money I had made. My income from the Turkish bath was nothing compared to that, but it couldn't be helped, for the Turkish bath was my source of information. The stocks and securities that I would buy were first talked about there... All the mysteries of Wall Street passed between the walls of my Turkish bath. Later, I closed my business. Or rather I devoted the whole

place entirely to Doheny. That guy and I did a lot of other business together. When he died, I had a million and a half dollars, that is, four and a half million liras in Turkish money.

However, a catastrophe swept all that money away. What I had left was chickenfeed... Nevertheless, at any moment I find the energy of those first times in myself. If I were to start working again as I did in the old days, I'm sure I'd earn all that money again!...⁴⁶⁶

The Story of Handan Hanım from Istanbul

Handan Hanım's father-in-law was typical of the American Negroes, who work in New York's Harlem, in the streets of New Orleans, the cotton fields of Louisiana, and on Mississippi River steamboats.

One night that fellow went to bed in his house overlooking the Mississippi River and had a very strange dream.

An elderly man was nudging the American Negro as he said these things to him:

"What business do you have here?... You are a dark-skinned man!... Of course they must have told you that you came from the middle of Africa. But there's something else you didn't know. Your ancestor, who was brought to America as a slave, was a Muslim. And your religion is also Islam. And do you know what your name is?... Ali!... And it's not just you, it's the same with your whole family. Tonight, as soon as you wake up from this dream, right away you will make a decision. You will gather your wife and children and board a ship going straight to the Old World... To Turkey... Learn Turkish there... Become a Turk... Become a Muslim... Beware lest you forget my words, Ali..."

And that's how after that the American Negro whose name had been Johnny Brown opened his eyes to life the next morning as Ali Efendi. He gathered his wife and children and told them:

"Get ready. We're going to Turkey!..."

The black children were shocked!... Turkey?... What for?... Ali Efendi explained his dream. The children never thought of disobeying their father's orders. They made their preparations together.

And one day Ali Efendi went to Turkey with his four sons, whom he had named Musa, Rıza, Mehmet, and Yusuf. There were probably the first American Negroes to set foot in Turkey. When they came, they didn't know a word of Turkish. The children knew that beautiful Negro music very well, and on the ship they were constantly humming the song "Old Man River."

At the time when the American black family reached the city, Istanbul was like a mole's nest. Riddled with holes on all sides. They were digging what looked like battlefield trenches. They were making Istanbul's famous sewer system!...

Being a very enterprising and venturesome man, when Ali Efendi saw those ditches, he said:

"Excellent...We can work on that, too..."

And two days after arriving in Istanbul, without knowing a single word of Turkish, they looked for jobs in the sewer construction business, and they started working...And at the same time they kept writing down the Turkish words they learned in their pocket notebooks.

Both their co-worker and their bosses addressed them as "Hadji...Hadji Efendi."

Eventually Ali Bey and his family found other work in the village of Alibey. Since they lived in Azapkapı, they would make the long trip there and back on foot. They were working in road building. At that time one of Necmeddin Molla's⁴⁶⁷ wives saw them. She put in a good word for them. She found them jobs in Molla Bey's home.

The child Musa studied there. Later, he went to the Haydarpaşa High School. And he finished high school. Today Musa speaks excellent Turkish. The youngest child too followed in his footsteps.

467 Necmettin Molla [Kocataş] (1875-1949), Ottoman Minister of Justice, 1909.

Coming to Ali Efendi's son Rıza... His ideal was to get married. When he brought up this idea, the matchmakers started looking around the area. The young black man had some very nice marriage prospects. At least one of them was very suitable. She was very beautiful.

However, Rıza didn't want her. Everyone, especially Handan Hanım, the black nanny in Necmeddin Molla's house, was amazed at the prospective bride.

"What's the problem?... Why don't you like her?... She's a very beautiful girl..."

Rıza turned down his lip and shook his head:

"She's beautiful...Very beautiful, but..."

He didn't know what else to say.

"But what?"

He shrugged his shoulders:

"White!"

Was that her biggest fault?... But when Rıza said he couldn't be happy with a white woman, no matter how beautiful she was, things changed. I wonder, was it the matchmaker who thought of Handan Hanım?

When she sounded him out, the young black man's eyes lit up with joy. But Handan Hanım was at first definitely not drawn to that marriage.

Then she consented. That is, the wedding of Rıza, the black man of American origin, and Handan Hanım was celebrated in Istanbul as Allah commands with the words of the Prophet.

After that, the males of the family—Ali Efendi, Rıza, and their brothers went back to America. There they started a new business. Rıza sent money right away to Handan Hanım, who had stayed behind in Istanbul, and arranged for her to come there.

Our black girl had never set foot outside of Istanbul and didn't know a word of English. Fortunately, her family in Istanbul wrote her a note containing the following sentences in English, French,

and German: "I am going to America. Please help me," and they glued it in her passport. Whenever she was in a bind, Handan Hanım would open her passport to that page, which would explain her situation in three languages to the person across from her. And she came to America.⁴⁶⁸

Belkıs Vassaf, who came to New York in 1936 for university studies, mentions Handan Hanım as "Yaşar Hanım" in her memoirs and tells her story like this:

Since the turn of the century, the Indian Muslims in America had been doing missionary work among the Negroes to convert them, trying to get them to accept Islam, and in some cases they succeeded. One of those Negroes who had embraced Islam went to Istanbul once, chanced to meet Yaşar Hanım, and married her, and she came here. Back then, and to a large extent even today, the Negroes in New York lived in a place called Harlem. No one would sell them a house anywhere else. They practically lived on top of one another, in very bad and crowded conditions. Back then, there were even rooms they called "hot bed rooms." And maybe they still exist. They would rent those rooms to three people, each of whom used it for eight hours at a time. During the other hours, the man would have to be out at work anyway. They called them hot bedrooms, because the bed never had a chance to cool off. As soon as one of them got out of it, another would get in.

Yaşar Hanım had settled down in Harlem, not in one of those "hot bed" rooms but in an apartment.

One day, Hayriye Hanım (her son was Commercial Attaché in New York. And she was a very intelligent and broadminded lady who was determined to learn about and to understand America) heard that Yaşar Hanım was there, and told me we should go and see her. We went together. As soon as we entered the first floor, we ran into something like dark wood. Some verses from the Qur'an were written on it in Arabic letters. Yaşar Hanım gave

468 Hikmet Feridun Es, "Amerikada Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 9, 1948.

us a warm welcome. However, her manner seemed to say, “I don’t know why I came to America.” “I look out the window, I see black everywhere. Here and there, a black head emerges... When I see so many blacks, I feel as if I’m in a coalyard,” she said. And one day she went to the part of Park Avenue near Harlem where the upper crust lived. And there was an Armenian there who had a grocery and vegetable store. And Yaşar Hanım was buying some vegetables there and was trying to choose. The owner of the store got mad and started cursing at her in Turkish. The Armenian was shocked when she answered him in kind. Of course it had never crossed his mind that a Negro who came from Turkey would go shopping in his store in New York.⁴⁶⁹

***The Story of Jack Mehmet,
as Written by his Grandniece Ayşe Önal***

I can’t know what was in young Mehmet’s mind in 1909 when he set out for a new continent. But I do know that, since he didn’t have the chance to choose flying, he set foot on the new continent after a long voyage by ship and immediately began another long journey by land, ending up in Chicago, and that he started a new life in that city.

The son of Ali Efendi from Elazığ, Mehmet changed jobs several times, as all immigrants did, to make money, going from waiter to manager of a casino. After getting his life on track, in 1919 he went to Istanbul, taking his first and only trip back home to see his sick father. When he returned to America, he wanted to take his little brother Halil with him. But Halil didn’t want to leave his homeland. As the years went by, Mehmet became Jack Mehmet Philips. Jack Mehmet married two girls but had no children. He got rich, but he died alone.

In 1956 he experienced a story like something out of a movie in Chicago. Mehmet’s younger brother Halil’s son Güngör—that is, the son of Jack Mehmet’s brother, Medal of Freedom winner Ma-

469 Vassaf, (2000), pp. 207-208.

zor Halil—who was an Air Force pilot, was spending some time in Canada for flight school. When he found out his uncle was in Chicago, he wanted to visit him. He went to the area where most of the Turks lived and asked the first Turk he ran into about his uncle. He replied that he was the man he was looking for. Jack Mehmet and his nephew were very moved by that astonishing and lovely coincidence. They hugged to bid each other farewell, and Güngör, having seen his last relative, Jack Mehmet, before he died, went back home.⁴⁷⁰

The Story of How Hüseyin Bektaş Emigrated from His Village of Yağlıdere in Giresun to Philadelphia

Years before, the Turkish government had decided to return its citizens of Greek ancestry who lived in different areas to Greece. Among the Greeks living in Giresun's Yağlıdere Village was an orphan boy named Lefter, and in spite of the insistence of all his relatives, he didn't want to leave Turkey. He came to my grandfather and told him he wanted to stay with him. And my grandfather said he would be happy to have him and took the boy in. Lefter stayed with us for a long time. And when he grew up, with my grandfather's consent he went to America by way of Russia.

Meanwhile, the years went by, and one day Lefter suddenly returned to the village. After mentioning the old days with my grandfather, he said that he had done very well in America, and the time had come to repay his debt. He asked permission to take my father to America with him. But my grandfather and father didn't accept his proposal. The subject was closed, and Lefter returned to America. But when word got around, one of our villagers came to my grandfather and told him he wanted to go to America, and requested that he ask Lefter to help him. In January 1968, the first person from Yağlıdere set foot in America, and many others were quick to follow him.⁴⁷¹

470 Ayşe Önal Zamboğlu, "Jak Mehmet'in hikayesi," *Türk of America*, no. 11, p. 64.

471 Meltem Pusat, "Amerika'ya göç edip kendi cumhuriyetlerini kurdular," *Sa-*

The Story of Ahmet Robinson of Galatasaray, From the Pen of Sara Korle

Ahmet Robinson, who had served the Galatasaray Football Club for years, was over seventy! However, he was still youthful and had lost none of his vigor, cheerfulness, or more importantly, his Turkishness and his beautiful Turkish.

Ahmet Robinson, who managed the affairs of a big estate in the New York area that was being made into a museum, lived with his wife in a lovely home on the shores of the Hudson River.

Ahmet Robinson, who in 1929 left his home in Turkey for America, that is, almost thirty years ago, has spent his whole life in a very active and adventurous way, as has his whole family. His father was from a family that had given to England Prime Ministers, and he was a member of the famous Rhodes family, which gave its name to Rhodesia after that place became part of the British Empire, and his mother was a member of a family that became renowned in the fields of art, education, and literature. Carried away by his eagerness to see new lands, like every English lord in Queen Victoria's day, Ahmet's father went to India too, and began growing tea there. Ahmet Robinson came into the world in the foothills of the Himalayas.

After losing her husband in India, Ahmet Robinson's mother, who had converted to Islam in England before getting married, brought her children with her to Istanbul. Abdülhamit, who was Sultan at the time, took an interest in that matter, and commanded that the family be lodged in the royal estates. Then the whole family took Muslim names. They became Turkish citizens.

bah, March 18, 2004; for studies concerning those who emigrated from Yağlıdere, see Ersin Ramoğlu/Ahu Bozlar, "I am from Yağlıdere da!", *Sabah*, July 10, 2002; Dr. Müzeyyen Güler, "Yağlıdere, Zeytinburnu, Brooklyn Köprüsü," *Toplumbilim*, October 2003, no. 17, pp. 131-145; Dr. Müzeyyen Güler, "Yale Üniversitesi'nin Yanıbaşındaki Yağlıdereliler," pp. 186-197, *III. Ulusal Sosyoloji Kongresi: Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Farklılaşma, Çatışma, Bütünleşme, 2-4 Kasım 2000, Eskişehir*, Sosyoloji Derneği (Ankara, 2002); Şebnem Şenyener, "New Yağlıdere," *Aktüel*, December 17, 1992, pp. 56-60.

Ahmet Robinson recalls all those events that took place sixty years ago, as if it had been yesterday! All of it, every bit—how they were received at the palace, how Robinson and his brothers were enrolled in the Kuleli Military High School upon the recommendation of Tophane Field Marshal Zeki Pasha, but later transferred to Galatasaray because their mother wanted them to pursue civilian life, and how they and their friends founded the Galatasaray Football Club...

Ahmet Robinson's eyes tear up as he says:

"I left my heart in Üsküdar, because my mother, Fatma, lies on Sultantepe. All my classmates, all my friends, my club, my memories of youth, all are there!" Then he turned his head so I wouldn't see him wipe his eyes!⁴⁷²

The Story of Hamdi Efendi, the First Turkish Chauffeur, Written by Cevat Fehmi

I set out [from Egypt] on a German steamship. We stopped in Naples and Hamburg. The voyage took twelve days. Finally, we set foot in New York. New York was the same as the city I had cherished in my dreams. I found nothing strange about those buildings that rose into the heavens and the streets that never end, even if you walk for hours.

Everybody with ten liras in his pocket was allowed to disembark. I had twice that much money. They let me go.

I got the address of a hotel from someone on the ship. 27th Avenue at 9th Street... That was the hotel where I would stay. But how would I find it? I didn't know any languages but a little Arabic and a little French. I asked a policeman. We didn't understand each other. Just then a man dressed as a porter came up to me. He knew a word or two of French. After bargaining, we agreed on a price of two dollars. He would take me to the hotel. We set out. I was carrying two big suitcases. I told the guy:

472 Sara Korle, "Ahmet Robenson'u New York'ta Buldum!" *Hayat*, no 26, June 24, 1965, p. 9.

“You take one of them!”

He replied curtly:

“I’m not a porter.”

“What are you?”

“A translator!”

“Buddy, is there any reason you can’t help in other ways besides translating?”

“Why should I?”

Good grief, but what a nice guy I had run into! Anyway, I said “give me patience” and started walking. And what a long way we had to go! I was drenched with sweat. I was inwardly cursing that guy as I walked. As if that were not enough, didn’t I run into another problem just then? A rock came flying from a relatively deserted street behind me. It struck one of my legs. I turned around. And what did I see but a bunch of boys... They were coming toward us with rocks in their hands.

I asked the translator:

“What’s going on?”

“They think you’re a Jew.”

“What?”

“What do you think? How many days has it been since you shaved? Haven’t you even looked in the mirror once these days?”

Those words the guy said took me out of my suffering.

Not only was I paying the guy but I had to listen to him reprimand me? I set down the suitcases and grabbed him by the collar. After one or two punches, when he realized that I was stronger, we made our peace. The guy got off his high horse. He even started saying:

“Give me that, I’ll carry one of your suitcases!”

We speeded up and got away from the bastards behind us. And anyway, the hotel appeared. I got rid of the guy, paying him two dollars.

I stayed three days in the hotel. The trip to America had really worn me out. I rested a while. On my third day in the place, I went to a café that I had heard about on the ship. That café was frequented by foreigners; it was a café of Armenians, Greeks, and Arabs. And there were a lot of Turks inside. I didn't like the first news I heard from them. America was going through dark days. There were no good jobs. You could say it was pretty much a crisis.

"Can you help me find a job?" I asked.

They replied, "Not for today. You'd better go away and come back in a few days, and we'll see!"

It was easy for them to say, "Go away and come back in a few days." But if I spent those few days without working, the money in my pockets would practically be gone. I started my life in Egypt. How hard it was to be a stranger, a foreigner somewhere! There was nothing you could do but look out for yourself. The next day, I applied at several garages.

"I want to voork!" I couldn't understand the garage owners' reply to my clumsy request. I thought they were all saying,

"Come back tomorrow!"

But when I went back the next day, I got the same reply.

As I found out later, apparently the guys were saying some mild curse words.

And several days went by like that. Now I was on the verge of bankruptcy. I had left the boarding house where I had moved after leaving the hotel. At night I would go outside the city with some unemployed men I had met in the café, and we would sleep in the fields. They wouldn't let us sleep in the parks, etc., in the city.

In the days when I was in danger of going hungry, the Panama Canal came to my rescue.

One day I heard at the café:

"They are signing up workers to operate the Panama Canal, which is about to open."

We went, we signed up, and shouldering our bags, we set out. That Panama Canal story turned out to be a bitter adventure for me. There were a lot of other jobs I could do besides digging in the dirt. Like operating cranes, motor vehicles, and working in repair shops for machines. Okay, so I could work in one of them. Since I was a foreigner, however, they turned a deaf ear to my applications. Digging in the dirt was a very hard job. They worked nine or ten hours a day. One day I couldn't take it any longer. Four or five friends and I quit our jobs. But that was a foolish thing to do. I didn't have five dollars in my pocket. How was I to get back to New York from Panama? We set out on foot for the nearest city on the coast. In that city I pawned my clothes and the other things in my suitcases. I paid the steamship with the money I got, and made it back to New York by the skin of my teeth.

I drifted in poverty for two or three months in New York. I was constantly beating down the doors of the employment offices, but I didn't find anything of any kind.

One day when I was sitting in the café, an Armenian named Herant came up to me.

"Come with me!" he said. "I'll give you a job."

I followed him. That man had three or four people working in a tiny workshop making fancy cigar boxes, and they made a living by selling them. I worked for him for two months.

After two months, the foreman sent for me:

"Hamdi," he said, "find me a gold dollar!"

"How am I supposed to find you a gold dollar?"

"Don't be afraid, I'm not going to cheat you out of your money. I'm going to double it."

By selling this and that, I did what that strange boss told me to. As soon as I had that yellow dollar, I put it in a box. I knew that that story about doubling it had to be some sort of scam. But Herant wouldn't do something like that. For one thing, he didn't need to. Then too, he surely didn't think I was the kind of idiot who would believe that fairy tale. It turned out just as I had said.

Two or three days later, he returned my money, saying that “it didn’t happen.” He had intended to do that all along. He had been testing me.

The whole thing was cleared up a short while later.

Herant offered me a new job. I was to buy metal spoons. Was that a weird job, or what? I wondered what he was going to do with those spoons.

I asked him: “What’s this job about?”

“It’s none of your business. Just go where I told you,” he yelled.

I couldn’t argue with him. My financial situation wouldn’t allow it. Early every morning, I went to the market. I kept busy till evening buying up hundreds of spoons, as my boss had instructed me.

Finally one day I found out what was going on. There had been a burglary in the apartment building where Herant lived, and the police had come to investigate. And at that time I had gone to Herant’s house to tell him something. He opened the door himself. What’s more, I saw that his face was ashen. He was shaking like a leaf from head to foot.

“What’s going on?”

“Don’t ask. I’ve been through something terrible.”

“What happened?”

“There was a burglary upstairs.”

“So what’s that to you?”

“The police came.”

“So let them come!”

“But what if they search my floor too?”

“Did you rob the people upstairs?”

“Of course not.”

“Okay, so what are you afraid of?”

“Nothing.”

“Tell me, buddy!”

Finally, after a lot of coaxing, he came clean. He was counterfeiting. He was melting the metal spoons he had me buy and making phony nickels. He said that even though I knew nothing about the counterfeiting, I would go to jail too. The police wouldn't believe I was innocent.

"Help me, Hamdi, my lamb!"

"What shall we do?"

"Let's throw these tools out the window."

There was nothing I could do but give in. If I hadn't agreed, maybe what the guy was afraid of would really happen.

"Since when have you been doing this?"

"Since two months ago."

"How much money have you made up to now?"

"About three or four thousand liras."

"Weren't you afraid of getting caught?"

"I wasn't doing anything definite."

"Who was putting the money in circulation?"

"The boys who work at the shop."

We wrapped the tools in a bed sheet, and the two of us threw them from the window onto the roof of the building. After that affair, I of course quit working for Herant. I quit and went out to look for another job. I did a lot of jobs other than waiting tables. Waiting tables was the only thing that pained me. I sold sweets and chocolates at a holiday resort in the New York area. I peddled cigarettes. But I turned down all the offers I received to work as a waiter. That boring, depressing, and oppressive lifestyle went on until I went to work as the tobacco merchant Eskenazi Efendi's chauffeur.

And you are familiar with that Eskenazi Efendi. He was our rich fellow countryman who left money when he died to make a hospital in Manisa. Eskenazi Efendi was a very good, very charitable man. I worked for him for six months.⁴⁷³

473 This person appears in the section on "Jewish Immigration" under the subsection dealing with the Shinasi Brothers.

Six months later, we heard that freedom had been proclaimed in Turkey. The Turks in New York held a big meeting organized by our consul, Müncü Bey. We were all longing for our homeland. I decided to return to Istanbul. I told Eskenazi Efendi what I had decided. He gave me the money for the ticket and a substantial tip besides. I boarded the ship on a Sunday evening.

America, which made everyone rich, didn't work out for me. I was happy to leave those lands where I had borne my years of greatest suffering.⁴⁷⁴

The First Generation of Immigrants, as Written by Doğan Uluç

The dark soil in the Peace Garden, which seemed to have been often tilled, was covered with green grass...The John Mehments, the Harry Hasans, the Charlie Ismails lie side by side, shoulder to shoulder under that green grass. Each one unaware of the others. They were the first passengers the *Gülcemal* brought to America. They started out in Harput, Dersim, Çapakçur, Siverek, Rize, and Samsun, traveled over continents and oceans, and found the last line of their lives in Lynbrook's Peace Garden, where a Crescent and Star and a few lines on their headstones summarize the experiences of seventy or eighty years.

Hasan Kâmil Topçuoğlu, for example, born in 1892 in Giresun. Died in 1955. Harry Hasan, born in Turkey in 1896. Died in 1944. On some of them even their birthplace is not stated. They are passed over with a few lines, the identification cards on their tombstones. The Peace Garden is an international cemetery 45 kilometers from New York, in the small town of Lynbrook. Most of the first passengers on the *Gülcemal* lie in the Turkish section of this cemetery. There are currently eighty-five graves there. More than eighty graves are awaiting their owners. Seventy-five-year-old Harput native Mustafa Abdullah visits his Turkish friends lying under the green grass when he has a chance, and this is what he says about the Peace Garden:

474 Cevat Fehmi, "Harikulade bir macera," *Cumhuriyet*, August 12, 1932.

“These stones tell the story of a generation. The story of the Turks who came to the New World on the *Gülcehal*, on cargo ships and in foreign freighters with the dream of getting rich...”

Eighty-two-year-old former teacher Mehmet Fatin, who is from Yalvaç, has this to say: “After I retired, I went to Turkey three times. Since I am an American citizen, I extended my visa and stayed more than six months. However, in the end I came back. Now I am living out my last days here. I have my place ready in the Peace Garden.”

The biggest worry of the Turks who were brought to America on the *Gülcehal* was their children and grandchildren. According to Mustafa Ahmet from Elazığ, “My sons and my grandchildren go to church. Not to the mosque. We didn’t teach Islam to our own...”

With its four masts, two steamstacks, and huge boom, the *Gülcehal* means a lot to Turks in America. Now there are two kinds of American Turks: the ones who came on the *Gülcehal* and those who came by jet. Even the *Gülcehal*’s oilman, Okmeydan native Methi Hayri, left his ship in the port of New York in 1920. He has now been struggling to become a millionaire for forty years in the New World. Most of the former Turks in America are retired. They want to go back to their homeland and spend their last days in their villages or cities. But since they are considered American citizens, the Turkish government makes it difficult for its own people.

But they say, “We will bring foreign exchange to the country, we will spend our retirement pensions in Turkey.”⁴⁷⁵

The Story of the Immigrants in the 1940s, As Written by Doğan Uluç

The northwest wind blowing angrily down the Adirondacks’ ice-covered foothills cut sharply into me as I came to Laurel Grove Cemetery. The wild wind had been blowing the snow over northern New Jersey for weeks, and the knee-deep snow covered the

475 Doğan Uluç, “1938’de Amerika’daki Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, February 4, 1971.

Laurel Grove Muslim Cemetery like a veil. In the silent world of Giresun native Niyazi, Hüseyin from Adıyaman, Mustafa from Kocatepe, Bekir from Malatya, and many more Muslim Turks, they could not hear the droning of the wild wind. Mournful faces red with the cold, old eyes hidden by black frames observed the lowering of the coffin they had been carrying on their shoulders with dull gazes. And Sami Tekiner from Nevşehir, like all mortals, began the journey from which there is no return.

It was easy for Turks to immigrate to the New World in the years when Tekiner from Nevşehir came. Having left his homeland for specialized studies after graduating first in his class from Ankara Law School, Tekiner didn't return when the Second World War broke out. After building a new life in New York, he had to stay. He was a forward looking young Turk molded by intelligence and hard work. He started out by importing specialty food items, newspapers, and magazines from Europe and later changed his business to investing in real estate, thus realizing the immigrant's "American Dream" of becoming a millionaire. It hadn't taken long for Tekiner, who had been quite angry when the war kept his scholarship from coming from his native land, to rise to the ranks of millionaires.

(...)

Beginning with the brilliant law student from Nevşehir, the Turkish immigrants of the '40s and '50s came into a way of life that was very different from that of the lands they had left behind. Compared to their homeland, where bread, gas, and sugar were rationed, and where it took a week to get from Erzurum to Istanbul, America, where there's nothing you can't find, was a land of unlimited opportunities. From Akseki to Talas, from Uzundere to Hilvan, from Ayaş to Beykoz, the first generation of immigrants upped and came, and before long, they got their share of the country's wealth. Both educated people and peasants, those wearing overalls and those with fedora hats on their heads made new lives for themselves with Packard and Hudson cars, and in apartments where the water never stopped running

and power outages were unheard of, or in houses surrounded by green trees, in the huge continent across the ocean.

From now on, their language was English, the money in their pockets was dollars, and their holiday was Christmas. The symbolic eagle replaced the crescent and star on their passports. But there was a downside. It wasn't easy for them to forget the white Taurus mountains, the coolness of the Palandöken mountain pastures, the Kızılırmak River's rapid currents, or Münir Nurettin's⁴⁷⁶ songs of home, the views of the harvest and the fields, or grandma's pastries. When they got together, they would say things reflecting their homesickness, like "I'm going back as soon as my son finishes high school, what about you?"

Once our customs and habits—the mix of language and religion—have become entrenched with Turkishness, they can never be reconciled with a later adoption of American ways. When their physical being and their memories and emotional identity are split between their former world and their new one, our American immigrants find their days filled with turbulence.

Sami Tekiner from Nevşehir was one of the leaders of the first group of immigrants, opening his arms and his wallet when he heard that the newcomers were sick or indigent. Having heard his name and that the philanthropic Turk was being buried in a brief ceremony in a very religious section of a Muslim cemetery, in the presence of his daughters, his spouse, mother-in-law, and a tiny group of friends, they slowly lowered him into a grave that was dug beneath the untouched snow. As he was being lowered into the grave in the shadow of a huge oak tree, no sound could be heard in the Muslim cemetery but the prayers of the *hodja*⁴⁷⁷ of the New World Mosque. The raging north wind calmed down.⁴⁷⁸

476 (1900-1981) revered Turkish classical musician and tenor singer.

477 A devout Muslim man who may perform specific duties, such as funerals, within an Islamic community.

478 Doğan Uluç, "New York, New York," *Hürriyet*, March 7, 1994.

The Story of Kiğı Native Rumi Bey

Hikmet Feridun Es ran into him during his visit to Detroit, and he had the following to say:

This was perhaps the best known of the coffeehouses the Turks in America had opened in keeping with Oriental custom. Since almost all the Turks worked in the big plants in the city of Detroit, at Ford or one of the nearby heavy industry firms, when night fell, Rumi's café was packed. On Sundays, there was standing room only.

Sometimes weddings and official meetings were held there. And they gave small banquets. Because Rumi's café was also one of the restaurants that served the best Turkish food in America. Most of the letters addressed to those who worked at Ford or nearby came to Rumi's café. It was a kind of club.

And this is how Hikmet Feridun Es told the story of Rumi Ömer Bey's life:

"I spent all my childhood and youth in the Kadıköy section of Istanbul. I am originally from Kiğı. I come from the Akoğlu family. But I came to Kadıköy at the age of thirteen. Since I was a very strapping lad, I was considered a young man. I sold water there. I did that job till I was nineteen. I made friends with everybody in Kadıköy..."

All of a sudden, he stopped. And, not having seen Kadıköy in forty years, the first question he asked was:

"Is the Osmanağa Mosque still there?"

"It is."

"And the fountain across from it?... That famous fountain! I used to make two hundred trips a day, carrying water from there. I sold water to the whole area around there. They nicknamed me "The Handsome Water Vendor." That's youth for you!... Finally, though I wasn't yet nineteen, they made me the Osmanağa watchman. From then on, I considered myself an important government official. Both a water vendor and a watchman!... You could make a nice handful of coins from those two hundred trips of water

a day... Just then a very rich woman adopted me as her godson. Since she had no children, I can't tell you how she doted on me: 'I will really educate you. I will make you my heir...', she said. But I was happy carrying and selling water. I didn't want to read, etc.

One day I had brought water to a house of mourning. Wailing upon wailing... I had been delivering water to them for years, and we had gotten pretty friendly. I asked them what they were so upset about.

'Oh, oh...Our son ran away to America!' they said.

America?... Where was that?... I'd never heard of it. I asked:

'Is that place you mentioned very far away?'

'The other side of the world!...'

The other side of the world!... I wondered how one would get there.

'Okay, but why did he go there?'

'To make money. There's lots—I mean, lots—of money there...'

'What was that place you mentioned? I'd really like to write down the name of that country...' I said.

And that's how I started wanting to go to America. A month later, I brought up the subject with the woman who was adopting me.

'I'm going to go...' I said.

She tried hard to talk me out of it. But now I was intrigued by that country 'paved with gold on the other side of the world.' And I was really determined. Finally, my lady begged me:

'Go, get it out of your system... Come back, get back to reading,' she said.

And one day I put down my tin pots, the water jug on my shoulder, and my watchman's club and set out for the other side of the world. So that's how I left. That poor lady of mine wrote me letters until she died..."

We mustn't confuse Rumi Ömer with the café owners and restaurateurs back home. He is well known in America, and especially among the many Turks in Detroit, to be one of the wealthiest of

them. His only goal is to buy a house in Kadıköy in Istanbul, near the railway bridge, and to grow old and die there.⁴⁷⁹

(...)

Florida, and especially the city of Miami, is the place where the fewest Turks are found. The Turks are mostly clustered together in the cities of Detroit, New York, and Chicago. There are three families from Rhodes that live permanently in Florida. However, the year before last two of the Turks who have settled in America, Rahmi from Erzurum and the “Long Legged” family, and Şakir, also from Erzurum, upped and came to Miami.

In those days Rahmi had a craving for *boza*. But is any *boza* to be found in Miami?... Nevertheless, our dear Rahmi wailed, “I’d give a hundred dollars for even one glass!...” One night, while Rahmi was at home getting ready for bed, he heard a voice outside, and what was it shouting but:

“*Boza... Sour bozaaaa... I have sour, and I have sweet... Bozaaaa... Boza from Vefa!*”

A *boza* man in the streets of Miami!... Rahmi thought his ears must have deceived him. He listened... When he heard the same voice yelling once again, he was so excited that he bolted through the door to the street in his underpants, without putting on his pajamas. But when he opened the door, he was devastated. Instead of a *boza* man, he found his friend Şakir facing him. Apparently, knowing how much he craved *boza*, he had played this trick on him. But Rahmi didn’t have a chance to get back at his friend for that. Because the “phony *boza* man” was arguing with someone in front of another house, and he heard him repeating:

“Upon my oath, I was lying... There isn’t any *boza*...”

I heard the other side of the story from the joker Şakir:

“Once I yelled *boza* in the street. No sound was heard anywhere. The second time I yelled, someone threw open a window. Come. Stop, voices! But not all of them were coming from Rahmi’s

479 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, May 30, 1948.

house! In the distance, from a villa on the corner... As I said to myself that they had probably misunderstood when I yelled *boza*, a burly American appeared in that doorway. Half in Turkish, half in English, what did he say but:

“Where did you find it?... Bring it here, let’s see that *boza*...Fill this pitcher with it!” Apparently, that man was the well-known Dr. Acemyan. And he was crazy about *boza*. On top of that, that night he had an American guest who had taught at Robert College in Turkey. And he loved *boza* too... When I thought I was playing a trick on my friend, my yelling outside had reached them before Rahmi. They had come down. I had a hard time explaining to them that I didn’t have any *boza*, it was a joke I was playing.”⁴⁸⁰

Stories of Those Who Came back from America to Retire

In an interesting series of articles published in the newspaper *Hürriyet* in 1970, the journalist Mete Akyol wrote about eighty Turks he found who had emigrated to America in the 1900s and returned to Turkey when they reached retirement age, having their pension checks forwarded to them by an officer at the American Embassy in Athens. This is the story of two of those retirees:

The Story of Ali Haydar İbrahim from Elazığ

My age was exactly twenty. I was about to begin the most productive period in my life. I was strong, energetic, and healthy. But I was hungry. I wanted to work, I didn’t have a job. I longed for a morsel of bread, but there was no bread. We didn’t have shirts on our backs or pants on our legs. I wanted to live, but how was I going to live? I didn’t know. Since we have no job where we could work and no bread to fill our stomachs, would we just say ‘welcome, death’? You can’t possibly understand how hard that was. As anyone who’s undergone that knows, that’s why I threw myself into the arms of America. There was nothing else I could do.

1917...We hadn’t even come out of the First World War... In the

480 Hikmet Feridun Es, “Amerikada Türkler,” *Hürriyet*, May 30, 1948.

village, we were all suffering from hunger... We would have settled for even the tiniest morsel of bread, but it was very, very hard to find any. If you ask me, we had a sword hanging over our heads. It was just at that time that word of America came to our rescue... There was a country. It was called America... America had plenty of work, plenty of bread, plenty of money, but too few people. I didn't know then, nor do I know now where that word of America came from to our village or who brought that word to our village. But that word was in the mouths and ears of everyone in the village. Then America came into our heads, and a little later, our dreams. Our bread, our food came into being...

First I went to Trabzon. In those days French ships came to Trabzon. Those ships loaded up with hazelnuts from Trabzon and carried them to Marseilles. And in those days all the shipping agents were French."

As soon as he got to Trabzon, Ali Haydar İbrahim went to the shipping agency.

"I want to go to Marseilles," he said. "I'll give you the money right away, regardless of how much the ticket costs..." Confronted with Ali Haydar İbrahim's ignorance, the French agent couldn't contain himself and starting splitting his sides with laughter.

"If you talk like that, you'll never take the first step from here to there," the man said, and he gave him some advice:

"You'll tell me that you want to go to Istanbul to work," he said, "and I'll issue you a ticket as far as Istanbul, but I won't take your money. Then I'll issue you another ticket. That ticket will get you from here to Marseilles. You will pay me for the second ticket."

"Alright, Monsieur."

Monsieur continued giving advice:

"You will hide the ticket to Marseilles very carefully in a corner of your pocket. You won't show it to anyone. When you board the ship here, you will show the ticket to Istanbul to the officer, and you will tell him you're going to Istanbul. When the ship arrives in Istanbul, don't go down. You won't get off the ship in Izmir

either. But when the ship leaves Izmir, you will run right up to the captain and show him the ticket to Marseilles in your pocket. Understood?"

"Understood."

"In that case, now you can hand over the money, and I'll issue you the ticket to Marseilles."

After gathering up his money from right and left, Ali Haydar İbrahim paid the agent three and a half French francs.

As soon as he set foot in New York, Ali Haydar İbrahim felt like a fish out of water.

"But I pulled myself together right away," he says now. "Because I had come here to begin the fight for life. I had to be strong, I had to be brave."

(...)

"I started as a dishwasher. My fight for life in America... Initially, I had worked for my keep. Very gradually, money started coming into my hands. I spent one-tenth on food and saved the rest. And one day I saw myself owning my own restaurant. My restaurant was a tiny restaurant, but its food was something else. The food in my restaurant was more delicious than that in any other restaurant. With the money I made from the restaurant, I opened a bakery. This time I started being a baker. The bakery was a more profitable business. And my businesses were doing very well."

Then some things happened to America... Whether it was the evil eye or something else... Some very weird things happened to America...

Money lost its value, it was worth less. The economy collapsed.

Troubles, troubles, troubles... Oh, what troubles those were! America was filled to overflowing with trouble on all sides. I didn't fully understand what had happened, but, like everyone, I cursed and mainly blamed Hoover..."

Drop by drop, the troubles America's economy went through between 1929 and 1931 eroded the size of Ali Haydar İbrahim's fortune.

"I closed the bakery, posted a 'bankrupt' sign on its door, and went to work in a wire factory in Boston."

He served twenty-five years in that factory. After leaving there, he went to work in a textile factory and worked there for nine years.

"They make workers in America retire when they reach the age of sixty-five. They made me retire too. And I didn't stay there any longer. The fear of death had come into me. I didn't want to die in a foreign place. I said, 'I'll go and die in my own country,' and I upped and came back here, to my village."⁴⁸¹

Halil Zekeriya Coşkun's Story

He began by saying, "I was twelve years old when I ran away.

My mother and father had gone to Samsun to look for work. Their wretched condition was plain to see, and America's gleaming future was in my dreams. It was 1908."

Saying, "I'm going to Istanbul to work," Halil Zekeriya Coşkun boarded a ship from Samsun. But he didn't get off the ship in Istanbul. He didn't get off in Izmir either, and went all the way to Marseilles. Halil Zekeriya Coşkun started his "life's struggle" in a screw factory in America. Then he went on to serve successively in the Ford, Chrysler, Hudson, and Chevrolet factories.

He says, "I retired after reaching the age of sixty-five. I was able to stay in America for a while. I couldn't stand it any longer, and I wanted to spend the last years of my life in my homeland. So that's why I upped and came here."⁴⁸²

Businessman Mustafa Birol's Story

While I was in New York City, I saw a number of Turks who were engaged in business life and who had been successful, so I was happy. A thirty-five-year-old young man named Mustafa

481 Mete Akyol, "Amerika 'Amerika'ya hizmet eden Türklere' Para Dağıtıyor," *Hürriyet*, January 27-28, 1970.

482 Mete Akyol, "Amerika 'Amerika'ya hizmet eden Türklere' Para Dağıtıyor," *Hürriyet*, January 28, 1970.

Birol headed the list of those successful Turks. When we went to the office of this individual, who was the founder of the firm of "Basden and Basden," at 258 Broadway, in New York's liveliest business district, we were proud to see that a Turkish citizen could make it there. He ran his business with Turkish and American clerks in a very orderly way, just like his American counterparts. Mustafa Birol took his head away from the telephone for a moment. A picture of Bursa resting on a windowsill behind the desk where he was sitting was a constant reminder of Turkey.

Mustafa Birol was a graduate of Istanbul's Robert College. He told me his life story in brief:

"In August 1945 I came to New York with the idea of examining business opportunities between Turkey and America in a purely exploratory way. I stayed here three months. I contacted quite a few people. After coming to the conclusion that it was possible for me to do as much here as I could in Turkey, and that I would be able to work without falling into despair, I boarded a freighter and returned to Turkey in thirty-three days. And that was when the World War came to an end. While on the verge of doing the work I had gotten it into my head to do, I made another trip to Cairo and London, and after making contacts that were interested in that business, I came to New York on May 6, 1946, and founded a Turkish-American firm. The business's goal was to ship American products to Turkey, and to promote Turkish products here. In the early days, problems caused by the war made it impossible for us to work as we wished. At the end of 1947, we started doing a very good business. We brought metal, hazelnuts, pistachios, and food products from Turkey, and we sent spare parts for machines and raw materials from here to Turkey. After working with the first business for a while, now I have founded a new firm, Basden and Basden. This firm has agents in different cities of Europe and Asia, in Japan and Ethiopia. And we are the export agents for eleven different factories in America. That is, if their products are shipped anywhere in the world, they pass through our hands."

“Do you see wide opportunities for Turks to work here?”

“Undoubtedly. If a Turkish businessman is determined to work seriously here, once he has taken into account the differences between the two countries’ mentalities, he will certainly be successful. Especially because here you won’t find the mentality that asks, ‘You’re a foreigner, what are you looking for around here?’ I am a Turk, and even so, the American government accepted me as a contractor and has profound confidence in me personally.

The Americans don’t discriminate in their lives between themselves and foreigners. I have two daughters. Gülsev and Füfun. They both go to ballet school. My older daughter was pronounced the number one lifeguard in swimming at camp. And in class she was very good at grammar; she wrote her friends’ letters. Although my younger daughter was only five years old, they saw her abilities and accepted her in school.

I live on Long Island, a half hour’s distance from New York. I was elected President of the P.T.A. at the school my children go to. I am a member of the board of the Jackson Hills Tennis Club. Everyone who came to America with good intentions is looked open everywhere with affection. That affection makes one work harder.

I only find my homesickness unbearable now and then. Last year I went to Istanbul. After seeing that beautiful city, I went back to running my business.”⁴⁸³

The most important difference between the immigration of Muslim Turks and that of non-Muslims is that the number of Muslim Turks who emigrated from Istanbul was very small. The immigrants were generally Anatolian youths. A significant portion came from Harput. That was because they followed the example of their Armenian neighbors and friends in Harput who had studied in the American missionary school and emigrated. The overwhelming majority of the Muslim Turkish immigrants

483 Şevket Rado, “Ticaret Hayatında Muvaffak Olmuş Bir Türk Genci: Mustafa Birol,” *Akşam*, July 26, 1950.

were male. The non-Muslim males who emigrated from Turkey didn't have great difficulty in finding a spouse of their own religion or sect in America; they chose a spouse either among their compatriots and coreligionists who had already settled in America or among the young women of their own kind who emigrated later from Anatolia or Istanbul. The Muslim Turkish immigrants had no such opportunities, because in those times there was not yet a Muslim community in existence in America. Young Anatolian Muslim girls were not the least bit inclined to emigrate to an "infidel nation" on the other side of the ocean, whose language they didn't know. That being the case, the male immigrants had two choices: either marry an American young woman, and become totally assimilated by raising your children as Christian Americans, or leave and go back to Anatolia as soon as they had saved enough money. Unfortunately, there is no exact record of the Muslim Turks who went back and those who died on "foreign soil." The tombstones engraved with the star and crescent in different cemeteries are the footprints of that first generation of immigrants who stayed behind.



CHAPTER FOUR



EPILOGUE



One thing the first Muslim and non-Muslim Turkish immigrants to America had in common was their longing for Turkey. The overwhelming majority of the first wave of immigrants were non-Muslims. And the main reason for this, as could often be seen in their life stories, was that non-Muslim young men did not want to serve in the military, which was mandatory after the proclamation of the Second Constitution. In spite of this, with the exception of some of the Armenians whose attitudes were understandably negative due to their loss of dear ones during the genocide connected with the 1915 deportation, the overwhelming majority of non-Muslims cherished positive feelings toward Turkey, remembering Istanbul and Anatolia with nostalgia and longing. Since these former Ottoman and Turkish citizens had forfeited their rights of citizenship either by evading the draft or violating the citizenship and passport laws, they could not return to Turkey.⁴⁸⁴ They couldn't satisfy their yearning to visit their homeland.

484 According to no. 207, article 9 of the Turkish Citizenship Law, dated May 28, 1928, by decision of the Council of Ministers, anyone who renounced their Turkish citizenship and became a citizen of a foreign country without permission from the Ministry of the Interior, could be denaturalized. According to article 12 of the same law, any Turkish citizen who had been denaturalized was forbidden to return to Turkey. This law remained in effect up to 1964. Therefore, the majority of former Turkish citizens who had acquired American citizenship without permission could not return to Turkey. And since they couldn't return, they had a great longing for Turkey.

Where the Longing Was Expressed: The 1939 New York World's Fair

The former Turkish citizens made their longing for Turkey particularly obvious to the Turkish journalists they encountered. For the former Turkish citizens who had settled in America, a visit to the Turkish pavilion at the New York World's Fair, which opened on April 30, 1939, was an extremely emotional event. One Turkish journalist described his impressions as follows:

On opening day, April 30, I was standing in front of the platform with a flag in my hand. An American in uniform came up to me. He took the flag and held it up to his face.

The American was looking curiously at either the color or the fabric.

I thought to myself, I don't mind. Then, attempting to hide his face from me and those near me, he asked in Turkish:

"Will you allow an American officer to kiss the flag?"

With eyes full of tears, he looked me straight in the eyes.

"Neither time, nor age, nor comfort can make me forget anything of the past. I am an Armenian and an Istanbulite!" he said. He thought for a little while, and asked a question:

"Can you imagine what a misfortune it is for those who were born in Turkey, and especially in Istanbul, to leave their country and lose all hope of ever returning?"

In the tourism section of the Turkish pavilion there was a big and very beautiful photograph of Rumeli Hisarı that was taken under the Göksu fountain. One of the visitors went over to that photograph and said to a little group beside him:

"I was born there!"

Then he started explaining—in Turkish to us and in English to the group beside him:

"Yeniköy is the world's most beautiful place, and the people in Yeniköy are the best in the world. I was born in Yeniköy, I grew up with Turks (after listing many names), I came here for busi-

ness, I settled down, I made money. If it weren't for this longing for the place where I was born, I could call myself the happiest man on earth!"

He turned back to the little group.

"Istanbul, the Bosphorus, Yeniköy—do you know what that means? On May evenings the Bosphorus is like a park full of flowers. The color, the fragrance..."

An elderly individual named Minasian who had given a rich collection of three thousand pieces to the Washington museum, said,

"That little gift was a well-known attempt to familiarize Americans with the culture of my country. And you are introducing me to the new one, you can't imagine how happy I am!"

He started talking, and after speaking for up to an hour, very shyly asked:

"Since I come every day to see these beautiful works, would you mind if I sat down in a corner to take a breath of air?"

He lowered his voice and leaned toward our ear. He said, "Living away from my homeland has caused my soul great suffering; I want my body to have the comfort of the soil where I was born!"

After spending minutes staring at the tiles in the pool and the cypresses on the grounds, a man came over to me.

"There are seven cypresses I planted in the Hasköy cemetery. They were an offering. Who knows how much they'll have grown by now."

We talked. His name was Eskinazi. He had a big department store on Fifth Avenue (where New York's most elegant and richest stores are located). It sold ladies' lingerie. His face was as wrinkled as a web.

"I want to stand on the bridge and look out over Hasköy, how often I've tried, once I got right up to the border, I was almost out of my mind."⁴⁸⁵

485 "Vatan Hasreti," *Tan*, June 9, 1939.

Another journalist who attended the fair expressed his impressions as follows:

My personal impressions of the former Turks in America were very favorable. I met quite a few of them in New York and at the fair, and I talked with them quite a bit about old and new issues facing our country. Almost without exception, I didn't come across a single person who didn't share with me that he was friendly toward the Turks and proud of being Turkish. And there wasn't a single one of them who was complaining about his situation in America or thought about leaving his new country and going back to settle down in his homeland. However, every single one of them was heartsick about having spent long years away from their birthplace, and inconsolable at being condemned never to see it again in their lives. Homesickness!...

"All of America can't compare with even a handful of dirt from Niğde, Ezine, Çeşme, Marmara, or Istanbul!" That's how superior they feel toward their children and their new compatriots.

"If they could just see the wonderful place where they were born once more before dying, if they could show it to their American-born children..."

They've made many attempts; when they couldn't get entry documents from our consulate in America to go home, they said "maybe we'll get away with it," and got as far as the borders by ship or automobile, but couldn't manage to get in.

That's how the journalist conveyed the former citizens' longing for Istanbul and Anatolia as a result of their being denied entry. According to the journalist, this prohibition resulted in a loss of foreign currency from tourism and kept commercial relations from being established between Turkey and the U.S.:

The problem of the Turks in America—and Turkish-born Greeks, Armenians and Jews in America are estimated to number as many as 450,000— is the problem of allowing them to enter the country as tourists and to establish commercial relations with the country.

A significant portion of the Turks in America are rich men.

Every year they spend the vacation months in different countries in Europe—France, England, Greece, and particularly the Mediterranean and Near Eastern countries—doing America’s business on behalf of important firms that are either completely in their hands or administered by them. (...) Turkey must carefully investigate the issue of allowing Turkish-born Greeks, Armenians, and Jews to enter their native land as tourists; it is an issue of foreign currency and business.

The Turkish delegation that came to New York on the occasion of the 1939 World’s Fair were moved by the extraordinary sympathy and cordiality shown them by their former compatriots in their new homelands. No one would have suspected that they would be so cordial. If they didn’t want to do that, if they wanted to behave differently, there was nothing to prevent them from showing their feelings freely. And this article of mine is also a small expression of the profound gratitude I felt toward my former countrymen.⁴⁸⁶

The impressions of Kemal Sünnetçioğlu, who came for a visit and encountered similar concern, are as follows:

When my *ahparlar*⁴⁸⁷ found out I was Turkish, they were delighted and gathered around me, raining down questions; I was surprised to see that some of these men, who had run away from their homeland years ago, still spoke Turkish. That means that they were still under the impact of Turkish culture and burned with longing for their homeland.

This was an excellent example of how expecting things to turn out as suggested by foreign propaganda is like trying to fish in muddy water. A minority who had lived side-by-side with the Turks for centuries and adopted Turkish culture was given the task of stabbing the Turkish nation in the back, but the sacred defense of the nation stood firm, and after becoming determined that they should not succeed in carrying out that business, was

486 N. H. Atay, “Amerika’da Türkiye’ye hasret Türkiye’liler,” *Ulus*, July 31, 1939.

487 Armenian “brother” with the Turkish plural suffix.

forced to cleanse one part and throw another part out of the homeland... Even though they knew that their crimes will not be pardoned, they were hoping for news from the stones and soil of their homeland, and were asking me the most outdated questions. Somehow they don't want to believe that the country has gone through huge transformations; they were still expecting it to look the same as when they left.

When they learned that our group of fifty people—half women, half men—had come over on the *Queen Mary* and were staying in New York's first-class hotels, such as the Barbizon Plaza, Commodore, and George Washington, they were simply amazed; those poor guys hadn't even heard that there was a Turkish pavilion at the fair. One couldn't help feeling sorry for them.

Moreover, later we chanced to meet an Armenian who owned a barbershop on Fifth Avenue, and he asked us the same sort of questions and was equally amazed at the answers he got; both Baba Nişan and that barber were extraordinarily grateful to me for enlightening them and even begged me to drop by often. They even refused to accept payment for the food and the shave.⁴⁸⁸

When the famous journalist Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın toured America with a group of colleagues in 1942, he spoke with a woman from Istanbul who had emigrated in the 1920s, and conveyed her pervasive air of melancholy and homesickness in an article:

I was sitting in my hotel room. On the telephone I was told that I had a visitor. A little later, there was a knock on the door, and a middle-aged woman came in. As she entered, she said in English: "I am a Turk."

I was amazed.

"But madam," I said, "you speak Turkish..."

She stopped, she was embarrassed. She forced herself to speak Turkish, and she wanted to. She knew how, but it appeared that she had forgotten. Very slowly, she adjusted to the idea and began speaking much better Turkish than in that first minute.

488 Sünnetçioğlu, (1944), pp. 37-38.

As she assured me, I was the first Turk she had seen in twenty years! She said her name was Melâhat Nazıf. She had fallen in love with a Greek. She left Istanbul with him. She came to America. Since then, she had lived here with her Greek husband. He had a barber shop. She assured me that they made a comfortable living. She had only one problem: her love for her country and her family. She had never heard from them. When she saw in the newspaper that I had come, she had rushed right over to see a Turk, to hear a voice from home and maybe something about her family. She had one desire: she wanted to send a hundred liras to the *Hilâliahmer*.⁴⁸⁹ She hadn't heard that it was now known in Turkish as the *Kızılay*. She hadn't had any news in twenty years. She had only heard that Turkey had gone through disasters and saw that it had begun to win favorable public opinion in America. She begged me to mention her in the newspaper when I went back to Istanbul. Maybe someone in her family would catch sight of it and write her a letter. I didn't take the money she tried to give me. I told her it would be more appropriate to send it by way of the consulate. Kissing my hand and weeping, she left. For her, I represented her far away, beloved homeland. Now, a year later, when I mention my memory of her, my heart aches too. For that poor stateless Turkish woman, America was no homeland. She was searching for Istanbul, and she had no children.⁴⁹⁰

Characteristics of the First Immigrants

In the words of Prof. Talat Sait Halman, most of the first immigrants who came to America thought they “were running away from a brutal father to take shelter with a kind-hearted mother.”⁴⁹¹ When they discovered that living conditions in America were not

489 The Arabic term for the “Red Crescent” Society, now replaced in Turkey by the Turkish “Kızılay”.

490 Hüseyin Cahit [Yalçın], “Büyük Amerika Turunun sonu,” *Yedigün*, November 22, 1943, no. 559, p. 4.

491 Halman, (1997), pp. 2130-2135.

as easy as they had imagined, they had two choices: either they coped with the difficulties until they got settled in America, or they went back. The non-Muslims adjusted completely to America pretty quickly. The main reason for this was that they were able to join communities established by their compatriots and coreligionists who had come earlier. For the Armenians who had experienced and escaped from the genocide of the 1915 deportation, the question of going back simply wasn't an option. For Jews and Greeks, going back meant being drafted into the army, so they didn't go back either. Hence, the only ones who went back were the Muslim Turks.⁴⁹² The objectives of the Muslim Turks were to get rich in this fabled country whose "streets were paved with gold," wait till the war was over and they wouldn't be drafted, grow old, and go back. Their dreams were to buy land in a village, hire employees to work the land, get married and have children, and a life of ease. But their dreams would be tempered by realities, and very few would return to their native land. The First World War began, and then that the Allies occupied Istanbul and the Greek Army, Izmir. Since many of the immigrants were of draft age, and they had the opportunity to take advantage of the economic boom in the America of the 1920s. Then the Great Depression they endured in 1929, and finally, the beginning of the Second World War: all of these were among the things that kept them from returning.⁴⁹³ Those immigrants who had come with the dream of getting rich experienced much unemployment during the Depression, and it affected them greatly. Furthermore, when there was an outbreak of tuberculosis in Europe and America, it spread quickly among the Turkish immigrants due to the fact that many immigrants shared the same home, resulting in many deaths. Many immigrants were afraid of dying and being buried in the soil of a Christian nation. For that reason, some Turkish immigrants arranged to have their bodies sent to Turkey

492 Ertan, (2002), vol. 6, p. 763.

493 Bilge, (1997), pp. 909-915.

if they should die in America. Some Turkish immigrants got to the point where they couldn't bear their homesickness.⁴⁹⁴ According to Prof. Halman, eighty-six percent of those who came between 1899 and 1924 went back. Another reason why they returned was that the War of Independence produced so many martyrs that the Turkish Republic was short of young males and hence encouraged its citizens who were abroad to come back.⁴⁹⁵ The first immigrants, regardless of whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim, wanted to marry women from their own country. And for that reason they sometimes chose a spouse from among the Turks who were living in America or else they sent for one from Turkey. The educational level of the first generation of immigrants was extremely low. Of the total of 1.2 million immigrants who came to America in 1914, twenty-one percent were illiterate. The percentage among Turkish immigrants was much higher: sixty-three per cent.. But among the Ottoman peoples as a whole, the percentage of illiterates was lower. Most of those who went back were well-educated. The majority of those who preferred to stay in America were illiterate. One thing that differentiated those who stayed in the U.S. from those who returned to Turkey may have been the notion that they wouldn't find better jobs than the ones they already had. The Law of National Origins, which went into effect in 1924, restricting the number of immigrants with quotas, would end mass immigration, and although the numbers would increase after the end of the Second World War, they would never reach the massive levels of the 1900s. The Turkish immigrants who came after 1945, unlike those of the 1900s, were much better educated and were professionals. They also included women and children. Workers, on the other hand, would henceforth prefer the European countries, which were much closer to Turkey and needed workers.⁴⁹⁶

494 Ertan, (2002), vol. 6, p. 763.

495 Halman, (1997), pp. 2130-2135.

496 Ertan, (2002), vol. 6, p. 763. The latest research on the subject of the Turks living in America is the PhD thesis written by Ilhan Kaya, *Immigration,*

Immigration after the Second World War

There were a number of developments that caused immigration to the U.S. to go up again after 1945. From the past until now, Turkey has regarded the American educational system as a system that was pragmatic and aimed at implementation. And a report on the subject of modernizing national education prepared by the American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859-1952), who was invited to Turkey in 1924, played a role in this. In 1947, when President Truman implemented the Truman Doctrine, which would be named after him, Turkey and the U.S. began drawing closer together. Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952. These developments gave an impetus to immigration. Those who wished to specialize in certain fields preferred to get their education in the U.S. Thus, thousands of physicians, engineers, and technicians went to America in the 1950s. Some of them did not return and settled in America. A similar situation—that of Turkish students who went for graduate or postgraduate education and didn't return—also occurred.⁴⁹⁷ The Immigration and Nationality Act, which became law on June 27, 1952, preserved the quota system that the National Origins Act passed by the United States Congress in 1924 had put into effect. But in the 1960s, as a result of protests and demonstrations advocating the need to abolish the racist criteria underlying the policy on accepting immigrants, that policy underwent profound changes. As a result of those changes, the number of immigrants who would

Identity and Integration: The Case of Turkish Americans, VDM Verlag, 2009.

497 On this subject, see Bahri Ata, "The Influence of an American Educator (John Dewey) on the Turkish Educational System," *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yıllığı (The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations)*, Ankara University, School of Political Science, vol. 31 (2000/2), pp. 119-130; Prof. Sabri Büyükdüvenci, "John Dewey's Impact on Turkish Education," in *The New Scholarship on Dewey* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), pp. 225-232.

be accepted into the U.S. from countries outside Europe was increased. Although the new law classified Turks as “Asians,” it didn’t accord them any special privileges. The Immigration Law passed on November 29, 1990 privileged people possessing a specialized “expertise,” making it easier for them to immigrate.⁴⁹⁸ According to INS statistics, the number of Turkish immigrants who came after 1924 is as follows:⁴⁹⁹

Period	Number of immigrants
1931-1940	1,065
1941-1950	798
1951-1960	3,519
1961-1970	10,142
1971-1980	13,399
1981-1987	15,290

According to research carried out by Dr. Birol Akgün, the number of Turkish immigrants who came between 1921 and 1985 was as follows:⁵⁰⁰

Period	Number of immigrants
1921-1940	34,889
1941-1960	4,317
1961-1965	4,330
1966-1975	18,744
1976-1985	20,865

By the end of the Second World War, the Turkish presence in America was still relatively insignificant. In 1946 the number of firms started by Turkish businessmen in America was only four. The most important of them was the going concern Ram

498 Karpat, (1995), pp. 238-242.

499 Kurtuluş, (1999), p. 54.

500 Dr. Birol Akgün, “The Turkish Diaspora in the United States and its Role in Promoting Turkish-American Relations,” *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yıllığı (The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations)*, Ankara University, School of Political Science, vol. 31 (2000/2), pp. 99-117, 103.

Trading Corporation, belonging to Koç Holding.⁵⁰¹ In our own day, the Turkish business world holds an organized and powerful position in America. The number of successful entrepreneurs, scientists, and researchers of Turkish origin in America, which was extremely low in the forties, has increased dramatically as the years have passed.⁵⁰² Nâsuhi and Ahmet Erteğün, the sons of Ambassador to Washington Münir Erteğün who founded the world famous Atlantic Records business; Ahmet Kafadar from Gaziantep, who first studied physics and mathematics in France in 1936 with a scholarship from the state, then studied mining, went on to invent the air bags used in the automotive industry, the pilot seat ejection system used in war planes, and founded OEA (Ordnance Engineering Associates), which manufactures the system of fuel tanks that detach from the body of space shuttles;⁵⁰³ Dr. Mehmet Yıldız, an expert on heart disease;⁵⁰⁴ the antique dealer and collector Kenan Kent;⁵⁰⁵ the architect Orhan Erdil;⁵⁰⁶ the industrialist

501 Melih Gürsoy, "Amerikada Türk Müesseseleri" *İktisadi Yürüyüş* 171 (February 4, 1947), p. 11.

502 For the stories of their lives, see Doğan Uluç, "Amerikalı Kocaların Müslüman yapan Türk Kadınları," *Hürriyet*, November 16-20, 1970; Doğan Uluç, "Amerika'da Türkler," *Hürriyet*, July 3-15, 1977; Meltem Pusat, "Türk kadınının borusu Amerika'da da ötüyor..." *Hürriyet* April 17-23, 1983; Doğan Ulu, "Amerika'da Altın Türkler," *Hürriyet*, June 5-11, 1983; Doğan Uluç, "ABD Petrol Pazarlarında Bizim Ceyar'lar," *Hürriyet*, September 7-13, 1986; Gürol Kara, "ABD'deki Türk Pompacıları," *Gazete*, November 4-5, 1988; Sedat Şahmay, "Amerika'daki Türkiye," *Yeni Günaydın*, May 30-June 1, 1996; Akman, (2004).

503 Demir Feyizoğlu, "Jumbo Jet Yolcularını Kurtaran Sistemin Mucidi," *Hürriyet*, September 12, 1970; Zeynep Göğüş, "Amerikan Borsasında Parlayan Türk," *Hürriyet*, January 14, 1991; Serpil Yılmaz, "Uzaydan Para Kazanan Türk," *Milliyet*, October 30, 1992; "Gerçek Mucize Türk oldu," *Yeni Yüzyıl*, January 24, 1998.

504 Sara Korle, "Amerika'da Türkler," *Hayat* 16 (April 14, 1966), p. 19.

505 Sara Korle, "Amerika'da Türkler," *Hayat* 18 (April 28, 1966), p. 33.

506 Sara Korle, "Amerika'da Türkler," *Hayat* 20 (May 12, 1966), p. 9.

Muammer Öztekin;⁵⁰⁷ Semil Temel and Necdet Ergül, founders of Microphase Corporation, which manufactures microwave filters for the defense and aerospace industries;⁵⁰⁸ the physician-surgeon Mehmet Öz; the painter Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013); the composer and producer Arif Mardin (1932-2006); the electronic music composers Bülent Arel (1919-1990) and İlhan Mimaroğlu (1926-2012)—these are just a few of the names of those who have attained success in the fields of science and art.⁵⁰⁹ In our days, the places most densely populated by Turkish immigrants are Long Island, Rochester, and Riverhead, New York, New Haven, Connecticut, and various places in New Jersey.⁵¹⁰ A significant number of the Turks living in Rochester are tailors.⁵¹¹

In our days, especially for today's young people, America retains its image as "the country with unlimited opportunities for success." The number of people from Turkey who participate in America's annual "Green Card" lottery is increasing. But, like the so-called "Gold Rush," the flood of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—each with a story more interesting and exciting than the next, is a thing of the past.

507 Sara Korle, "Amerika'da Türkler," *Hayat* 13 (March 24, 1966), pp. 4-5.

508 Sara Korle, "Amerika'da Türkler," *Hayat* 14 (March 31, 1966), pp. 8-9. www.microphase.com

509 Halman, (1997), pp. 2130-2135.

510 According to Prof. Kemal Karpat, between approximately 15,000 and 20,000 Turks live in those areas. Most of them came from Çorum, Yozgat and Ankara. Online journal *Turkish Torque*, May 14, 2002.

511 Murat Birsnel, "Amerika'daki Türkler'in Bereket Sırrı!," *Sabah*, December 10, 2000.



CHRONOLOGY
OF IMPORTANT EVENTS





- March 26, 1790 It is decided by law that “Any free and white foreigner” who lives in the U.S. for a period of two years, may become an American citizen upon application to a court, providing that he is registered.
- January 29, 1795 A law is passed replacing that of 1790. The residence period is extended to five years. It is stipulated that one must state his intention of becoming an American citizen at least three years before citizenship shall be granted.
- June 18, 1798 Under threat of war with France, the American Congress extending the residence period required for becoming a citizen from five to fourteen years.
- June 25, 1798 The Alien Act is passed. The law gives the President the authority to deport foreigners deemed “dangerous to the peace and security of the U.S.” in peacetime. Captains of ships carrying passengers who are foreign citizens are required to inform the Port Customs Authority when they arrive in port.
- April 14, 1802 With the passage of the Naturalization Act, the residence period required to become an American citizen is reduced from fourteen to five years. The basic conditions for being accepted as a citizen are good character, loyalty to the Constitution, and the stated
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- intention of becoming a citizen in the presence of witnesses.
- March 2, 1819 The Steerage Law is passed. It stipulates that ships arriving in American ports must submit a list or manifesto of their passengers to the Head of Customs, with copies for the State Department.
- February 18, 1856 The Imperial Edict of Reform is proclaimed in the Ottoman Empire. Non-Muslims are required to serve in the military. They could obtain an exemption from service by paying a substitution fee (*bedel-i askeri*).
- March 3, 1875 For the first time criminals and prostitutes are forbidden entry to the U.S., and immigrants are subjected to federal inspection.
- May 6, 1882 The U.S. Congress forbids entry of Chinese workers for a period of ten years. It bars them from obtaining American citizenship.
- August 3, 1882 The Immigration Act is passed. It assesses a tax of fifty cents a head on immigrants. It also blocks entry to the retarded, mentally ill, convicts, and anyone who might be a burden on public funds.
- February 26, 1885 It is forbidden to bring foreigners under contract to work to the U.S.
- March 3, 1891 The Bureau of Immigration is founded. Criminals, the handicapped, and polygamists are forbidden to immigrate.
- January 1, 1892 The Ellis Island Immigrant Reception Station goes into operation.
- May 1, 1893 The World Columbian Exposition, held to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the
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- discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, opens.
- April 30, 1904 The St. Louis World's Fair opens.
- June 29, 1906 The Naturalization Act is passed. It stipulates that, in order to become citizens, immigrants must be able to speak and understand English.
- February 20, 1907 Changes to the Immigration Act are adopted. The head tax is increased to four dollars. The categories of unacceptable immigrants now includes people with tuberculosis, children unaccompanied by their parents, and women involved in immoral behavior and/or coming with immoral intentions. It stipulates that foreigners must declare their intent upon entering the U.S. (i.e., whether they intended to stay permanently or only temporarily). Artists, clergymen, professors, singers, and domestic servants brought to the U.S. under contract are exempted from the law's restrictions on employment.
- March 13, 1908 The Hasköy fire.
- July 23, 1908 Sultan Abdulhamid II proclaims the restoration of the Constitution, thereby ushering in the "Second Constitutional Period." When written, the new Constitution states that non-Muslims are subject to conscription.
- August 7, 1909 Law 113, the Law of Equal Conscription to the Army, abolishing the *bedel-i askeri* (substitution fee) and making mandatory military service universal, was passed.
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Late 1911	The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society founds its Oriental Bureau to assist Sephardic immigrants.
September 29, 1911	The Turkish-Italian War begins.
August 6-7, 1912	The Mürefte-Şarköy earthquake (magnitude 7.8), causes 216 casualties.
October 8, 1912	The Balkan War begins.
October 15-18, 1912	The Turkish-Italian War comes to an end.
September 29, 1913	The Balkan War comes to an end.
August 1, 1914	The First World War begins.
April 24, 1915	235 leaders of the Armenian community are arrested in Istanbul.
May 27, 1915	The law popularly known as the “Armenian Deportation Law” is passed.
February 5, 1917	Those who were unable to read forty words in any language are barred from entry to the U.S. Entry of immigrants of Asian origin to the U.S. is also restricted. The head tax is raised to eight dollars.
November 19, 1918	The First World War ends.
May 19, 1919	The Turkish War of Independence begins. Non-Muslim Ottoman citizens are called up for the army.
May 19, 1921	The U.S. Congress passes the first law limiting the number of immigrants.
January 30, 1923	The Treaty of Lausanne and the protocol concerning the Turkish-Greek population exchange are signed in Lausanne.
October 29, 1923	The Turkish Republic is proclaimed.
May 26, 1924	The U.S. Congress adopts the National Origins Quota System.

- June 27, 1952 Although the National Origins Quota System is still in effect, the U.S. Congress for the first time establishes yearly minimum quotas for all nations. Thus America opened its doors to immigrants from different nations which had previously been denied entry for racial reasons. It also stipulates that, in order to become American citizens, applicants must be able to read and write English.
- November 12, 1954 Ellis Island is closed.
- October 3, 1965 The National Origins Quota System is abolished. Within a maximum total of 170,000 people accepted without regard to ethnicity, each nation was assigned a quota of 20,000 immigrants. It stipulates that a maximum of 120,000 immigrants would come from the nations of the Western hemisphere.
- November 6, 1986 The Immigration Reform and Control Act was passed. It provides amnesty for approximately three million undocumented foreigners who had been living illegally in the U.S. since January 1, 1982. For the first time, it makes it a crime to hire foreigners who are in the U.S. illegally.
- November 29, 1990 A new Immigration Act is passed. With this law it is determined that for each year between the fiscal years 1992 and 1994, the number of immigrants accepted would be 675,000. A lottery program is created that randomly assigns a number of visas.
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1 A-2: Photograph of Anatolian Greeks in their national costume.

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E1-PR 6: Photograph of an immigrant going through the health inspection.

E1-GH 3: Photograph of immigrants waiting on Ellis Island.

E1-PR 9: Photograph of an immigrant being interrogated on Ellis Island.

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