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## OTTOMAN ARMENIAN RACIALIZATION IN AN AMERICAN SPACE (1908–1914)

### **Abstract**

At the dawn of the twentieth century, droves of former Ottoman subjects including Armenians and Syrians began to set foot in the United States searching for better opportunities. Many faced American white supremacist xenophobia and fell victim to racial discrimination. Various Ottoman diasporic communities responded to this harassment by expressing an increasing investment in the question of American whiteness and vigorously yearning to move beyond its fringes. Their voices, however, remain considerably muted; their stories are largely excluded from most American immigration narratives and conventional histories in area studies. This study endeavors to help reverse this scholarly tradition by examining the mindset of Ottoman Armenian expatriates as articulated in the editorials of *Asparēz*, an Armenian-language weekly published in Fresno, California starting in 1908. As this microstudy shows, the migrants used the European racialist knowledge imported from the Ottoman Empire to lay claim to whiteness and achieve integration in the US, and also to affect change at home.



### INTRODUCTION

We feel the differences when we compare ourselves with the healthy nations of Europe and America. A man can be very well-educated in arts, literature, and sciences, but can still be more behind than the most ignorant peasant in matters pertaining to rectitude, truthfulness, public spirit, and punctuality. We need to become a physically healthy race.<sup>2</sup>

These statements appeared in a 1911 editorial of *Asparēz*, an Ottoman Armenian migrant weekly that had begun publication in Fresno, California in August 1908, one month after the historic Young Turk Revolution, and was accessed by Ottoman Armenian expatriates

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with scant knowledge of English.<sup>3</sup> The above lines reflect their authors' sense of inferiority in the context of a highly racialized American space and reveal a dilemma of belonging that has often been central to expatriate overseas experiences in the United States. Treating Armenians as a single, unified collectivity, *Asparēz* sought to liberate them from their assumed subordination and create a context in which they would attain an equal position with those in power.

While the ethnographic studies and scholarship on the contemporary Armenian diaspora in California have been booming in recent years, the community's formative phase needs more in-depth academic exploration. The scant books and dissertations produced on the history of the early Armenian immigrants in California (or the US more broadly) follow the same "celebratory" path of migration studies diagnosed by Sarah M.A. Gualtieri in the budding literature of Arab American Studies on Arab émigrés bound to America.<sup>4</sup> These publications laud the newcomers' economic triumphs and their ability to reach the highest points on the social ladder in a brief time. More importantly, however, these studies capture the development of a new, distinctive Armenian identity on the other side of the Atlantic, far from home, and highlight the migrants' successful integration in the US, as marked by their English-language acquisition and ownership of property. Thus, the available historiography adopts a teleological path to the study of Armenian immigration by focusing on the more positive aspect of the narrative that culminates with the inevitable success of the migrants in their country of adoption.

Meanwhile, the harsh reality of the immigrants' landing in a highly racialized space where they attempted to please their new, usually unwelcoming hosts and book their admission into whiteness has been forgotten. The broader implications of anti-Armenian racial discrimination have also been woefully understudied. There are only passing references to expatriate community leaders' concerted attempts to detach their nationals from homeland traditions, which were often viewed as remnants of ancient and barbarous practices.<sup>5</sup> In other words, scholars have tended to reinforce certain facile understandings of assimilation and Armenian whiteness without interrogating the question of what it meant to "belong." Hence, histories documenting Armenian immigrant experiences in the US have missed a critical contextual element that enriches our understanding of their behavioral patterns.

David Gutman's *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America* stands as the only recent study narrating the story of

transatlantic Armenian migrations, written from the Ottoman state's perspective.<sup>6</sup> Spanning from 1885 to 1915, this text chronicles the adversities survived by Ottoman Armenian émigrés faced with the Ottoman state's restrictionist policies that aimed to block their outward movement. Gutman's account is primarily centered on the Sublime Porte's discriminatory attitudes towards its Armenian subjects more than the alienation that accompanied them in the US based on their racial identity.

The scholarship on migrants from the Ottoman Arab world, though still under development, offers a useful model for expanding the field of Ottoman racial encounters in the US. Sarah Gualtieri's *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* is a seminal account of the history of Syrian racialization in the US.<sup>7</sup> Gualtieri observes that Arabic-speaking immigrants, who arrived in the US from geographical Syria, became greatly invested in the question of whiteness as they became victimized by America's racial politics. The migrants felt obliged to take on a new, racialized identity once they arrived to secure a decent life for themselves and their progeny in their adoptive country.<sup>8</sup>

In line with Gualtieri's argument, this essay contends that self-proclaimed Armenian migrant leaders in Fresno, California internalized an American white supremacist racist system of thought, which they articulated through editorials appearing in *Asparēz* between the first appearance of the newspaper in 1908 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The curiosity to unriddle the puzzle of European ascendancy and Ottoman waning power had propelled the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)—enthusiast proprietors of the Armenian-language weekly—to develop familiarity with the latest literature on Anglo-Saxonism before their arrival in the US.

Together with its allies in the Young Turk movement, the ARF (founded in Tbilisi, the Russian Empire, in 1890) sought to mend the ills of the shared Ottoman homeland under the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909). As this article demonstrates, efforts to resist racial discrimination via assimilation in whiteness forced migrants to appropriate European racist ideologies that had travelled with them from the Ottoman Empire. These ideas acquired new incarnations once they crossed the Atlantic. Under the new circumstances, the internalization of the Anglo-Saxon racist mythology, acceptance of new notions of temporality and moral conduct, and an aspiration to idealized masculinity became

synonymous with whiteness and constituted the new racial characteristics to be adopted by Armenians immigrants.

This study contextualizes the views of Ottoman Armenian migrant leaders within broader metanarratives prevalent at that time and problematizes the question of Armenian whiteness. It also shows that the embracing of Euro-American assumptions of whiteness was intended not only to serve a social purpose in the US, but also to achieve a political objective in the Ottoman homeland. As I argue in this essay, the editors planned to utilize the new racialized white identity that they sought in the US to legitimize their claims to authority back home. Throughout the period under study, no major inconsistencies are detected in the thinking of the newspaper proprietors. Changes most likely occurred after the Armenian Genocide of 1915 caused the large-scale expulsion of Armenians from their native abodes in Anatolia.

America's racist system operated within a framework of power relations invented to safeguard the country's racial purity by instilling difference and policing the boundaries between its native-born white citizens and all those deemed to be outsiders who were setting foot on American soil.<sup>9</sup> Citing the inherent unassimilability of certain immigrants, this legal regime endeavored to maintain the status quo and decrease the chances of racial mixing, one of the major fears of xenophobic nativists.<sup>10</sup> The country's immigration policies, moreover, were geared towards perpetuating the foreignness of racialized immigrant groups often described as "undesirables" who posed an "existential threat" to the social order of the "free white republic."<sup>11</sup> Consequently, members of various expatriate communities shared similar experiences of racial discrimination in the US: not gaining easy access to American citizenship and being relegated to racially segregated spaces. In other words, US authorities refused to treat them as their equals and denied granting them rights to what is often described as white privilege, the absolute preserve of officially recognized citizens.<sup>12</sup>

As David Gutman explains, it is hard to conceive the actual number of Armenian migrants who received US nationality. The decentralized character of the naturalization process entrusted to local state courts before signing the 1906 Naturalization Act has made the work of historians onerous. But Gutman believes that less than 50 percent of all US-based Ottoman Armenians became recognized as citizens before 1909. While most incoming émigrés qualified easily for American citizenship, this became more arduous later with the

adoption of more drastic measures that aimed to tighten immigration to keep foreigners off the American shores.<sup>13</sup>

After 1909, the journey of Armenian migrants seemed not so different from the experiences of other immigrant groups, who hailed from Eastern and Southern Europe, or Asia. They were often greeted with mounting anxiety and aversion in an atmosphere of rising nativist sentiments. Dwelling at the fringes of whiteness, Armenian and Syrian expatriates—just like their Italian, East European, and Jewish counterparts—stood little chance to be sworn in as citizens. As one *Asparēz* editorial states, the applications for naturalization submitted by Armenians did not meet approval. The newspaper argued that as former residents of the Ottoman Empire and as individuals with a peculiar culture and customs, Armenians were seen as descendants of the “Mongoloid” race.<sup>14</sup> The 1911 report of the Dillingham Commission also confirmed their non-white status by placing Armenians under the rubric of “other [not perfectly white] races.”<sup>15</sup> At the more popular level and perhaps judging by their quirky mannerisms not matching with the white man’s conduct, the slur “d\*\*\*\*” —traditionally associated with Italian migrants and used interchangeably with “white n\*\*\*\*\*s” —was stretched to embrace Armenians in Fresno.<sup>16</sup>

Belonging to the club of “undesirables,” this community endured racial discrimination. Many encountered difficulties in finding accommodation next to native-born white Americans.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, to thwart any threats endangering the county’s racial homogeneity, Ottoman Armenians were kept geographically restricted to non-white neighborhoods. Concentrated in what eventually constituted an Armenian district adjacent to Chinatown, another racially segregated area in West Fresno, most newcomers tarried in this white-free zone.<sup>18</sup> Their racial classification also affected their employment. American landowners recruited European immigrants instead of arriving Armenian expatriates to work on their ranches.<sup>19</sup> Against this backdrop, hundreds of Armenian migrant men and women sailing out of the Ottoman Empire and lured by the promise of employment and sustenance in Fresno’s growing agricultural sector experienced systematic exclusion alongside their Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican counterparts. They were often ignored by their white American superiors, who blatantly displayed an unwelcoming attitude towards outsiders.<sup>20</sup>

Although not alien to hierarchically structured systems of governance and religious forms of subordination given their experience in the Ottoman homeland, Armenian migrants nevertheless

felt mortified upon encountering such a grim and ethnicist reality, divided along strict white/non-white racial lines.<sup>21</sup> This and their strong determination to stay in Fresno and readily interact with their white American neighbors drove them to consider ways of holding onto a racialized identity endorsed by white supremacist elites. Moreover, Armenian migrants' desire to own arable land in the country further complicated the terms of Armenian repatriation to the Ottoman Empire. Unlike their counterparts heading to the East Coast in search of manufacturing work, Armenians moving to Fresno developed a different and somehow unique relationship with the land of migration. As active farmers, many considered America as their new domicile, a sentiment which was also reflected in the pages of the local expatriate press published on the Pacific seaboard. Accordingly, while most Armenian-language newspapers on the East Coast orchestrated a crusade against migration, enunciating the US as a "temporary exile" and the migrants as "pilgrims in America, not colonists," *Asparēz* had a different take.<sup>22</sup> The weekly reckoned that Fresno was more than a mere way station for Armenians while also not entirely ruling out the option to return.<sup>23</sup>

#### OTTOMAN ARMENIANS ON THE MOVE

After the global technological breakthroughs in transportation and communication, increasing numbers of people across Eurasia found the opportune moment to migrate to the Americas. Most of them did so in a quest for better employment opportunities. For example, to flee late-nineteenth-century economic hardships in Europe, more than fifty-five million individuals, mainly unskilled, young, and single male adults, established themselves, albeit sometimes temporarily, in the US.<sup>24</sup> Guided by a similar motivation, Ottoman subjects also began placing great hopes in overseas voyages. Trusting that migration would put an end to their socio-economic misery, many chose to sail long distances to the US. Indeed, a considerable number of Armenian expatriates from the Harput region (also called Mamuret-ul-Aziz) in Anatolia eventually realized their ambitions. Like the Arab Christians who had migrated to the US from Mount Lebanon, they reached new heights in their adoptive country. Besides enabling their acquisition of properties back home, the regular inflow of American cash helped to elevate the socio-economic status of the migrants' families and contributed to the gradual recovery of their otherwise collapsing native economies.<sup>25</sup>

The actual process of Ottoman Armenian migration overseas was an exceptionally daunting venture. The autocratic regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II approached mobility with more suspicion and mistrust when undertaken by Armenians than when undertaken by others, such as inhabitants of Ottoman Mount Lebanon. This attitude, to some extent, emanated from Armenian involvement in what the Sublime Porte perceived as transnational “anarchist” movements that plotted acts of political violence against Ottoman state officials including the sultan himself. The revolutionary projects undertaken by the clandestine cells of Armenian political organizations further criminalized the empire’s Armenian subjects. Seeing the migrants as threats to Ottoman security, the state considered them “troublemakers” and associated them with “disloyalty, sedition, and terrorism.”<sup>26</sup>

To minimize Armenians’ exposure to seditious political ideologies while abroad, the Sublime Porte developed new immigration policies to block or stiffen their emigration and return. Meanwhile, Levantine Arabs, for example, encountered minimal constraints in terms of out-migration. Starting from 1899, they obtained the liberty of free travel as long as they promised to retain their Ottoman nationality and abstain from political ventures that threatened the empire’s interests.<sup>27</sup>

After the development of more stringent regulations, however, Ottoman Armenian transatlantic crossings did not slow down. On the contrary, Armenians continued to arrive in North America in droves. Expansive underground travel networks became incredibly important in this regard. Smugglers were successful at helping Armenians emigrate for two reasons. First, most of the anti-immigration decisions taken by the Ottoman state remained unimplemented in the absence of border-policing apparatuses that were able to effectively oversee their later application. Second, certain provincial governors and high-ranking bureaucrats collaborated closely with these smuggling networks. The smuggling process became increasingly sophisticated as it attracted more men of power, agents of foreign shipping lines, boatmen, and crewmembers. In this atmosphere of lawlessness and given the lack of systematic border patrolling, Ottoman Armenian subjects with the help of smugglers found ways to escape surveillance while freely pursuing overseas migration. Before the outbreak of World War I, approximately 65,000 Armenians out of the total population of nearly two million left Ottoman shores and set foot in North America.<sup>28</sup>

California's flourishing agricultural sector and its promises of a bright future propelled some migrants to settle there.<sup>29</sup> Many expatriate men labored as raisin cultivators in farms they leased or owned, sometimes joined by their wives and children. Others practiced popular petty trades and crafts, mostly carried from their home countries in Anatolia. Meanwhile, many Fresno-based Armenian women, in general, found employment in the raisin, fig, and the dried-fruit packing houses, in addition to their regular household responsibilities.<sup>30</sup> It is hard to establish the exact number of Armenians who came to reside in the county, but according to estimates extracted from official reports, by 1908, approximately 3,000 Armenian expatriates were living in Fresno and its environs.<sup>31</sup> No doubt, the appearance of *Asparēz* in 1908 was a product of the city's new demographic group.

#### ASPARĒZ: A WINDOW INTO THE OTTOMAN ARMENIAN MIGRANT IMAGINATION

Newspapers have the power to create a variety of imagined worlds reified through words. They offer an empty canvas onto which realities can be made and unmade and new meanings and discourses imposed through the careful play of words. *Asparēz*, whose editorials form the core of my primary evidence, provided this type of space. Its first appearance in Fresno in August 1908 coincided with the inflow of Armenian migrants arriving directly from the Ottoman Empire or after brief stints in other parts of the US, predominantly, the East Coast.<sup>32</sup>

As one of its founders and first editors Abraham Seklemian explains in retrospect, *Asparēz* was the brainchild of seven émigré men, who shared a common political lineage as staunch believers in the ARF's program to bring autonomy and reform to Ottoman Armenians. None of them, however, was an actual journalist or intellectual. The founding editors practiced a variety of trades and started publishing this weekly out of a deep concern for the present and future of their fellow nationals residing in the Ottoman Empire and on their way to California.<sup>33</sup> Hence, *Asparēz* initially began as an ARF-oriented platform, only to become ARF's mouthpiece towards the end of WWI due to growing financial burdens on the editors of the newspaper and the mounting need for additional manpower.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to its many other functions, the newspaper helped bridge the vast geographical gap separating migrants from their homelands. *Asparēz* served as a liaison between physically detached



individuals who shared mutual feelings of fraternity by means of common language and knowledge propagated through the press.<sup>35</sup> The proprietors of *Asparēz* in Fresno and the contributors based abroad, including places such as Istanbul, Diyabekir, Harput, Van, and Erzurum in the Ottoman Empire, made sure to strengthen existing bonds and instill a love of the Ottoman fatherland and the Armenian heartland in the hearts of the migrants. The newspaper's meticulous presentation of political events in the Ottoman center and peripheries, as well as the circulation of the Armenian-language newspapers such as *Piwzantion* (Byzantium, 1896–1918) and *Zhamanag* (Times, 1908–present), both published in Istanbul, greatly enhanced this process.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to articles by correspondents, *Asparēz's* editorials mirrored the itinerant mobilities of the diasporic community. They reveal the editors' investment in the question of whiteness and its role in shaping their own understanding of the world. Armenian racialized experiences in the US significantly impacted their thinking about the Ottoman Empire. The minds of the self-proclaimed migrant leaders seemed to have been fixated on at least three geographically distinct yet closely interconnected worlds: the Ottoman capital, the easternmost provinces of the empire, and the US (mostly California).<sup>37</sup> As recent migrants who had left their families and an "imagined community" of Armenians behind, the editors deliberated on the importance of maintaining strong connections between the diaspora and the homeland, and voiced uncertainties about their people's future in the US, the perplexing question of their Armenianness, and the acquisition of American citizenship.

#### THE AMERICAN ANGLO-SAXON ETHOS AND HIERARCHICAL RACIALISM

*Asparēz* educated its readers about the political values of the idealized American Anglo-Saxon man that distinguished him from members of allegedly inferior races. To be sure, the newspaper did not grasp the nuances of American Anglo-Saxonism nor its varied ideological uses. This mid-nineteenth-century racist doctrine cinched the exclusion of those coming in contact with the white race either as a result of immigration or continued American expansionism. In both cases, its overriding objective was to immortalize white supremacy by subjugating the "other." Anglo-Saxonism legitimized the right to keep the immigrants pouring in from Southern and Eastern Europe barred from privileges possessed by the white American man. In the meantime, the US adhered to this ideology to substantiate its

hegemony over the conquered non-white, indigenous American “savages,” Blacks, and “degenerate” Mexicans and mestizos. In this sense, Anglo-Saxonism can be considered synonymous not only with whiteness, but also with its supreme version that secured the power of nativists.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, *Asparēz* could not identify the hierarchies of whiteness rampant in the American legal landscape that sometimes risked the superiority of European immigrants, reducing them to a subordinate status. “White” and “whiteness” never made an explicit appearance in the editorials of the newspaper. *Asparēz*’s rhetoric betrays a conviction that the US was an extension of Europe because of its British colonial past. America therefore came to be the home of the Anglo-Saxon race. *Asparēz* does not seem to draw clear-cut distinctions between the American, the European, and the Anglo-Saxon, as it sometimes employs these categories interchangeably. In a single editorial, the newspaper uses “Anglo-Saxon” in one sentence only to substitute it with “American” in another: “But the proud Anglo-Saxon can find this seriously offensive. . . . This seems to be the primary reason why the Fresno-based Armenian is not loved by the Americans.”<sup>39</sup> This pattern of reasoning can also be detected in the lines below:

Although the American nation [*amerikean azg*] is formed from a blend of European nationalities [*yeuropakan azgut’iwnner*], the Anglo-Saxon race [*Anglo-Sak’son ts’eghë*] stands at the core of the nation and is the lord of its language.<sup>40</sup>

The editors’ familiarity with the literature on Anglo-Saxonism most likely predated their arrival in the US. As ARF partisans, they would have carried this racial knowledge with them from the Ottoman Empire. Considering that Edmond Demolins’s *À quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* (*Anglo-Saxon Superiority to What It Is Due?*) was widely circulated among intellectual and political elites in the Ottoman domains, it is possible that the editors had read it or at the very least were familiar with its tenets before emigrating.<sup>41</sup> In this alluringly titled book, Demolins attributes Great Britain’s economic and political superiority to its “individualistic” setup.<sup>42</sup> This idea of private initiative as the underpinning of superior societies must have spoken to the hearts of many Young Turk leaders, who opposed the autocratic regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II and earnestly hoped to reform the Ottoman Empire, and in doing so preserve and strengthen it.

Prominent among them was Prince Sabahettin, a close ally of the ARF. The ARF, in fact, was steeped in the Ottoman constitutional struggle and essayed to safeguard the long-suppressed 1876 constitution after its reinstatement in July 1908.<sup>43</sup>

Self-government and constitutionalism were guarantors of public order and hallmarks of the American Anglo-Saxon mythology. Seeking to establish parity between Armenians and the supposed descendants of the Anglo-Saxon race, *Asparēz* put great emphasis on these ideas.<sup>44</sup> This accent emanated from ongoing political transformations in the Ottoman fatherland in the wake of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution that revived the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. In the editors' opinion, a brighter future for the Ottoman political scene depended on the establishment of a nonauthoritarian form of governance. Constitutionalism was the only means to ensure the prosperity of the Empire's various religious groups now described as "races."<sup>45</sup> Authoritarianism, which meant tyranny and despotism, were said to have sent the empire's subjects back in time to the Middle Ages.<sup>46</sup>

The editors of *Asparēz* yearned for the rule of law to be established. They lauded the constitution as a corrective to the highly confessional system of governance that "had centered around the cult of the Ottoman sultan/caliph and had invoked love of religion rather than fatherland."<sup>47</sup> Considering Islam in the Ottoman context or any other religion more broadly as an impediment to "progress" and political stability, *Asparēz* wished to carve a reality corresponding to the one experienced in the US, one purged of "feudalism" and with institutions grounded in "political and religious oppression."<sup>48</sup> An editorial concluded, "Speaking from experience, we know that progress and Islamic fanaticism cannot go hand in hand" reiterating that religious bigotry was not a desirable component of the modern world.<sup>49</sup>

As Hourri Berberian insightfully demonstrates, this sympathetic view towards Ottoman constitutionalism had global resonances extending far beyond the shores of the American Pacific. Leading Armenian intellectuals and political activists between the Ottoman, Russian, and Persian empires had been staunchly advocating for this transition.<sup>50</sup> Constitutions, for them, represented a "panacea for all economic, political, and social ills and injustices."<sup>51</sup> One prominent leader of the Social Democratic Hnchakian Party (SDHP, founded in Geneva in 1887), Stepan-Sapah Gulian, for instance, saw the constitution as a prerequisite for the emergence of a "New Turkey."<sup>52</sup>

Both the SDHP and the ARF drew great inspiration from the constitutional spirit dominating American and Swiss political life at the time, two exemplar states that were successfully striking a balance between ethnic diversity and political unity.<sup>53</sup>

*Asparēz* looked down on all those races engaged in military conflicts or otherwise deviating from the peaceful norms of constitutionalism. Going beyond the shores of the Pacific, *Asparēz* painted two binary images of “the Turk” that stood in a dichotomous opposition to one another: the new or Young Turk on one side and his older counterpart on the other. The former occupied a superior position with respect to the latter, who acted as the “greatest enemy of the constitution” and consequently of progress.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, both the Young and “old” Turk still exhibited inherently inferior characteristics compared with members of the superior Euro-American race.

The Armenian-language weekly must have borrowed the romanticized image of the “Old Turk” as the “Terrible Turk,” discussed extensively in Murat Ergin’s monograph, from European Orientalist discourses that had emerged over the course of the nineteenth century. Paradoxically, after the Ottoman Empire started to falter militarily and began losing its former prestige, the “Turk” as a category gained a derogatory meaning denoting a backward person “operating along [lines of] darkness, both metaphorically and in terms of physical complexion.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, *Asparēz* situated Kurds on the “uncivilized” and “backward” side of the scale judging by what it described as their “primitive” tendencies of factionalism and aggression. Allegedly inherited from their savage past, the Kurds too went against the tide of constitutionalism and hence were reverted to the earlier stages of humanity for having violent, “gorilla-like” instincts.<sup>56</sup>

Taking us back to its immediate vicinity, the newspaper also employed racialist language to mark the inherent inferiority of other racialized groups. Echoing mainstream American discourses, *Asparēz* characterized Mexicans, for example, as a group of “bloodthirsty people” on account of their involvement in the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). In the periodical’s judgment, belligerents stuck in Mexico’s political conflict belonged to “the feudal [times] of the Middle Ages,” for their actions did not distinguish them from the Kurds and Turks.<sup>57</sup> Drawing upon the internationalist and expansionist principles of the well-known nineteenth-century doctrine called Manifest Destiny, *Asparēz* deemed the annexation of Mexico by the United States the only way to terminate the ongoing disorderly situation, characterizing it as an “indescribable blessing.”<sup>58</sup> The weekly reiterated

the exceptionality of the Anglo-Saxons and the benefits American Anglo-Saxonism promised to humanity articulating beliefs previously spelled out by prominent figures in the US.<sup>59</sup> Renowned American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, for example, underlined the country's enormous potential for dominating the world and "'banishing from the earth its greatest stain—the murder of men by men.'"<sup>60</sup> Albion W. Tourgée, an American soldier, diplomat, and judge, also considered the American Anglo-Saxons the "'peacemakers of the twentieth century.'"<sup>61</sup>

Another editorial used the subjugation of Black peoples in the US as a living example of oppression to teach its readers about Armenian political autonomy in the Ottoman Empire. Attributing Black Americans' downtrodden status to their supposed ineptitude in self-governance and striving to protect Armenians from Ottoman political oppression, the weekly urged its readers to take the lead in creating their own destiny instead of allowing others to do so on their behalf.<sup>62</sup> Finally, *Asparēz* expelled Syrian immigrants from the racial boundaries of whiteness, even though most were Christians. It rejected the creation of a joint Syrian-Armenian front in defense of the collective rights of both peoples in the US. Syrians' relatively darker complexion and use of Arabic, the language of Islam, were two indications of their racial inferiority and determinants of *Asparēz's* unwillingness to collaborate.<sup>63</sup>

What is evident is that the self-proclaimed Armenian migrant leaders had internalized a worldview that resembled the view held by those in positions of power. Haunted by American racialist discourses, the world embodied a system of dichotomies inherently divided into superior and inferior forms of knowledge and people.<sup>64</sup> It is clear that the editors used the weekly to reinforce many of the assumptions of American racial politics. They tended to portray the system of domination and subjugation constitutive of the American racialized reality as natural. For them, as for the disciples of American Anglo-Saxonism, the white American race occupied a superior position vis-à-vis the utterly backward, subordinate, and doomed Black, indigenous American, Mexican, Spaniard, and Asian races.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, as an *Asparēz* editorial proclaimed,

We cannot develop [economically, socially, politically, or morally] without following the example of the progressive nations....If we want to progress, develop, and occupy a place

among the ranks of other [civilized] nations, it is important that we too should follow in their footsteps and [adopt] new ideas, conceptions, and abilities.<sup>66</sup>

Hence, as relatively more educated and well-to-do individuals of the migrant Ottoman Armenian society of Fresno, the editors aspired to subdue their people's otherness by forging a new, racialized identity grounded in American Anglo-Saxon principles and values.

#### A DICHOTOMOUS CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEMPORALITY: "BACKWARDNESS" VERSUS "WESTERN PROGRESS"

Hardliners of American Anglo-Saxonism articulated civilizational discourses that were embedded in a lexicon not significantly different from the European colonial streams of thought. They rendered themselves as a nation entrusted with the duty to civilize the "uncivilized" folks while pursuing territorial expansionism most notably in the Western hemisphere, which avowed white supremacy over non-white races.<sup>67</sup> Technological and scientific breakthroughs shaped Anglo-Saxon superiority and promised its temporal advancement.<sup>68</sup> Taking Edmond Demolins at his word, the publishers of *Asparēz* must have conceded to his claim that owing to former British governance, North America embodied a "forward motion of Society, and the greatest known development of agriculture, commerce, and industry."<sup>69</sup> Based on this reading and the attempt to overcome Armenian racial marginalization inside the American context, the editorials ostensibly inflamed a desire to benefit from the fruits of the civilized world and perhaps take the road to whiteness.

The editors exhibited a new understanding of temporality that divided human history into distinct stages. Every move along this invented trajectory required a radical transformation.<sup>70</sup> "The monarch's devastating and deadly expeditionary forces have been succeeded by champions of science, intelligence, literature, and industry," claimed one editorial.<sup>71</sup> As Lynn Hunt explains, this new notion of time was moored by a "sense of rupture" or "temporal break," the acceptance of the "superiority of the modern," and a high level of erudition.<sup>72</sup> Following the same line of thought, *Asparēz* exalted the present and identified it as a sharp dividing line between two completely alien temporal spaces. As the weekly noted, "The encyclopedia on our desk conveys more knowledge than the entire

library of Ptolemy established in Alexandria.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, this marked the superiority of the present over the distant past.

Machinery and new technologies became indispensable for experiencing this sense of rupture and defining one’s self. They accelerated an individual’s temporal advancement, and, consequently, determined one’s position on the hierarchically organized racial line. Thus, new technologies not only provided material manifestations to immaterial time, but also made humans what they were.<sup>74</sup> The editors of *Asparēz* understood the essence of this logic from the very outset. On multiple occasions, the weekly celebrated the blessings of the age often expressing great fascination with the new mechanized way of life prevalent in the US and perhaps never experienced in the remote provinces of the Ottoman Empire. One of the editorials claimed, “Our rooms [in Fresno] now illuminated by electric, gas, or kerosene lamps are more comfortable and pleasant than the castles of Nebuchadnezzar.”<sup>75</sup>

Looking backwards, *Asparēz* also drew a romanticized image of the Ottoman world and its rural indigenous populations, including Armenians, in ways not greatly different from the portrayals in European Orientalist accounts. Continued reliance on farming methods that required manual labor were cited among the most important factors keeping the entire region in antiquity and obstructing its passage into the new world.<sup>76</sup> *Asparēz* even found fault with the use of the donkey as the primary mode of transportation. Through contrasting “the symbol of sluggishness and backwardness” with its presence “in America, [where] it is observed as an ancient animal only to be stared at in the zoos,” the weekly advocated for more frequent and widespread carriage use in the Ottoman context.<sup>77</sup> One editorial even suggested that time in the Ottoman provinces remained static with no hopes of forward movement, given the prevalence of practices “similar to [the ones] mentioned in Xenophon’s inscriptions, compiled about 2300 years ago.”<sup>78</sup> Through this statement, the newspaper also affirmed that their fellow Armenians in the empire continued to live in a time not shared by their Euro-American superiors.<sup>79</sup>

Emphasis on migrant familiarity with modern sciences and technologies both in the Ottoman Empire and in the host country was a recurring theme in *Asparēz*’s editorials. The newspaper reiterated the need to benefit from these American luxuries. It continuously reminded readers of their privileged position in terms of amplified exposure to the most recent scientific breakthroughs, which were often beyond the reach of people in other parts of the world. One of the

editorials instructed the émigrés to gain technological expertise in the US and carry it with them to the homeland.<sup>80</sup> The goal was to put the empire back on its feet and protect its integrity against foreign encroachments.

*Asparēz* assigned great agency to the expatriates who, in theory, had to play a pivotal role in this process. It pointed to their potential for transferring new farming machinery to the Ottoman Empire and saving its agricultural sector from complete deterioration, which would allow the Ottoman peoples to occupy a distinguished place among civilized nations. Going several steps further, the weekly also envisaged the financing and construction of factories to rapidly industrialize the Ottoman economy and curb its reliance on foreign imports.<sup>81</sup> Finally, to combat perceived Ottoman Armenian illiteracy and keep their co-ethnics abreast of global scientific developments, the newspaper endorsed the inauguration of new centers of knowledge that would serve as beacons of enlightenment outside the actual beacon of the world (the US).

If we cannot expect to have an indigenous Armenian Carnegie to build a library in every city and village in [Ottoman] Armenia, then we must expect that those Armenians enriched in the country of Carnegies to take upon themselves the duty of setting up libraries in their birthplaces to enlighten the native people.<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, in the editors' imaginations, the migrants were fully capable of compensating for what Hunt calls "lost time" and speeding up their people's collective march towards progress.<sup>83</sup>

#### DISCIPLINING THE SELF AND THE COMMUNITY

Conformity with a particularly white supremacist value system also stood at the core of the American Anglo-Saxon mythology. As historian Matthew Frye Jacobson explains, observance of certain norms and the display of an appropriate behavior increased one's chances of qualifying for racial whiteness. In other words, the attainment of whiteness in the US was a matter of performance and a "civilized" code of conduct as much as it involved skin color and physical appearance.<sup>84</sup> In view of this, a puritanical campaign to reform the collective behavior of Ottoman Armenian expatriates came to be seen as essential. The newspaper's editorials served as forums for moral disciplining that



would detach their readers from norms inherited from the Ottoman Empire. *Asparēz* often tried to rectify the faults that might injure the racial image of Armenian migrants to the US.

Keeping record of some of the traits seemingly incongruent with the general taste of white American men, *Asparēz* set out on a new behavioral trajectory. In its ruling, politeness and trustworthiness were the exemplary qualities to be subsequently demonstrated to the superior race. “Be polite,” commanded one editorial, observing rudeness as a chronic malady of not only migrants in Fresno but also their brethren on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>85</sup> *Asparēz* also overemphasized the noble virtue of truthfulness, most notably, on the eve of the 1910 US census. Its intent was to impress American authorities by providing accurate information about Armenian economic triumphs in the US. An editorial stated “Let Armenians fearlessly and candidly report [to the Census Committee] about their real estates and accumulated wealth,” for this was the perfect moment to correct widespread racial prejudices and secure a place on the white side of the racial line.<sup>86</sup>

Alongside its denunciation of social vices such as sodomy, gambling, and breach of contract, *Asparēz* also decried mendicancy. Identifying the Ottoman Empire as “the country of mendicancy,” it urged its migrant brethren to act like Americans while in America leaving all practices carried from the homeland behind. “Americans never beg,” it claimed.<sup>87</sup> The publishers were aware that any form of association with the activities of allegedly non-white racial groups jeopardized their collective right of admission and claims to whiteness.<sup>88</sup> The denunciation here also stemmed from consideration of California’s Anti-Vagrancy Act of 1872 which was in full effect in the 1910s and sentenced violators to severe forms of punishment such as deportation and imprisonment.<sup>89</sup>

In addition, *Asparēz* underlined the importance of maintaining good public and personal hygiene because they too lay at the heart of the dominant value system in the US. Connecting the origins of Armenian apathy toward cleanliness with long centuries of Muslim rule, several editorials emphasized the alienness of unhygienic habits to the Armenian routine. Reluctant to assign direct responsibility to fellow nationals, they cited the environment in which their predecessors had lived as the reason for the later prevalence of indifference toward cleanliness.<sup>90</sup>

One editorial serialized in two issues, titled “The Nose,” sought to overturn this reality and conferred upon *Asparēz* the fatherly right to dictate not only the migrants’ daily practices but also their dietary habits. Regular shaving, bathing, and staying away from foods generating a foul odor had become part of a new migrant lifestyle that would meet the expectations of their American superiors. With these considerations in mind, the newspaper even advised its readers to remove garlic and onions from traditional Armenian diets, as their smell offended American sensibilities.<sup>91</sup> It announced resolutely that migrants “do not have the right to blow their bad breath into another’s nose.”<sup>92</sup>

In this way, *Asparēz* sought to reform the collective behavior of the Fresno-based Ottoman Armenian migrant society so that it would fit the patterns of white moral conduct. Newcomers were expected to be responsible for ridding themselves of moral and physical impurities. Instead of acting as indifferent observers, they were asked to monitor each other and intervene when necessary, since even the actions of individuals, could “bring honor or dishonor to the nation.”<sup>93</sup> Conversely, *Asparēz* envisaged a reversal in dialectic once the émigrés decided to return home which made the issue of their disciplining even more imperative.

Based on their acquired knowledge, potential repatriates had to fulfill a similar civilizing mission not only for the benefit of their co-ethnics but also for the advantage of the Ottoman Empire. The newspaper distinguished them from the rest of the Ottoman Armenian populace and even reserved for them the right to assume leadership positions in various domains to ensure the empire’s revitalization.<sup>94</sup> With this in mind, it counseled the migrants to seize every opportunity for personal growth and self-improvement during their American sojourn, as it was looking forward to the planting of a bevy of American principles and values in the remote homeland.<sup>95</sup>

#### GENDER AND IDEALIZED MASCULINITY

As much as it represented a political, cultural, and scientific project, American Anglo-Saxonism also had a strong gendered dimension, inherently connected to the exercise of manliness.<sup>96</sup> Constitutionalism and democracy, scientific innovations and technologies, and a well-tamed moral behavior all contributed to the assertion of an idealized masculinity. The editorials of *Asparēz* not only reflected an aspiration to whiteness but also a desire to carve a new, racial identity that was

grounded in manly qualities and distinct from the effeminacy of Asian races.

*Asparēz* continuously lionized the virtues and values of the American people that had enabled it to emerge as one of the vigorous representatives of the white Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>97</sup> Substituting migrants' inherent moral qualities with those present in the white-settler value systems became a way to secure the triumph of masculinity over effeminacy. Relinquishing deceitfulness, for example, stood high on the list of changes that would accelerate the Armenians' collective move toward manliness.<sup>98</sup> As in the American white supremacist imagination so too in the Orientalist one, trickery was often considered an effeminate trait inherent to the peoples of the "Orient."<sup>99</sup> While *Asparēz* once tried to correct this mischaracterization, it more often reinforced the Orientalist discourses about Asians, Ottoman subjects, and Armenians.

As Edward Said demonstrates, this essentialist and dichotomous splitting of the world between Oriental weakness or degeneracy and Western heroism stood at the core of the Orientalist fantasy and was clearly internalized by the newspaper's proprietors. The technological and intellectual accomplishments of Europe and successive Ottoman military defeats were explained through gendered stereotypes.<sup>100</sup> The editors also used the waning Ottoman presence in southeastern Europe as proof of the empire's degeneracy. Several editorials accused the empire's male and female Muslim subjects for its gradual downfall, but the newspaper took a harsher stance toward women. It held them most accountable for Ottoman frailty because of their ostensible ignorance and submission to slavery, which prevented them from preparing new generations of refined citizens and competent warriors.<sup>101</sup>

To elevate the status of the Armenian people, to divorce it from the allegedly inferior inhabitants of the "Orient," and to enable it to occupy the highest point along the racial ladder, *Asparēz* revolutionized the role of the Armenian woman in both the immigrant and native societies. It wished to apply the principles of what Americanists have called "republican motherhood" on Armenian women by reserving a vital position for them within the private sphere.<sup>102</sup> The duty of preparing an army of politically adept male citizens well-versed in Anglo-Saxon traditions fell upon their shoulders. Moreover, in their capacity as loyal wives and devoted mothers, women were transformed into the idealized prime movers of the "nation" and the "provider of its vitality, power, and persistence."<sup>103</sup> As laid out in the

doctrine of American republicanism and in line with the broader Armenian interpretation of womanhood, this was hardly achievable without promoting female education.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, the editors of *Asparēz* expressed a deep concern over women's schooling and aspired to make it compulsory in both the Ottoman Empire and the US. Drawing lessons from the failing Ottoman example, and probably fascinated by the success of the American republican experiment, they too contemplated that a virtuous nation needed not only successive generations of well-trained youth, but also an army of enlightened mothers. "Let us clearly understand that the future is for all those who possess well-educated women," claimed an editorial.<sup>105</sup> This statement was not dissimilar in tone to one set forth by the pastor John Abbot, who, in 1833, averred "When our land is filled with virtuous and patriotic mothers, then will it be filled with virtuous and patriotic men."<sup>106</sup>

At the same time, in conformity with the white masculinist line of thought, *Asparēz* rejected female exposure to the outside world for, as Joan Nagel explains, a woman stood as the "bearer of masculine honor."<sup>107</sup> It surmised that women by their very nature possessed more delicate and fragile physical and psychological peculiarities that rendered them unfit for the public sphere. Trapped by European colonial and American white-settler mental traditions, the editors deemed it their natural right to curb Armenian women's political agency and limit their participation in civil society dreading that their engagement in public ventures could easily jeopardize their motherly responsibilities.<sup>108</sup>

This became even more of a concern after 1911, following the enfranchisement of women in California. Several editorials propagandized the above myths about women to amplify the power of Armenian men over their supposedly physically weaker counterparts while also pointing out women's inability to grapple with "complex and knotted political matters."<sup>109</sup> Granting new civil liberties to women would defy the hegemony of men inside their homes and would lead to unpleasant political controversies, the newspaper argued. Designed to be reliant on her husband or another man for protection, "the woman is a weak vessel that can be easily fractured by careless and coarse hands," the weekly added.<sup>110</sup> From 1908 through 1914, *Asparēz* remained a highly masculinist project. It often preferred to keep women in a subordinate position and prevent them from sharing power, not only to perpetuate the existing patriarchal order but also to demonstrate its profound admiration of American Anglo-Saxon

principles.<sup>111</sup> In brief, the editors aspired to affirm their and their people's masculinity while also guarding female chastity and conserving women's high moral principles.<sup>112</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This microstudy demonstrates that the Armenian expatriate men responsible for publishing *Asparēz* in Fresno, California drew upon the same racial knowledges they had acquired in the Ottoman Empire to facilitate their integration in the US. It shows how the self-ascribed Armenian migrant leaders, previously exposed to European racist literature and hoping to salvage the empire from imminent collapse, repurposed that intellectual wisdom to develop their own understanding of whiteness – a term not bluntly used in the press — but implied through articulations of race, civilization, and progress. As this study argues, notwithstanding their discontent with American racial prejudices, Fresno-based Armenian migrants also became invested in promoting said preconceptions. In doing so, the heads of the expatriate community longed to establish the “whiteness” of the Armenian people with the intention of engaging their new racialized white identity in the home country. With little hesitation, the custodians of *Asparēz* publicized pseudo-scientific racist, temporal, and gender-based categories and value systems which were accepted as self-evident, natural, and universal truths.

To overcome the challenges of their probationary white status, migrants advocated for the introduction of fundamental changes to their personal and collective subjectivities, and in the Armenian case, drew from and continued to engage with their places of origin. Thus, a transnational outlook of migrant identity formation makes the Ottoman Armenian case compelling. Armenians were not alone in coping with the nativist reticence to admit them into whiteness. Syrian and other immigrant groups from the Ottoman Empire grappled with a similar dilemma. This seems to have been a common and perhaps an inescapable episode in immigrant experiences in the US. Thus, such studies necessitate an interactive approach that connects Ottoman and American histories. Only then we can begin to appreciate and understand the immigrant experiences on the shores of the early twentieth-century American Pacific.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for the constructive feedback of Hourii Berberian and Chelsea

Schiels. I also thank Daniel Ohanian, the editors, and the two anonymous reviewers of *Mashriq and Mahjar* for their valuable suggestions and comments on earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>2</sup> “A Fundamental Remedy,” *Asparēz*, 12 May 1911, 1. This article’s referenced issues of *Asparēz*, published from 1908 until 1914, are digitized and accessible online through National Library of Armenia, <http://tert.nla.am/mamul/Asparezfrezno1908/NLA.html>.

<sup>3</sup> *Asparēz* grew from a four-page to a six-page Armenian-language weekly serving Fresno County and, to a lesser extent, California at large. It had replaced the short-lived *K’aghak’ats’i* (*Citizen*), which had appeared in 1902. Most Armenian-language periodicals in the US were published on the East Coast, where the majority of incoming migrants were settled. Currently, *Asparēz* is published in the Hollywood neighborhood of Central Los Angeles.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 9. For a communal history on Armenians in Fresno see Berge Bulbulian, *The Fresno Armenians: History of a Diasporan Community* (Fresno: The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2000). It belongs to the “celebratory” tradition in migration studies since, as the preface explains, it shows “how a non-Western European minority community was able to fulfill the American dream of moving from rags to riches” (xiii). For an ethnographic study on present-day Armenians in California, see Daniel Fittante, “Glendale’s Ethnopolitical Entrepreneurs: Suburban Immigrant Incorporation,” *Ethnopolitics* (2020); Fittante, “The Armenians of Glendale: An Ethnoburb in Los Angeles’s San Fernando Valley,” *City and Community* 17 no. 4 (2018): 1231–47; Fittante, “But Why Glendale? A History of Armenian Migration to Southern California,” *California History* 94 no. 3 (2017): 2–19.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 141, 154.

<sup>6</sup> David E. Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885–1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 6, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3–4, 6, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 23. See also Beth Lew Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 26, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, *The Chinese Must Go*, 20, 29, 45. See also Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 11, 38, 88.

<sup>12</sup> Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 52, 61.

<sup>13</sup> Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration*, 121, 126, 165.

<sup>14</sup> "The Question of Citizenship," *Asparēz*, 22 October 1909, 1.

<sup>15</sup> United States Senate, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 24, Immigrants in Industries, Part 25: Japanese and Other Immigrant Races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States: Agriculture (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911), 576, accessed 10 April 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924064511490&view=1up&seq=7>.

<sup>16</sup> "The Ottoman Constitution and the Fresno Armenian," *Asparēz*, 11 September 1908, 1; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 57.

<sup>17</sup> "The Armenian Community of Fresno," *Asparēz*, 24 March 1911, 1; "The Ottoman Constitution and the Fresno Armenian," *Asparēz*, 11 September 1908, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Christina Morales Guzman, "Race, Citizenship, and the Negotiation of Space: Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans in Fresno, California, 1870–1949" (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2012), 63, 68.

<sup>19</sup> "The Fresno Armenians and the Americans," *Asparēz*, 1 October 1909, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Guzman, "Race, Citizenship, and the Negotiation of Space," 34, 67, 69; George Byron Koushian, Jr., "The Armenian Immigrant Community in California: 1880–1935," (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2002), 72–73.

<sup>21</sup> Fuat Dundar, "Empire of Taxonomy: Ethnic and Religious Identities in the Ottoman Surveys and Censuses," *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 1 (2015), 149–150. See also Janet Klein, "Making Minorities in the Eurasian Borderlands," *Empire and Belonging in the Eurasian Borderlands*, ed. by Krista A. Goff and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 21, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands*, 77–79, 114–115, 258.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact* (New York: Oxford University, 1998), 3, 11–12.

<sup>25</sup> Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration*, 12, 29–30. See also Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 15–16; and Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 40.

<sup>26</sup> Toygun Altıntaş, "The Ottoman War on 'Anarchism' and Revolutionary Violence," in *To Kill a Sultan: A Transnational History of the Attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)*, ed. by Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem, and Henk de Smaele (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 109–11. The two leading Armenian political organizations were the Social Democratic Hnchakian Party (SDHP, founded in Geneva in 1887) and the Armenian Revolutionary



Federation (ARF, founded in Tbilisi in 1890). Both parties adopted a socialist and nationalist outlook. Unlike the SDHP, the ARF did not champion separatism and independence from the Ottoman Empire. See Hourì Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 8; Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration*, 6, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration*, 4–6, 73. Engin Deniz Ekerli, “Ottoman Attitudes Towards Lebanese Emigration, 1885–1910,” in *the Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, ed. by Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: IB Tauris, 1992), 125.

<sup>28</sup> Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration*, 12, 32, 48, 52, 70–73, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Guzman, “Race, Citizenship, and the Negotiation of Space,” 68, 73–74. See also Hatton and Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration*, 165, 169; and Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands*, 132.

<sup>30</sup> United States, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 628, 633–634, 644, 646, 651.

<sup>31</sup> Koushian, “The Armenian Immigrant Community in California,” 44.

<sup>32</sup> *Asparēz Collection on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary 1908–1918* (Fresno: Asparēz, 1918), 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 15. Two of them were real estate agents, two agricultural workers, two tradesmen, and one craftsman.

<sup>34</sup> While Seklemian officially served as the first editor, his fellow comrades also sometimes signed editorials. No major differences existed in tone and writing style between him and the others. Hence, I will treat them as a single group sharing a similar mindset. See *Asparēz Collection*, 9–10, 19, 21, 24–25, 209–210.

<sup>35</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 44.

<sup>36</sup> *Asparēz Collection*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> In the late Ottoman period, these were Sivas, Erzurum, Harput (Mamuret-ul-Aziz), Diyarbekir, Bitlis, and Van.

<sup>38</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 41–42, 168, 170, 206.

<sup>39</sup> “The Fresno Armenians and the Americans,” *Asparēz*, 1 October 1909, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* The editors did not draw any major distinctions between the concepts of race (*ts’egh*), nation (*azg*), nationality (*azgut’iwn*) and people (*zhoghovurd*), which as in European intellectual and public discourses, were all used interchangeably and retained almost similar meanings. See Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 23.

<sup>41</sup> Demolin’s book was published in Paris in 1897. Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 129. Unfortunately, in the absence of direct citations in the

editorials, it is difficult to determine the exact literature or authors with which the editors of *Asparēz* were familiar.

<sup>42</sup> Stefano Taglia, *Intellectuals and Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Young Turks on the Challenges of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2015), 87.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87, 109, 117; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparing for a Revolution: The Young Turks 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 97–98, 100.

<sup>44</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 42.

<sup>45</sup> “The Ottoman Renaissance,” *Asparēz*, 28 August 1908, 1. See also “Emigration,” *Asparēz*, 9 October 1908, 1; “The Separation of Church from State,” *Asparēz*, 3 December 1909, 1.

<sup>46</sup> “The Best Solution, Part 1,” *Asparēz*, 25 September 1908, 1; “Our Conduct with the Turk,” *Asparēz*, 20 August 1909, 1.

<sup>47</sup> “The Best Solution, Part 2,” *Asparēz*, 2 October 1908, 1. Migrant conceptualization of the Ottoman “homeland” or “fatherland” (*yerkir* or *hayrenik*’ or *vatan* as they were frequently used) remained quite nebulous and fluid. These terms sometimes denoted the so-called Armenian-inhabited provinces of the Empire and at other times the Empire as a whole. See Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 153–154.

<sup>48</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 16, 17, 19, 21–22, 24.

<sup>49</sup> “The Separation of Church from State,” *Asparēz*, 3 December 1909, 1. See also “Emigration, Part 3,” *Asparēz*, 6 November 1908, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 115, 120.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 124–125.

<sup>54</sup> “Peace Reigns,” *Asparēz*, 31 March 1911, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Murat Ergin, “*Is the Turk a White Man?*”: *Race and Ethnicity in the Making of Turkish Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 86–87.

<sup>56</sup> “The Bible of Hatred,” *Asparēz*, 22 March 1912, 1.

<sup>57</sup> “The Mexican-Balkan War,” *Asparēz*, 28 February 1913, 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* Nevertheless, outside this narrow political context, *Asparēz* never referred to the racial discrimination pursued against Mexicans or mentioned their presence when speaking about events in central California.

<sup>59</sup> Reginald Horsman, “Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism,” in *Critical Whiteness Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*, ed. by Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 139–142.

- <sup>60</sup> Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 195.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.
- <sup>62</sup> “The Destiny of the Armenian,” *Asparēz*, 25 April 1913, 1.
- <sup>63</sup> “Three Local Issues,” *Asparēz*, 22 October 1909, 1.
- <sup>64</sup> Ramon Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking and Global Coloniality.” *Transmodernity* 1, no. 1 (2011), 6–7.
- <sup>65</sup> Horsman, “Race and Manifest Destiny,” 142.
- <sup>66</sup> “Diligence,” *Asparēz*, 16 September 1910, 1.
- <sup>67</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 168, 205, 207, 214.
- <sup>68</sup> Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 45–46, 286.
- <sup>69</sup> Taglia, *Intellectuals and Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 88.
- <sup>70</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 4, 6.
- <sup>71</sup> “The March of Civilization,” *Asparēz*, 14 July 1911, 1.
- <sup>72</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History* (Budapest: Central European University, 2008), 49, 51–52.
- <sup>73</sup> “Change for Good,” *Asparēz*, 27 October 1911, 1.
- <sup>74</sup> Danilyn Rutherford, *Living in the Stone Age: Reflections on the Origins of a Colonial Fantasy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018), 101, 107, 110; Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 15, 17–18, 28.
- <sup>75</sup> “Change for Good,” *Asparēz*, 27 October 1911, 1.
- <sup>76</sup> “The American Armenian and the Armenian of Armenia, Part 2,” *Asparēz*, 20 November 1908, 1; “Tradition,” *Asparēz*, 7 January 1910, 1; “The Migrant’s Return,” *Asparēz*, 9 February 1912, 1.
- <sup>77</sup> “Emigration, Part 3,” *Asparēz*, 6 November 1908, 1.
- <sup>78</sup> “Tradition,” *Asparēz*, 7 January 1910, 1.
- <sup>79</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 27.
- <sup>80</sup> “Emigration, Part 2,” *Asparēz*, 30 October 1908, 1.
- <sup>81</sup> “The American Armenian and the Armenian of Armenia, Part 2,” *Asparēz*, 20 November 1908, 1; “The Migrant’s Return,” *Asparēz*, 9 February 1912, 1.
- <sup>82</sup> “The American Armenian and the Armenian of Armenia, Part 3,” *Asparēz*, 27 November 1908, 1.
- <sup>83</sup> Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History*, 25.
- <sup>84</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 57, 65, 168.
- <sup>85</sup> “Politeness,” *Asparēz*, 14 January 1910, 1.

- <sup>86</sup> "Census and Statistics," *Asparēz*, 25 March 1910, 1.
- <sup>87</sup> "Mendicancy," *Asparēz*, 28 January 1910, 1.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* See also Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 57.
- <sup>89</sup> Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *City of Inmates: Conquests, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 52.
- <sup>90</sup> "The Improvement of the Race," *Asparēz*, 4 October 1912, 1.
- <sup>91</sup> "The Nose, Part 2," *Asparēz*, 23 August 1912, 1.
- <sup>92</sup> "The Nose, Part 1," *Asparēz*, 26 July 1912, 1.
- <sup>93</sup> "Master of the Word," *Asparēz*, 10 December 1909, 1; "Character," *Asparēz*, 24 May 1912, 1; "Remove the Causes," *Asparēz*, 26 June 1914, 1.
- <sup>94</sup> "Emigration, Part 1," *Asparēz*, 9 October 1908, 1.
- <sup>95</sup> "The Railroad in Armenia," *Asparēz*, 24 September 1909, 1.
- <sup>96</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 42.
- <sup>97</sup> "The March of Civilization," *Asparēz*, 14 July 1911, 1.
- <sup>98</sup> "The Lie," *Asparēz*, 23 December 1910, 1.
- <sup>99</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 38–39.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 45, 152.
- <sup>101</sup> "The American Armenian and the Armenian of Armenia, Part 3," *Asparēz*, 27 November 1908, 1; "Women's Duty," *Asparēz*, 3 January 1913, 1.
- <sup>102</sup> Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, *Modern Motherhood: An American History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 17–18.
- <sup>103</sup> "The Role of Women," *Asparēz*, 14 June 1912, 1.
- <sup>104</sup> Hourri Berberian, "Armenian Women in Turn-of-the-Century Iran: Education and Activism," in *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie*, ed. by Nikki Keddie, Beth Baron, and Rudi Matthee (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2000), 82; Vandenberg-Daves, *Modern Motherhood*, 19; Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1992), 206.
- <sup>105</sup> "The American Armenian and the Armenian of Armenia, Part 3," *Asparēz*, 27 November 1908, 1.
- <sup>106</sup> Claire Buck, "Engendering the Political for Feminism: Citizenship and American Motherhood," *Paragraph* 21, no. 3 (1998), 294.
- <sup>107</sup> Joan Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 2 (1998), 251–252, 256.
- <sup>108</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 55, 63, 64, 71.

<sup>109</sup> “The Liberation of Women,” *Asparēz*, 22 September 1911, 1.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005), 848.

<sup>112</sup> “Immorality,” *Asparēz*, 13 September 1912, 1.