



The American Board And The Ottoman Women's Education*

Amerikan Board ve Osmanlı Kadınlarının Eğitimi

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Abstract

The American Board began its work in the Ottoman State in 1820. From the earliest days of the American Board, women held a chief place in its work. The American Board followed two great methods of work among the Ottoman women. The first method of approach was that of evangelization. On every side homes were opened to the visits of the Bible women and the missionary in the evangelistic work. The second great method of work was that through schools. Beginning in 1820 and persisting throughout the Ottoman State, there was practically no modern education. The few schools which did exist were almost entirely ecclesiastical, maintained for the purpose of teaching a few men to conduct religious services. This was largely true of all schools, whether Armenian, Greek or Turkish. Among the Ottoman girls and women, general education was discouraged. But the American Board missionaries began to open schools for the Ottoman girls. They trained hundreds girls in those schools. These girls were scattered throughout the villages and cities of the Ottoman State as teachers in the schools. With the organization of the Woman's Boards of Missions this work for women became at once more systematized and developed. In this study, we explain the work of American Board and the Woman's Boards of Missions on the Ottoman girls and women.

Key Words: American Board, Ottoman State, Education, women, girls

Özet

Amerikan Board, Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki çalışmalarına 1820 yılında başladı. İlk günlerinden itibaren kadınlar bu çalışmalarda önemli bir yer edindi. Amerikan Board, Osmanlı kadınlarına yönelik çalışmalarında iki önemli yol izledi: Bunlardan ilki, İncil öğretimi, ikincisi ise okullaşma çalışmalarıydı. 1820'de Osmanlı Devleti'nde modern eğitim neredeyse yoktu. Modern eğitimin olduğu ve çoğu dini nitelikte olan az sayıdaki okulda ise eğitim daha çok din hizmetlerine yönelik yapılmaktaydı. Bu durum Ermeni, Rum ve Türklere ait okulların çoğunda aynıydı. Osmanlı Devleti'nde kız ve kadınlar arasındaki eğitim durumu oldukça kötüydü. Fakat Amerikan Board misyonerleri Osmanlı kızları için okullar açmaya başladılar. Bu okullarda yüzlerce kız öğrenciye eğitim verdiler. Bu okullarda eğitim alan kızlar, köy ve şehirlere öğretmen olarak gönderildiler. Kadınlar için yapılan bu çalışmalar The Organization Of The Woman's Boards Of Missions ile birlikte daha sistemli ve gelişmiş bir hale geldi. Bu çalışmada, Amerikan Board ve The Woman's Boards of Mission'un Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki kız ve kadınlara yönelik eğitim çalışmaları ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerikan Board, Osmanlı Devleti, Eğitim

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Introduction

This study discusses the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission's educational impact on Ottoman women within the framework of the American Board's training activities in the territory of the Ottoman State. The discussion will follow the establishment of the American Board, the beginning of the Board's activities in Ottoman lands, the educational activities of the Board in the Ottoman State, the activities of educating Ottoman women, and the effects of Board education on girls.

The Establishment of the American Board

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the first missionary group to pioneer the organization of missionary activities in almost the entire Ottoman State, was established in 1810. Although there were a few institutions doing missionary activities on behalf of the United States, this organization actually operated not only in the Ottoman State, but also conducted American Protestant missionary activities in many other areas of the world. Other missionary organizations established later either grew up within the American Board or established working principles inspired by it.

Beginning in the early 1800s the foundation for the American Board was laid by a group of young people from poor farming families led by Samuel J. Mills. These people were committed to initiating missionary activities on the part of "heathens", in other words non-Christians or even non-Protestant Christians. During a conversation about the moral status of Asia, Mills and four friends from school agreed on sending missionaries to prevent the further moral decay of both Asian pagans and Muslims. In 1808 Mills and his colleagues founded the secret Society of Brethren and the members of this society then initiated the American Board while undergoing seminary training at Andover College in 1810.¹

From the moment the organization was founded, members of the American Board decided that its first international activities should be directed at India beginning in 1812, after which it would start missionary activities in the Holy Land; i.e., Jerusalem and surrounding areas in greater Palestine. Consideration of this phase of the work began in 1819, with implementation of this decision to begin in 1820. Because of all of this land was located within the borders of the Ottoman State, the American Board found itself entering into Ottoman territory. According to them, the Holy Lands could not be left in the hands of the Muslims, as they were too important to the Christian cause to be left alone. Therefore they saw it as necessary to dominate this region. To accomplish this end, it was decided that the first focus should be on converting the Jews. Two missionaries, Pliny Fisk and Levy Parsons, were sent from Boston to the Ottoman lands to begin Jerusalem-based missionary activities in the Palestinian territories in 1819. Following instructions they had received about the need to expand the areas of their efforts, they expanded to Smyrna in January 1820.² This expanded the Board's reach to the many various races and religions in the Ottoman lands.

¹ For more information see relevant: William E. Strong, *The Story of The American Board (An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Missions)*, The Pilgrim Press, Boston, New York, Chicago 1910; Frank Andrews Stone, *Academies For Anatolia*, University Press of America, New York 1984, 3; Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika (19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okulları)*, Arba Yayınları, Second Edition, İstanbul 1989, 40.

² Joseph Leon Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East Missionary Influence on American Policy (1810-1927)*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1969, 5.

In this period, the lack of other missionary organizations with which American Board missionaries might cooperate or exchange views within the Ottoman State made for heavy work for the two pioneer American Board missionaries. Therefore, the two missionaries began to learn local languages to facilitate communication with local people by creating a temporary station. At the same time, they also did not neglect to do short- and long-range research and study tours from time to time. The first long-distance trip was a short-term visit by Parsons to Jerusalem in 1821. In later years visits to the Jerusalem area were repeated and while in the region, they attempted to gather information in order to prepare the groundwork for future studies. In addition, the missionaries began to learn Italian, Greek and Arabic to facilitate their work in the region.³ However, in the spring of 1825 the Board missionaries were forced to withdraw from Jerusalem to Beirut due to the deterioration of the political situation in the region. Eventually work in Jerusalem was suspended and the center of the missionary effort in the region was shifted to Beirut. In addition, American Board officials in Boston sent missionaries Isaac Bird and William Goodell to Beirut with their wives late in 1823.⁴ Their primary focus was on education and eventually the first American Protestant missionary school was opened in Beirut on July 28, 1824.⁵

However, positive results obtained from missionary works in Beirut on behalf of the American Board met with a negative response from French and Russian officials. The Greek revolt, starting in the Morea Peninsula and dragging the region into turmoil, also added to these adverse reactions and the city of Beirut and the region became an area where missionary works were conducted under very difficult circumstances. In addition, the outbreak of The Ottoman-Russian War of 1827-1828 and closure of the British consulate in Beirut after the Battle of Navarino caused the suspension of American Board missionary activities in the Ottoman lands for a while. The missionaries went to Malta in May 1828 and here, under the protection of British missionaries, initiated printing operations. Throughout their stay they were strongly supported by the British Bible Society.⁶ After the rearrangement of the political situation in the Ottoman State, American Board missionary activities began again in 1831 and would be not interrupted again until 1915.

The American Board Activities in the Ottoman Land

Activities of the American Board in the Ottoman lands were concentrated on primarily religious studies, education, and health aid. Activities in these areas were conducted within the framework of churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, etc. The operation of printing presses in a coordinated publishing effort also took place. Of these, educational institutions (i.e. schools) were of the highest priority and these activities were the most intense in both the number of operations commenced and amount of activity invested. In the second half of the nineteenth century the American Board's activities in the Ottoman land began in the health field. These activities, which were started in the form of individual doctors, were organized around clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, etc. established in the American Board stations and notable health-care work was carried out with success.

³ Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy...*, 8.

⁴ Henry H. Riggs, *Beginnings at Beirut, Centennial of Constantinople Station*, İstanbul 1931, 17.

⁵ Kocabaşoğlu, *Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika*, 35; İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Amerikan Okulları Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler*, *Amme İdaresi Dergisi*, Vol.14, No.3, Ankara 1982, 87.

⁶ Kocabaşoğlu, *Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika*, 35; Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy...*, 21.

Work in the printing field was an important asset for the missionaries in pursuing the American Board's objectives in the field of education. In addition to producing religious materials, the Board's press printed scientific and other books which would be taught in their schools.⁷ From the moment it was decided to conduct operations in the Ottoman State, the printing operation in Malta made a significant contribution. The impact of this contribution was further enhanced by new printing operations in Smyrna, Istanbul, Beirut and Antep. The size and importance of this contribution is clearly shown by the approximately 8 million pages of materials printed in Smyrna in 1840, followed by 14 million pages in 1841.⁸

The American Board missionaries gave their highest priority to education mainly for two reasons. The first of these was to create a trained community that could read the Bible in order to do religious propaganda among this community's members. The second was to be accepted by the public through building positive relationships with people and providing educational activities in areas where such opportunities were insufficient. After this first stage missionaries who managed to stabilize their position in the region gave more weight to children's education. This was mainly because of the perception that children educated in a Protestant Christian setting would inevitably become agents in an ideological campaign in the future.

Basic-level education such as reading and writing was provided in these educational institutions at first. Such basic training was offered for both adults in Sunday schools and children in elementary schools. The training activity that was conducted by the American Board occupied different dimensions over time. Over the years higher educational institutions became needed while the main purpose of providing basic education continued. The requirement for a higher level of education was resolved through the creation of theological seminaries or high schools. Qualified female and male students were also trained through boarding schools offering high level education. Once students reached a particular level of mastery, they could be elevated to the next level in the educational system, and then eventually to colleges that had been opened in the country. Some of the graduates of these schools then met the need for additional teachers at American Board schools in the Ottoman land while others served in different capacities helping the American Board's activities both in the U.S. and in other countries.⁹

As we have seen, American Board missionaries gave a lot emphasis to educational activities in order to reach their goals and obtained some very successful results in their educational enterprises. The most important reason for this success was the failure of the Ottoman State to provide education for both men and women. In other words, the lack in terms of the number of schools available and the shortcomings in terms of quality of those educational institutions that did exist in the Ottoman State provided an open opportunity for the missionaries in this field. As a result of following smart politics, the American Board turned this opportunity into an important success, something that the Ottoman State also

⁷ Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (PABCFM), *Reel 504*, No:80, 82. For example, in a period of time the American Board made the distribution of 8000 copies published in their own printing press in Bible House in İstanbul.

⁸ Kocabaşoğlu, *Kendi Belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika..*, 88.

⁹ Stone, *Academias For Anatolia*, 161.

recognized.¹⁰ Closing the education gap through schools opened by the American Protestant missionaries played an important role in this regard.

The American Board's Educational Activities Among Ottoman Women

The above-mentioned deficiencies in the Ottoman educational system was especially true for the education of the Ottoman women. After their tour in Anatolia between the years 1830-1831, Eli Smith and H. G. Dwight stated that this shortage of education among women had become obvious and women were far more miserable than men in this regard. Though they noted lack of literacy among the people in general, they drew attention to women's literacy as a special issue during their trips in Anatolia.¹¹ Despite these findings, at first the missionaries did not really promote education for girls or rush to open schools for them. Nevertheless, the first girls' school in Ottoman lands was opened by the American Board in Beirut in 1830.¹² They opened the first girls' school in Anatolia in the house of William Goodell in Istanbul in 1832.¹³

Protestant authorities and American Board officials reached a consensus at this point; a shared view that there was little need to educate women.¹⁴ They put forward some reasons to support this view. If the girls were learning to read and write, they believed, they would begin to correspond with the young boys; therefore they would be an embarrassment to society and it would disgrace their families.¹⁵ Because of this view, the school opened by Mr. Goodell and his wife in their home to educate Greek girls in 1832 was closed four months after opening.¹⁶ Thereafter the American Board's attempt to educate women was blocked for thirteen years. Despite all these comments missionaries were quick to grasp that women were the axis of social life and to establish relations with them meant establishing relations with the whole family and they stepped up the importance of women and their education.¹⁷

As time progressed, American Board policies softened and gradual changes began to take place; activities to educate the girls were brought back onto the agenda in 1845. This time, activities for women were initiated in both religious and educational fields. With this softening, the policies implemented by the American Board missionaries among women in order to advance their missionary work began to exert some great effects. The American Board

¹⁰ Ottoman State staff members realized that progress in all areas depended on improvements in education. So it was understood that education would be the basis of progress in all areas. Many statesmen thought hard about this subject and presented ideas that they thought were essential for the solution of the problem in the form of memoranda. One of these memoranda was prepared by Kamil Pasha. It clearly expressed that the number of middle/rustic and primary school of the Ottoman State was inadequate as compared to the number of non-Muslim schools/minority schools and outlined the required work to rectify this problem, noting that these non-Muslim schools provided excellent educational programs. Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi / BOA*), Yıldız Esas Evrakı (Y.EE. S. Kamil E.), Document Number: 86-1/55.

¹¹ Akgün, *Misyonerlerin Etkisi*, 2128.

¹² Mustafa Halidi - Ömer Ferruh, *İslâm Ülkelerindeki Misyonerlik ve Emperyalizm*, Çeviren Osman Şekerci, Bilmen Basımevi, İstanbul 1968, 105.

¹³ May Fincancı, *The Story of Robert College Old and New (1863-1983)*, Redhouse Press, Çeltüt Matbaacılık, İstanbul 1983, 30.

¹⁴ Stone, *Academies For Anatolia*, 73.

¹⁵ Stone, *Academies For Anatolia*, 73; Necmettin Tozlu, *Kültür ve Eğitim Tarihimizde Yabancı Okullar*, Akçay Yayınları, No. 76, Ankara 1991, pp. 74-75.

¹⁶ Stone, *Academies For Anatolia*, 73.

¹⁷ Halidi-Ferruh, *İslâm Ülkelerindeki...*, 268.

had come to understand that it was necessary to emphasize educational work conducted among women in order to get effective and efficient results from their activities carried out among men. In other words, they came to realize that work among men would experience great harm they did not equally work to Protestantize and educate women. At this point, the greatest difficulties faced by the missionaries in the Ottoman State were social traditions in the East that made it practically impossible for male missionaries to work effectively among women, who might, in turn, pass lessons on to their children through their own educational activities and at home.

Another reason for this softening was that the American Board missionaries' began experiencing a passion to build schools for girls in order to liberate women from what were seen as "pagan" cultural restrictions. For its time, the nineteenth-century American Board can be seen as a peculiarly feminist organization. Not only were missionary wives strongly empowered, the American Board was the only employer of large numbers of unmarried women in foreign countries. This desire of the missionaries was also true for the Ottoman State and many girls' schools in the Ottoman territory emerged as a result of this passion.

At first, only missionary families were sent to Protestantize and educate. The first softening began with sending unmarried men and girls to the missionary stations in addition to these families which helped to accelerate the opening of schools for girls.¹⁸ Schools then were seen as a means for American Board missionaries to reach children and their families. Just as these means were successful in opening new horizons for men, so were they in opening up the world for uneducated and domestically isolated women. After a while, they found themselves inside the formerly closed Ottoman society, reaching Ottoman minority peoples with a team consisting of women educators through a kind of adult school opened for women without any resistance.¹⁹

In 1845, missionaries started prayer meetings specifically for women only in the Pera district of Istanbul for the dissemination of Protestantism among them.²⁰ In the same year, a school was opened for girls under the control of Miss Harriet Martha Lovell with the help of Mrs. Everett in Mr Goodell's house.²¹ In later years this school, known as the Armenian Girl Mission Training School, was moved to Hasköy and a boarding section was also created for girls of Armenian families.²² The school trained the wives of the first Protestant pastors graduated from Bebek Theological Seminary and the first graduates of the school served as teachers in many schools which provided training to their own communities.²³ In 1865, the school moved to Merzifon, a town in central Anatolia, for two reasons. The region was primarily seen as safer and secondly, in central Anatolia there were more needs for trained female teachers.²⁴

In the end, missionary activities among women in the Ottoman land increased, but work was still insufficient and did not get the desired results through the 1860s. Thereupon

¹⁸ Akgün, *Misyonerlerin Rolü*, 7.

¹⁹ Akgün, *Misyonerlerin Rolü*, 8.

²⁰ Stone, *Academias For Anatolia*, 103.

²¹ Strong, *The Story of The American Board*, 106; Florence A. Fensham, Mary I. Lyman, Mrs. H. B. Humphrey, *A Modern Crusade in the Turkish Empire*, Published by Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior, Chicago 1908, 38; Stone, *Academias For Anatolia*, 73.

²² Fensham-Lyman-Humphrey, *A Modern Crusade in the Turkish Empire*, 38.

²³ Stone, *Academias For Anatolia*, 73.

²⁴ Fensham-Lyman-Humphrey, *A Modern Crusade in the Turkish Empire*, 47-48.

American Board officers agreed to establish three women's missionary organization as part of the American Board and work in this area was transferred to them in order to make missionary efforts in these activities more systematic and to strengthen the impact of work among women. These organizations are as follows:

- The Woman's Board of Missions (WBM),
- Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior (WBMI),
- Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific (WBMP).

The first (WBM) was founded in Boston in January 1868, the second (WBMI) in Chicago in October of the same year, and the third in San Francisco (California) in 1873; all were founded by and worked under the direction of the American Board.²⁵ Through these associations, female missionary staffs that could directly work among women in foreign countries were trained. The wages of female missionaries working in schools for girls and funds for supporting school activities, which previously had been paid by the American Board, was transferred over to these new associations beginning in 1868. These three women's boards applied great effort in bringing up girls both to be exemplary Protestant mothers on the one hand and teachers for girls' schools on the other hand. Another initiative that was included within the scope of these organizations was the opening of orphanages. Orphanage work formed the basis of a significant investment for the future on behalf of the missionaries, although the community addressed was not as large as that addressed by schools. Still, hopeless and helpless children might be expected to show their gratitude by fulfilling the missionaries' requests by reshaping their lives in Protestant form in return for the assistance provided by missionaries. This then would further the aim of the American Board to create local audiences that could be used in promoting their evangelical interests.

As of 1910, the list of educational institutions supported by these three women's board of missions was as follows²⁶:

Name of Station	Name of Schools	Number at Station	Name of Organization
Samakov	Boarding School for Girls	100	WBMI
Manastır	Boarding & High School for Girls	68	WBMI
Kortcha	Boarding School for Girls	76	WBMI
Sofya	Kindergarten	50	WBM
İzmir	American Collegiate Institute	301	WBM
Merzifon	Anatolian Girls School	250	WBM
Sivas	High School for Girls	726	WBM
Adapazarı	High School for Girls	293	WBM
Bursa	High School for Girls	169	WBMP
İstanbul	Gedikpaşa School	268	WBM

²⁵ PABCFM, *Reel 505*, No:512, 730-731; Fensham, Florence A.-Mary I. Lyman-H. B. Humphrey, *A Modern Crusade In The Turkish Empire*, Published by Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior, Chicago 1908, 37.

²⁶ David Brewer Eddy, *What Next in Turkey, Glimpses of the American Board's Work In the Near East*, Boston 1913, 162.

Talas	Boarding School for Girls	147	WBM
Maraş	Central Turkey Girls' College	118	WBMI
Antep	Girls' Seminary	156	WBM
Adana	Girls' Seminary	180	WBMI
Haçın	Haçın Home School	267	WBMI
Harput	Euphrates Girls College	395	WBM
Van	Boarding & High School for Girls	410	WBM
Erzurum	Boarding & High School for Girls	200	WBMI
Bitlis	Boarding School for Girls	41	WBM
Mardin	High School for Girls	39	WBM

There was a strong collaboration among these three womens' missionary organizations, although they were independent organizations working within the American Board. For example, although Mardin Protestant Girls High School was founded by The Woman's Board of Missions, Miss Agnes Fenenga, who was responsible for the school, was actually affiliated with the Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior.²⁷ Many other examples might be cited that illustrate the solidarity among these three organizations.

The most important point in discussing these organizations lies in understanding their purpose in spreading their culture through educational activities carried out in the Ottoman territory. Here, as from the first, these organizations and their personnel tried to spread their own particular religious understandings among Ottoman minorities. They also worked at spreading their own language among the people; this was the most basic tool in their educational efforts. Courses for girls were conducted sometimes in Turkish and sometimes in the minority students' native languages because of inadequate English proficiency on the part of the students during their first semester at girls' colleges. Despite this dilemma they created the necessary environment to teach English and provided for students to learn English well. In advanced-level schools, English became the sole language for instruction because students had a higher level of education and had become a more informed student audience through having attended established schools/institutions before. Additionally, the books used in the schools were published primarily in the English language, forcing students who wanted to continue their education to learn this language better.

As a result of all this we can say that the American Board's boarding or day school education for girls had a very significant impact. This effect is best expressed in the words of a Turkish Pasha used for American Board School in Merzifon: "when a girl comes from the American school, a girl, not a school but the effect is increased four-fold."²⁸ Having graduated from boarding school, or even just having studied there for a period of time, girls gained knowledge and experience and frequently then transferred this to their families. Girls' education concentrated on how to be a good housewife—a good housekeeper and above all a good mother. As a result of this, education given to girls departed from the American Board's original evangelical focus on education being only a system to convert individuals in a society and became a process that helped foster a new identity into families and the society at large, through individuals. In addition to these social tasks, the girls who graduated from the American Board schools became well-educated partners/wives for young men who had

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Fensham, Lyman, Humphrey, *A Modern Crusade in the Turkish Empire*, 48.

graduated from other Board-operated schools. Many religious scholars who graduated from theological seminaries married these girls and experienced great help in their own work from having wives who were quite proficient in terms of both scientific and religious knowledge. As the Board hoped would be the case, the majority of girls who graduated did not remain idle after graduating, but worked in the field of religion or education. Their work areas were not limited to their immediate location; they served in every corner of the Ottoman State, hence the impact of the American Board missionaries to reach every location in the general population succeeded through their effort to extend female education.

In fact, the effect of educating girls done by the American Board had more of an impact than those of educating men. This because the importance given to the education of girls by the Ottoman State was quite superficial in the most intensive period of work by the American Board missionaries. Another reason is the extreme interest that was shown by the American Board missionaries in the female students who were educated in their schools. The girls who attended these schools learned to look out the window to another world during their time at school as a result of friendships and social relationships. The most significant contribution in this came from the Board missionaries' two-way relations entered into with the Ottoman girls. Missionaries approached girls not as authoritarian teachers, but in a friendly manner. They could not completely overcome a negative point of view of on the part of Turkish society in general toward them, but at least they managed to win the hearts of their young female students through this behavior. The most beautiful example of this is the friendship of Miss Charlotte Willard offering a lifetime to the Merzifon Girls Boarding School, with a Turkish student who studied for a while in the school.

An Ottoman girl enrolled in the Merzifon Girls Boarding School for a four-year term dropped out of the school on account of warnings by the Ottoman authorities that she should not continue at a Christian school. Miss Willard recommended to this female student to not forget the information she had learned in the school during her short residence. After being forced out, this female student found that she was too old to continue at a Turkish school and was confined to her house. She was forced to enter into sheets that Turkish girls were compelled to wear after the age of twelve years. Shortly after her removal, the teachers at the school heard that she was about to marry a young doctor. The prospective groom wanted to see the girl before marriage, a request that was not normal according to the traditions of the time, though not completely unacceptable. Apparently he liked what he saw and the young bride was permitted to invite Miss Willard to her wedding. Miss Willard attended the wedding, took the young girl's hand into her own during the ceremony, and imparted advice about her future. Despite the very short term the girl was allowed to stay in the school, clearly a warm bond was formed between the female teacher and her female student. At the crossroads of her life, Miss Willard supported her not as a teacher but a friend.²⁹

Another positive effect of the American Board schools on Ottoman girls occurred in the economic field. In general, it provided economic continuity for Ottoman minorities through Self-Help Sections established in all the Board schools. Activities conducted by this part of the Board schools provided many opportunities for not only the female students but to all students. First, opportunities were given to students who wanted to benefit from the Board's education but had some financial/economic difficulties, by providing the opportunity to meet their

²⁹ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türk-Amerikan Münasebetlerine Kısa Bir Bakış (1800-1959)*, Doğu Matbaası Yayınları, Ankara 1959, pp.46-47.

educational expenses by working in this section. Second, students increased their skills and learned professions by working in this section. Even if they left school before graduating, they would have learned a craft that might help them to have self-sufficient lives.

In respect to vocational training, the most important benefit of this section was on the girls and boys in the orphanages founded by the American Board. It provided them with professional skills before they were turned out from the orphanage a certain age through training in this section. For instance, for girls it was possible to learn all the intricacies of weaving by working on looms. So a profession was taught to these children in order to help them to continue their lives without the need for future assistance.

A good example of this practice took place in Merzifon. Merzifon's reputation for weaving cotton was of long standing, finding expression even in the *Travelogues of Evliya Çelebi*. Evliya Çelebi noted of Merzifon weaving:

...and every year merchants varies various amounts of thousands of pink clothes with slaves by taking to the Crimea land. All clothes and garment of Crimean people are made from Merzifon gland. Fabrics, beautiful linens and a bed sheets and curtains are even qualified. There are fans around the world.³⁰

American Board missionaries had noticed the importance of Merzifon weaving and had set up looms to revitalize and develop hand loom operations. In fact, the main goal was to help 400 widows and 8 orphans of the Ottoman minorities by providing employment opportunities. The work in this field began in January 1895 opening a small business in Merzifon and producing more than 100,000 yards of a narrow and rough but useful cotton fabric. Here, jobs were created for 60 people, each of whom could make a living for their families. Some of the fabrics produced were then used to clothe the poor, while the majority was sold in the public market. The industry produced more than four times the amount of capital invested, and according to the missionaries, the region, which was in danger of becoming dependent on charity, was able to support itself. This also provided relief for people indirectly as their brains and hands were busy with work. Work on weaving was not limited only to Merzifon. Looms were given to the people of Zile to begin weaving. American Board missions helped a young person from Hacıköy to find money from the U.S. in order to provide looms in this town and approximately 30 people began working on the machines.³¹ Again in Merzifon, another application in the field of weaving was launched in the Industrial Department of the Anatolia College. Here in one year, 150,000 yards of cloth were produced and a large proportion of it sold. After seeing the great tangible and intangible benefits of the Industrial Department, missionaries started to use this department as an active field to support orphans.³²

Another important influence on Ottoman girls by the American Board missionaries through education was provided by the School of Nursing affiliated with the Anatolia Hospital established at Anatolia College. The first educated nurses in Anatolia graduated and received their diplomas from this school, although the training life of the school was short and

³⁰Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmet Zillî, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, Edited by. Zekeriya Kurşun-Seyit Ali Kahraman-Yücel Dağlı, Second Book, Yapı Kredi Press, İstanbul 1999, 207. (... ve gûna-gün pembe bezi senede niçe bin yük Kırım diyârına tüccârlar götürüp esire deęişirler. Cümle Kırım halkının ferâceleri ve siyâbları cümle Merzifon bezidir. Ve basma kalemkârı, latif çit yorkan yüzleri ve çarşef ve perdeleri dahi mevsûfdur. Ve mahbûb ve mahbûbesi dahi memdûh-ı âfâkdır)

³¹ PABCFM, *Reel 606*, No:700-701.

³² PABCFM, *Reel 606*, No:791-793.

consequently it had very few graduates. Thus, the school in which four years of practical training was given, was a pioneer in Anatolia on the one hand, and opened a new field of study on the other hand.³³

Therefore, the American Board missionaries constantly were leading figures in influencing life among the people, not only minorities, but among Turks as well. However, the influence of the missionaries among the Turks and the Ottoman minorities was not directly proportional. The Ottoman minorities, whose lifestyle, life philosophies, and cultures were very similar to that of the Turks as a result of living in peace together for many years, began to look at the world in a new way and the links between the two communities began to break. Minorities who sat directly at the center of missionary activities came under the cultural influence of the missionaries very quickly and effectively. However, effects among Turks spread gradually and was less impactful than that of minorities. Nevertheless, American Board schools negotiated introducing modern educational approaches and methods into the country. These effects of the American Board missionaries on Turkish society can not be ignored.

The great successes these schools inculcated in education among the Ottoman girls continued until early 1916 despite all the hard conditions of the First World War. But the Ottoman state was forced to take measures as the war continued and eventually put an end to the activities of the American Board missionaries and their schools in the Ottoman territory, at least until the end of the war. Letters dated 24/25.02.1332, report the confiscation of the American institutions such as schools and hospitals operating in the province located in the Ottoman military zones to be used for military housing and treatment of soldiers and remanded the officials located in these institutions to Istanbul.³⁴ This decision was implemented with orders sent by the top commander to the provinces of Sivas, Erzurum, Trabzon, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, *Elazığ*, sanjak of Canik and the ninth, tenth and eleventh corps.³⁵

But the American Protestant missionaries, despite their awareness of the importance of wartime activities, insisted that they wanted to continue to work in the region. As a result, some of the missionaries working at hospitals remained in their institutions. These missionaries were ordered from the American Board's headquarters in Istanbul to work with Ottoman military medical personnel.³⁶ After the war ended, some of institutions reopened, but they never returned to pre-war levels. Starting then with the National Struggle, they did not find an environment in which they wanted to continue their activities. At this time, welfare and other aid began to replace missionary enterprises; thereafter, the most important organization from the U.S. to engage in such efforts was the Near East Relief, established by the U.S. Congress in 1919.³⁷

³³ PABCFM, *Reel 618*, No:200.

³⁴ Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı (Military History and Strategic Studies / ATASE), *BDH*, Klasör:2932, Dosya:561, Fihrist:2 (1-22), Belge No: A:4/3671 – D:44 – F:2-1, 2, 15; A:4-3675 - D:- - F:1-2.

³⁵ ATASE, *BDH*, Dosya: Y:89 E: Yok/B.A.:88/Klasör:2985/Fihrist:2 (1-22), Belge: A:4/3675 – Dolap No:165 - Göz No:2 - Klasör No:2985 - Dosya No:89, A:4-3675 - D:- - F:1-75; Klasör:2932, Dosya:561, Fihrist:2 (1-22), Belge No: A:4/3671 - D:44 - F:2-14.

³⁶ ATASE, *BDH*, Dosya Y:89 E: B.A.:88, Klasör:2985/Fihrist:2 (1-22), A:4-3675 - F:1-1.

³⁷ Now called the Near East Foundation. Near East Foundation, "History,"

<http://www.neareast.org/whoweare/history>.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be formulated on the basis of what has been presented here:

- The American Board and the Women's Missionary Societies made great efforts both physically and spiritually for the education of girls in the Ottoman territory. As a result of these efforts, training was provided for creating educated wives for young people, Protestant mothers for families, and teachers for schools. The whole of Ottoman society in general was influenced by this.
- In general the American Board girls' schools served the Ottoman minorities. Due to the state's ban, very few Turkish girls were able to attend these schools but minorities were not subjected to the same restrictions. Therefore, the influence of these schools was felt more among the minorities.
- These schools gave a new identity to the Ottoman minorities and links between the minorities and the Turks were weakened, while minority populations began to see themselves in a new light.
- Each of the girls' school served not only the cities where they opened, but also surrounding cities and all the Ottoman lands.
- The American Board never abandoned their initiative for female education even though it transferred the administration of these schools to the women's missionary organizations.

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