

NEGLECTED NARRATIVES: THE ABSENCE OF OTTOMAN MIGRATION IN ARGENTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

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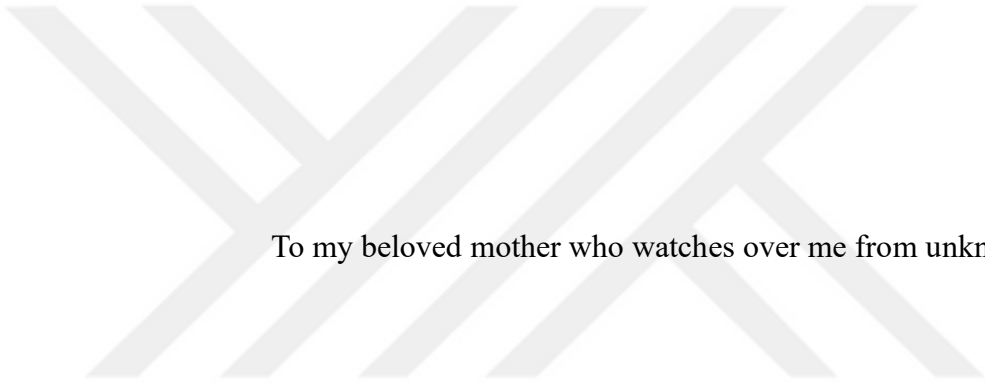
NEGLECTED NARRATIVES: THE ABSENCE OF  
OTTOMAN MIGRATION IN ARGENTINE  
HISTORIOGRAPHY

A Master's Thesis

by  
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Ankara  
September 2024





To my beloved mother who watches over me from unknown places

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MIGRATION IN ARGENTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfilment of Requirements for the Degree of  
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September 2024

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ARGENTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

By Özlem Sultan Çolak

I certify that I have read this thesis and have founded that it is fully adequate, in  
scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of History.

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Kenneth Weisbrode  
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I certify that I have read this thesis and have founded that it is fully adequate, in  
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## ABSTRACT

### NEGLECTED NARRATIVES: THE ABSENCE OF OTTOMAN MIGRATION IN ARGENTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

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September 2024

During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Argentina underwent a period of swift economic expansion and advancement, leading to the emergence of a robust need for both skilled and unskilled workforce. Simultaneously, considerable numbers of people left the Ottoman Empire due to political unrest, financial struggles, and discrimination based on ethnicity and religion. While a multitude of migrants made their way to Argentina from diverse regions globally, the specific encounters and journeys of those originating from the Ottoman Empire have frequently been neglected in the historical accounts of Argentina. Intending to respond to this issue, the study sought to examine the diverse and fragmented communities that were formed through Ottoman migration, analyzing how these communities dealt with the preservation of their cultural roots while also facing the challenges of assimilating into Argentine society. Ottoman migrants, such as Armenians, Syrians, and Lebanese, stood out from European immigrants because of the evident differences in their ethnicity, religion, and language.

The wide range of differences among Ottoman migrants resulted in the formation of separate and frequently secluded societies, causing the overall journey of these individuals to be challenging to identify as a cohesive historical occurrence.

**Keywords:** Migration, Argentina, Memory, remembering, memorial



## ÖZET

### İHMAL EDİLEN ANLATILAR: ARJANTİN TARİH YAZIMINDA OSMANLI GÖÇÜNÜN EKSİKLİĞİ

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Eylül 2024

19. ve 20. yüzyıllar boyunca Arjantin, hem vasıflı hemde vasıfsız işgücüne yönelik ihtiyacın ortaya çıkmasına yol açan bir ekonomik gelişme ve ilerleme dönemi geçirdi. Aynı zamanda, önemli sayıda insan siyasi huzursuzluk, mali mücadeleler ve etnik kökene veya dine dayalı ayrımcılık nedeniyle Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan göç etmeye başladı. Arjantin, Amerika kıtasında bu göçün önemli bir noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Ancak Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan göç edenlerin hikayeleri Arjantin'in tarihsel anlatılarında çok fazla yer almamaktadır. Bu soruna yanıt verme amacıyla, çalışma Osmanlı göçüyle oluşan çeşitli ve parçalanmış toplulukları incelemeyi, bu toplulukların kültürel miraslarını korurken aynı zamanda Arjantin toplumuna asimile olma zorluklarıyla nasıl başa çıktıklarını analiz etmeyi amaçladı. Osmanlı'dan göç eden topluluklar arasındaki farklılıklar, ayrı ve sıklıkla izole toplulukların oluşmasına yol açmış, bu da Osmanlı göçünün tutarlı bir tarihsel olay olarak tanımlanmasını zorlaştırmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Göç, Arjantin, hafıza, hatırlama, anıt

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.Thesis Question:

Apart from providing an overview of the larger narrative surrounding migration, the primary objective of this research is to look at the Ottoman migrations to the Americas, mainly to Argentina, during the period commonly referred to as the Age of Migration (late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century) in an interpretative way. By examining these migrations through an interpretative perspective, this thesis aims to delve into the historical and cultural backdrop, paying particular attention to the reasons behind the relatively limited representation of Ottoman migrants in historical studies. Although there is a wealth of information available on the general movement of people across the world during this era, the specific migration of Ottomans, which encompasses a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds, has not been thoroughly explored by scholars. The focus of this research will be to examine the impact of the distinct socio-political environment within the Ottoman Empire, in conjunction with broader global movements of people, on the journeys and experiences of Ottoman migrants who settled in Argentina. Furthermore, the study aims to examine the disjointed cultural recollections and identities of these migrant groups, investigating their methods of maneuvering through their Ottoman background and integrating into Argentine culture.

## 1.2. Introduction:

A significant historical period known as the “Age of Migration” unfolded during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, witnessing an unparalleled wave of global movement. The era known as the “Age of Migration” was a term introduced by scholars in later years to characterize the unprecedented mass migration of individuals during the 1800s and early 1900s. During this era, there was a significant movement of people to the Americas, including the countries of the southern part of the continent, such as Argentina, due to challenges like economic difficulties, political instability, or ethnic and religious persecution.<sup>1</sup> At that particular point in time, the various movements of individuals were often labeled as immigration waves or diasporas, and it was not until later examinations of global migration trends that the term “Age of Migration” started to gain traction, notably through the contributions of historians such as Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller.<sup>2</sup> A vital feature of the era was the prominent influx of European migrants to the Americas, notably to countries such as the United States, Brazil, and Argentina, fundamentally altering the demographic composition of these nations. It was not until the early 1800s that Buenos Aires began to gain importance, having been a colonial city before that. Several decades following Argentina’s liberation from Spanish rule, Buenos Aires remained a somewhat insignificant hub for trade and commerce. Only in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did the city expand rapidly, eventually evolving into Latin America's most significant and

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel L. Bailey, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914* (Cornell University Press, 2016); J.C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Hein de Haas, Stephen Castles, and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 6th Edition, (Red Globe Press, 2020).

most densely populated urban region. The cultural fabric of Buenos Aires was enriched by the settlement of immigrants, shaping it into a diverse city. In the latter part of the 1800s, the elites of Argentina, along with the government, made a deliberate decision based on positivist principles to promote the influx of European immigrants. The core focus of positivism was on the utilization of scientific rationale, empirical scrutiny, and reasoned contemplation in dealing with social and political dilemmas. Argentina's elites and government adopted these principles to bring about modernization within the country. By embracing positivist ideology, the Argentine upper class held the belief that the arrival of European migrants, notably from countries like Italy and Spain, would usher in progress, industrial growth, and the dissemination of “civilized” ideals throughout the nation. As Raanan Rein and David M.K. Sheinin underline, the driving force behind this action stemmed from a solid aspiration to boost the relatively limited population to “‘improve’ (a euphemism for ‘whiten’)” the local demographic composition by luring immigrants, mainly from Europe.<sup>3</sup> They believed that these newcomers had the potential to enhance the growth of a more sophisticated community centered on logic, scientific knowledge, and financial efficiency. Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884), a prominent figure in liberal thought and politics, introduced the concept of “Gobernar es poblar”<sup>4</sup> in 1853 in his notable work, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina*, underscores the idea that effective governance plays a crucial role in encouraging the growth of population. Natalio R. Botana and Ezequiel Gallo emphasize this view following: “Alberdi formulated a theory in which the idea of a society based on immigration, railroads, and industry

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<sup>3</sup>Rein, Raanan and David M. K. Sheinin, “Structuring Jewish Buenos Aires at the End of the Long Nineteenth Century,” *Jewish Culture and History* 24, no. 4 (2023). doi:10.1080/1462169X.2023.2253020., p.486.

<sup>4</sup> “Gobernar es poblar” means to “to govern is to populate”.

coexisted with the order born of the spontaneous exercise of individual freedom.”<sup>5</sup> Throughout the presidency of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1868-1874), the surge of immigration to Argentina gained even more significant momentum due to Sarmiento’s conviction that the nation’s underdevelopment could be remedied through the influx of European immigrants. Even though most of the migrants to Argentina during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries came from Europe, a smaller but significant portion originated from regions beyond Europe, including the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, despite the considerable focus on European Migration in academic circles, there is a noticeable lack of research on Migration originating from areas such as the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to the limited figures compared to European migrants, Ottoman migrants had a distinctive impact on forming Argentina’s diverse society. Their migration patterns, on the other hand, showed notable distinctions when compared to the migration patterns of European migrants, particularly in terms of the magnitude of movement and the underlying socio-political motivations that propelled them. This thesis aims to examine the distinguishing traits of Ottoman Migration, considering how their journeys were shaped by the circumstances within the Ottoman Empire as well as the various opportunities or obstacles they faced upon arriving in Argentina. In that period, Argentina took proactive measures to promote immigration as a way to advance its economy and settle its extensive, undeveloped lands. In order to attract immigrants, the government introduced a range of incentives and policies, such as granting land, subsidizing transportation, and offering employment opportunities, particularly in the sectors of agriculture and industry. Argentina’s immigration

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<sup>5</sup> Natalio R. Botana and Ezequiel Gallo. n.d., "Introduction," in *Liberal Thought in Argentina, 1837-1940*, ed. Natalio R. Botana and Ezequiel Gallo, trans. Ian Barnett (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2013), xv.

strategies were influenced by a solid aspiration to bring the country into the modern era and infuse it with European characteristics, as the ruling class believed that European migrants were crucial in realizing their concept of national progress. The addition of migrants from the Ottoman Empire, although in smaller quantities, enhanced the cultural tapestry of Argentina. Argentina's promise of economic opportunities and political stability was a magnet for Ottoman migrants, mirroring its attraction for other immigrants.

One of the main questions that propel this thesis forward is exploring the factors contributing to the limited recognition of Ottoman Migration to Argentina in academic research. Although there has been significant research on the movement of Europeans, specifically Italians and Spaniards, the Migration of Ottoman subjects has frequently been disregarded or given less attention. Various circumstances are accountable for this particular oversight. To begin with, the Ottoman Migration was of lesser magnitude in contrast to the European Migration, potentially causing historians to direct their attention towards the larger influxes of immigrants. Additionally, a significant number of Ottoman migrants, specifically those hailing from the empire's Arabic-speaking and other Muslim territories, were frequently labeled as "Los Turcos" within Argentine society, a general term that concealed the vast array of their ethnic and religious backgrounds. The classification might have played a role in the disappearance of the unique individualities of Ottoman immigrants from historical documentation. It will be discussed that migration to the New World was not only to find economic prospects but also one of the vital ways to survive from political upheavals and violence, as in the Armenians' case. It is essential to show these reasons in order to understand why "Ottoman migration" is understudied. People who migrated because of survival and all the traumas with them may not be blended into the identity

of “Ottoman.” One reason behind choosing Armenians specifically as a small case study is laying for this purpose.

Additionally, the historical prejudices of scholars in concentrating on European stories over non-European ones have been a factor in the exclusion of Ottoman migration. With these biases, the language barrier plays an important role. By engaging with the gaps in historiography, this thesis will explore the reasons behind the oversight of Ottoman Migration while also putting forth suggestions for reimagining the narrative of migration history in Argentina more inclusively and diversely.

During this era in the Ottoman Empire, there was a noticeable decrease in political and economic stability, along with conflicts like the Balkan Wars and World War I, as well as internal turmoil, all of which potentially motivated people to seek opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, Armenians, Syrians, and Lebanese, who belonged to cultural and religious minority groups within the Ottoman Empire, were often targets of persecution and actively sought refuge in other places. The push factors that fueled Migration were closely linked to the socio-economic conditions within the Ottoman Empire, with a notable impact in the Levantine and Anatolian territories. Many individuals faced restrictions in terms of economic prospects, and the situation was made even worse by the presence of political instability. Consequently, moving from one place to another in search of a better life or avoiding mistreatment became a feasible choice for numerous individuals.

Even though it may not be the immediate inclination when considering the Armenian diaspora, Latin American countries, with Argentina at the forefront, transformed into crucial territories where a sizable number of Armenians sought refuge and endeavored to establish a new life before and after the deportation. Specifically, it is worth noting that the initial Armenian community as we know it today can be traced

back to the migration movements that took place during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Karpāt underlines, the decision regarding selecting a particular destination was frequently swayed by the presence of established ethnic connections and accessibility of various economic prospects.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, it is important to highlight the significant role of the Ottoman Empire's conflicts during that period, especially in the East and the Mediterranean regions. These conflicts were instrumental in shaping the Armenian community, leaving a lasting imprint on its evolution and cultural heritage. According to Narciso Binayán, referring to this wave of immigration, “They really wanted to go to the United States, but the restrictions that began to be felt for the entry of non-traditional foreigners prevented their access, so they opted to come to Argentina.”<sup>7</sup> However, Armenians were not the only community that migrated to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Sephardi Jews, Syrians, Lebanese, etc., were also taken to Argentina from the Ottoman territories. In other words, the Migration of those communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to various places like the northern part of the Americas, or Europe, or different parts of Latin America was driven by a variety of reasons and underlying factors, primarily stemming from the desire to seek out new opportunities that embody the fundamental goals of each immigrant: foremost being freedom, along with employment, tranquility, respect. Like Sephardi Jews, the movement of Armenians at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century might be seen as a type of Migration; furthermore, the Armenians were striving for an advancement in their conditions. Over time, Armenians opted to relocate to other parts of the world, particularly to regions where

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<sup>6</sup> Kemal Karpāt, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no.2 (1985): 176-180.

<sup>7</sup> Narciso Binayán Carmona, *Entre el Pasado y el Futuro: los armenios en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Edición de Autor, 1996), 75.

there was a demand for labor or to places like Latin America, known for its accessible entry and abundant opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

The memories of the past that are ingrained in society come together to create a pool that shapes the essence of the community, guiding its present expressions and forthcoming progression. This idea involves the various methods by which societies remember and protect significant moments from the past, whether through long-standing customs, notable structures, literary creations, or innovative modes of expression. These components function as both physical and abstract connections that interlace the shared recollections of a community, molding their cultural stories and sense of identity.

When delving into Argentine history, the significance of cultural memory becomes evident in unraveling the intricate tapestry of the country's societal structure, especially in the exploration of the enduring impacts left by diverse immigrant communities and periods marked by political instability. In the context of Argentine history, the term "unraveling" involves the exploration of how cultural memory is maintained and manifested in various public and private settings. The process entails thoroughly examining the multiple ways in which a range of immigrant communities, including those hailing from Italy, Spain, the Ottoman Empire, and other regions, have played a significant role in shaping the social fabric of Argentina by imparting their unique traditions, languages, and collective memories. The memory of these significant occurrences is upheld and conveyed through various channels, including structures erected to honor pivotal historical figures and events, written works that capture the experiences and challenges of diverse communities, and spoken traditions that hand down tales across multiple generations. Institutions like museums, public

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<sup>8</sup> Carlos Antaramian, "La merced, mercado y refugio. El caso armenio", *Istor: revista de historia internacional*, 9, no. 36 (2009): 110.

monuments, and community archives play a crucial role in maintaining the cultural heritage of various groups and preventing their contributions from fading into obscurity. The lasting effects brought about by a variety of immigrant groups, including the Armenians, Syrians, and Arabs, stand out significantly. The presence of these communities has dramatically added to the cultural diversity of Argentina, helping to define the nation's essence while simultaneously upholding their individual cultural legacies. The physical and emotional remnants of migration and trauma offer valuable insight into the enduring effects on the societal framework of the country, illustrating the ongoing process of shaping and reshaping identity and history. Therefore, delving into the significance of cultural memory in Argentina can offer valuable insights into how the nation shapes its sense of self. It underscores the enduring impact of the past on the present and future, not solely by upholding historical accounts but also by continuously reassessing and placing these accounts in the broader scope of national and global history.

The thesis commenced by exploring the underlying causes that led to the Migration of Ottoman citizens to Latin America, delving into the historical evolution of this migration phenomenon, and exploring the socioeconomic framework and interactions between the Ottoman Empire and Latin American nations during that specific era.

### 1.3.Literature Review

Being conceptualized as imagined communities, nations are founded on the notion that individuals within them, alongside unfamiliar others, are considered constituents of the country and possess a collective sense of belonging as a group.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the collective memory of a nation is upheld through the shared belief that individuals within a particular group share a historical background.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that nations tend to be quite selective in their recollection of history, often choosing to remember certain events while conveniently forgetting others.

In his pivotal and illuminating work, *On Collective Memory*<sup>11</sup>, Maurice Halbwachs thoroughly investigates the elaborate and sophisticated strategies employed by societies in the remembrance and conservation of their past. Delving into the depths of the concept of collective memory, Halbwachs, a prominent figure in the field of sociology and philosophy hailing from France, makes a compelling argument that our memories extend far beyond individual reminiscences, intricately intertwined with the complex network of societal structures that surround us. His book intricately dissects the interwoven nature of collective memory with space and time, providing a nuanced perspective on how these factors shape and define our shared recollections. According to his ideas, certain specific locations, such as monuments and architectural structures, hold special significance in serving as concrete foundations for society's

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<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso,1991).

<sup>10</sup> John R. Gillis, "Introduction: Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press,1992).

communal remembrances and cultural heritage. Halbwach also emphasizes that the collective remembrance of historical events is intimately connected to the cyclical passage of time through significant occasions like anniversaries and remembrances, as this thesis tries to show.<sup>12</sup>

It is essential to highlight that the ongoing development of the Armenian diaspora is a continuous and evolving process. In other words, it is undeniable that the Armenian diaspora has been a relatively neglected topic in academic studies. There is not a lot of work about the Armenian Migration to the Americas. One of the pioneer works belongs to Robert Mirak. In his book titled *Torn Between Two Land, Armenians in America 1890 to World War I*<sup>13</sup>, Mirak offers a compelling exploration of the Armenian immigrant experience in the United States during a critical period in history. Exploring the depths of Armenian identity, Mirak brings attention to this community's struggles, successes, and significance within the evolving American society and the turbulent events in their homeland. According to Mirak, “America promises everything... Fabulous stories are related here of the rapidity with which wealth is obtained there...”<sup>14</sup>

Stacy D. Fahrenthold points to an essential point about the changing world in her book, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora*, the complex frameworks of global capitalism have gradually necessitated the Migration of novel proletarians to different parts of the world, supported by modern modes of transportation such as steamships and railroads, which transported laborers to far-flung locations more extensively than in previous eras;

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<sup>12</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 204.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Mirak, *Torn Between Two Land, Armenians in America 1890 to World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Mirak, *Torn Between Two Land, Armenians in America 1890 to World War I*, 39-41.

moreover, the expansive trans-Atlantic corridor served as a crucial route for the transporting a substantial number of Mediterranean laborers to fulfill the demands of the swiftly growing agricultural and industrial field in the post-slavery Americas.<sup>15</sup> Her book primarily delved into the experiences and stories of Syrian and Lebanese individuals who made the courageous decision to relocate to the Western hemisphere.

Another important work that migration to the Americas belongs to Kemal H. Karpat. His work, titled *The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914*<sup>16</sup>, presents an in-depth examination and thorough breakdown of the migration trends that occurred from the Ottoman Empire to the Americas in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At this juncture, noteworthy changes were unfolding in the sociopolitical and economic landscape of the Ottoman Empire, which had a profound effect on the patterns of emigration that were observed. Karpat's research extensively explores the underlying reasons, distinguishing features, and consequential impacts of this Migration, presenting invaluable and enlightening observations on the experiences of Ottoman migrants and the far-reaching consequences for the Ottoman Empire and the American regions. Karpat meticulously scrutinizes migration routes and settlement patterns, offering an in-depth and detailed analysis. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first influx of migrants from the Ottoman Empire to the American continent was triggered by economic downturns and social upheavals. Within the region referred to as the New World, the necessity for a workforce during the reorganization of the nations' economies that achieved autonomy resulted in a surge of movement towards Latin America. According to Karpat, it is estimated that around 1.2 million Ottoman individuals relocated to the Americas, mainly the United States,

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<sup>15</sup> Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Karpat, *The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914*.

and Argentina, during the period spanning from 1860 to 1914; he also mentions that “approximately 600.000 were from Syria and Mount Lebanon and were Arabic speakers; about 150.000 were Muslims of all areas; the rest came from Albania, Macedonia, Thrace, and western Anatolia.”<sup>17</sup> The research conducted by Genç and Bozkurt revealed that the primary group of migrants from Ottoman territories to the United States consisted of Maronites originating from Syria and Lebanon, with Armenians following closely behind in terms of numbers.<sup>18</sup>

Narciso Binayán is one of the prominent scholars who works on the Armenian community in Argentina. In his detailed exploration of the subject matter, Binayán meticulously dissects the multifaced nature of the Armenian community’s presence in Argentina, shedding light on the complexities and nuances of their journey in his work, “*La Colectividad Armenia en la Argentina*.”<sup>19</sup> The author’s comprehensive study delves into the historical context of their migration and the challenges they faced upon arrival.

Another important work on this topic is *Los Armenios en Buenos Aires, La Reconstrucción de la Identidad (1900-1950)*<sup>20</sup> written by Nélida Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian. A considerable segment of the book is devoted to investigating the meticulous manner in which the Armenian community in Buenos Aires undertook the task of reconstructing and reshaping their cultural identity. He delves deeply into the intricate and complex interplay of the cultural, religious, and educational institutions in upholding and safeguarding the Armenian heritage.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Karpát, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” 185.

<sup>18</sup> Hamdi Genç, and İ. Murat Bozkurt, “Osmanlı’dan Brezilya ve Arjantin’e Emek Göçü ve Göçmenlerin Sosyo-Ekonomik Durumu (1850-1915),” *Marmara Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi* 28, no.1 (2010): 73.

<sup>19</sup> Narciso Binayán, *La Colectividad Armenia en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Alzamor Editores, 1974).

<sup>20</sup> Nélida Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian, *Los Armenios en Buenos Aires, La Reconstrucción de la Identidad (1900-1950)* (Buenos Aires: Edición del Centro Armenio, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian, *Los Armenios en Buenos Aires*, 131-153.

The book titled *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*<sup>22</sup>, edited by Ignacio Klich and Jeff Lesser, presents an in-depth and thorough analysis of the varied experiences and valuable contributions made by Arab and Jewish immigrants in the region. The compilation includes a range of essays written by various scholars, all providing distinct perspectives on the societal, financial, and cultural elements of the societies. This collection of writings holds significant worth due to its emphasis on a comparative method, delving into the shared aspects and unique journeys of Arab and Jewish migrants in various nations within the area.

In his seminal work, *Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina*<sup>23</sup>, Gino Germani thoroughly analyzes how immigration has played a crucial role in shaping Argentina's advancement in social and economic aspects. The transformation of Argentina from a primarily agricultural society to a more urban and industrialized one was greatly influenced by mass migration, as argued by Germani. His in-depth analysis scrutinizes the impact of immigrants, predominantly originating from Southern Europe, on Argentina's rapid modernization, achieved through their concentration in urban hubs, stimulation of labor markets, and introduction of novel cultural and political concepts.

May E. Bletz's research, as presented in *Immigration and Acculturation in Brazil and Argentina: 1890-1929*<sup>24</sup>, delves deeply into a comparative study exploring the ways in which immigrant communities adjusted to and impacted the cultural and societal framework of Brazil and Argentina throughout a pivotal period characterized by significant immigration flows. Bletz delves into the diverse levels of assimilation,

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<sup>22</sup> Ignacio Klich and Jeff Lesser, eds., *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities* (Routledge, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Gino Germani, "Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 2 (1966).

<sup>24</sup> May E. Bletz, *Immigration and Acculturation in Brazil and Argentina, 1890-1929*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

incorporation, and opposition that were encountered by various immigrant communities, with a particular emphasis on European populations like Italians and Spanish, while also scrutinizing the regulations and societal responses of the host nations. She also examines the efforts of Argentine elites to “civilize” and integrate immigrants into the national agenda while immigrants frequently uphold their unique cultural identities.

The current body of literature on the migration patterns to Argentina in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, exemplified by the research of Gino Germani and May E. Bletz, primarily centers on European immigration and the pivotal roles these immigrant groups played in the economic and social advancement of Argentina. Nonetheless, the narratives presented in these works tend to exclude the perspectives and cultural impacts of other migrant communities, particularly those coming from the Ottoman Empire, including Syrians, Armenians, Lebanese or Arabs. As mentioned above, there are only a few studies written by Kemal Karpaz, Stacy Fahrenthold, or Narciso Binayán, but those studies mostly emphasize one specific community. Narciso Binayan’s and Nélida Boulgourdjian’s works illuminate future studies about the Armenian Migration to Latin America with their demographic information and insights about social and cultural life in the new countries.

The primary objective of this thesis is to address this gap by delving into the varied and scattered backgrounds of Ottoman migrants and examining how their memories, memorialization practices, and efforts to preserve their identity have been influenced by their migration experiences. By delving into the specific experiences of Ottoman migrants, it is aimed to shed light on the interplay between migration and memory, particularly by examining the disparities in cultural memory and identity

preservation across various migrant communities. This thesis intends to dispute the assumption that the advancement of modernization in Argentina was predominantly driven by European migration, as it will emphasize the valuable role of Ottoman migrants in shaping the country's social and cultural structure. In addition to that, this thesis will try to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring a significant oversight in research regarding how memorials and monuments contribute to molding the cultural memory of Ottoman migrants. It is intended to enrich the understanding of memory and diaspora in Argentina by delving into the strategies employed by Armenian, Syrian, and other Ottoman-origin communities to negotiate their fragmented pasts and maintain their cultural identities.

#### **1.4.Methodology and Sources**

This thesis' interpretative approach entails delving deeper into the analysis, moving beyond the mere presentation of raw data or historical documents related to the Ottoman migration. This strategy requires delving into the subjective experiences of the migrants, exploring the cultural intersections between them and Argentine society, and interpreting the historical implications of this migration. The study aims to delve into the reasons and methods driving these movements, going beyond mere identification to uncover the underlying motivations and mechanisms. This process entails contemplating the manner in which history is formulated, which individuals have the authority to narrate the narrative, and which viewpoints have been pushed to the sidelines. While doing this, it surpasses mere recollection of events by seeking to grasp the intricate mechanisms driving Migration, influencing interactions, and shaping historical memory.

Space is an essential factor in the procedures of commemoration, functioning both as a communal context and a tangible foundation that actively shapes the significance and portrayal of bygone eras and the arrangement of remembrance. In the scope of this research, it will be explored that how migrant communities originating from the Ottoman Empire, alongside various European migrant groups, utilize physical locations, such as memorials, as a means to establish and uphold their cultural reminiscences. The focus is on how different communities in Argentina use commemorative spaces' design, location, and symbolism to craft their historical accounts and sustain their identities.

### **1.5.The Organization of Thesis**

In the second chapter, an in-depth analysis is conducted on the migration trends towards Argentina that occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, placing special emphasis on the significant increase of migrants originating from the Ottoman Empire. It provides a background on Argentina's historical immigration policies and the favorable economic and social circumstances that entice a variety of people to choose the country as their destination. In the chapter, there are examples of demographic developments and displaying the multiple waves of Migration.

The third chapter will analyze the reasons for migrating to Latin America, Argentina from the Ottoman territories. The exploration in this chapter extensively examines in intricate and diverse voyages undertaken by migrants originating from the Ottoman Empire and settling in Argentina throughout the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the initial years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter delves into the ways in which various ethnic and religious communities, including Syrians, Armenians, and others, managed their interactions within the empire's socio-political environment and the factors that influenced their decisions to migrate. Additionally, the chapter explores these groups' diverse and fragmented identities, which resulted from their origins in different regions across the Ottoman Empire. Also, it gives a detailed point of view about Armenians because their motives were different.

In the third chapter, an in-depth analysis is conducted on the migration trends towards Argentina that occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, placing special emphasis on the significant increase of migrants originating from the Ottoman Empire. It provides a background on Argentina's historical immigration policies and the

favorable economic and social circumstances that entice a variety of people to choose the country as their destination. In the chapter, there are examples of demographic developments that display the multiple waves of migration.

The fourth chapter emphasizes exploring how the collective memories have molded the stories told by immigrant communities from the Ottoman Empire. By focusing on the significance of memorials and monuments, this chapter delves into how various communities, including Syrians and Armenians, use memory to safeguard their cultural legacy and navigate their sense of self in a foreign land.

The conclusion encapsulates the core findings of the thesis, establishing links between the varied migrations from the Ottoman Empire to Argentina. The examination brings attention to the frequently disregarded journeys of Ottoman migrants and stresses the significance of acknowledging their influence within the broader scope of Argentina's immigrant past. Ultimately, this thesis proposes a call to action for a more all-encompassing comprehension of global migration narratives that fully acknowledges the intricate nuances and significant contributions of marginalized communities, particularly those hailing from the Ottoman Empire.

## CHAPTER II

### Argentina Beckons: Migration Patterns

The commencement of the initial Spanish settlement in present-day Argentina, specifically in Buenos Aires, which is presently recognized as the capital of Argentina, was initiated in 1536 under the authority of Spain, led by the explorer Pedro de Mendoza alongside a cohort immigrant.<sup>25</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Spain sparked the initial uprising for independence with Argentine territory. In 1810, the Buenos Aires city council, also referred to as the cabildo, demonstrated its support for King Fernando VII of Spain, whom Napoleon had deposed, by creating a self-governing body that remained loyal to Fernando VII. In 1814, with the assistance of various supports, Fernando was able to reclaim his position as ruler. However, discontent began to spread across the nation due to his administration, leading to a council gathering in Tucuman on July 9, 1816. This council, representing the majority of the nation, announced Argentina's independence under the name of the "United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata."<sup>26</sup> Throughout the eras marked by the emergence of independence movements, within the nation, there was a significant and rapid growth in the population, with the territories stretching from Buenos Aires to the Andes and Paraguay, hosting a populace of roughly 406.000 individuals by the 1830s, it has risen to approximately 770.000 residents.<sup>27</sup> At this juncture, the country witnessed economic

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<sup>25</sup> Şebnem Atakan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Arjantin İlişkilerinin Başlangıcı" in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu-Latin Amerika (Başlangıç Dönemi)*, ed. Fatma Öznur Seçkin (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Latin Amerika Çalışmaları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, 2012), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Atakan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Arjantin İlişkilerinin Başlangıcı," 2.

<sup>27</sup> Atakan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Arjantin İlişkilerinin Başlangıcı," 2.

growth, with its primary source of earnings being linked to animal husbandry and the craft of leatherwork.

Nevertheless, unidirectional attempts at progress proved to be inadequate, leading to a gradual rise in the nation's inflation, budget shortfall, and overall public debt as the 1830s approached. In that period, Juan Manuel de Rosas pursued a path of economic thriftiness across the whole territory. As Şebnem Atakan's emphasize, despite the various progress made and strict governance of Rosas, Argentina continued to struggle in achieving the economic development it sought; furthermore, subsequent to Rosas relinquishing control in 1852, it became apparent that a substantial number of workers were necessary in the countryside areas of the nation, where animal breeding and farming constituted the primary revenue streams.<sup>28</sup> In the early years of the 1800s, Britain and the United States led the way by introducing the first laws aimed at outlawing the slave trade, which subsequently inspired other European countries to adopt similar measures. In the historical context of Latin American nations, where the utilization of enslaved individuals in the realms of agriculture and mining was prevalent during the colonial epoch, a requirement emerged for a workforce to bridge this void, leading to the initiation of measures by these countries to encourage the Migration of individuals. The need arose to facilitate the arrival of laborers, predominantly from European countries, by means of immigration.

The mass migration to Argentina, notably in the latter portion of the 1800s and the initial decades of the 1900s, brought about substantial changes to the country's social, economic and cultural framework. This period witnessed a mass movement of millions of individuals towards the New World as they sought out new opportunities because of the chaos in Europe. Through the course of these migrations, Argentina

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<sup>28</sup> Atakan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Arjantin İlişkilerinin Başlangıcı," 2-3.

solidified its position as a crucial destination, welcoming immigrants from almost all over the world. Despite the fact that the majority of immigrants originated from Europe, a notable portion of the immigrant population hailed from the Ottoman Empire as well. The initial Turkish immigrants who settled in Argentina originated from the regions of Syria and Lebanon, which were formerly territories of the expansive Ottoman Empire and subsequently fell under the governance of French administration. Upon their arrival in Argentina, a variety of immigrant groups, including followers of Islam, Christianity, and other faiths, predominantly consisting of individuals from rural areas, and initially accessed the nation via the Port of Buenos Aires. Given the expanding European market for the Latin American goods, a number of countries in southern part of the New World took steps to attract more immigrant by providing incentives such as “land grants, tax breaks, financial support, reduced or complimentary transportation; as Hekimian’s emphasizes “ the theory behind these policies was that a European work force would facilitate agricultural and industrial development in the newly independent nations.”<sup>29</sup>. Carlos Antaramián underlines an important difference between Argentina and Mexico about their view of point about immigration by saying that “There appear to have been same restrictions for certain incoming nationalities in the official record (Diario Oficial de Las Fedaración of July 15,1927). Using economic argument clearly inspired by racist criteria, those who were considered ‘undesired’ were associated with what were considered the lowest forms of commerce and speculation. These included Syrians, Lebanese, Armenians, Palestinians, Arabs and Turks.”<sup>30</sup> On the other side, Hekimian gives us another point of view by saying “unlike Mexico, ‘the government of Argentina viewed immigration

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<sup>29</sup> Kim Hekimian, “Armenian Immigration to Argentina:1909-1938,” *Armenian Review* 43, no.1 (1990):86.

<sup>30</sup> Carlos Antaramián, “Armenians in 1930’s Mexico City,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 19, no.1 (2010): 46.

as vital to its national progress.”<sup>31</sup> Despite the initial condition of openness, it underwent a modification due to escalating Migration flows towards Buenos Aires. Over the span of the 1920s, there was a mounting significance given to the enactment of policies aimed at constraining the entry of immigrants into the country. During this particular period in time, there was a noticeable split in opinions and points of view concerning which specific individuals were considered to be acceptable or unacceptable in relation to the topic of immigration.<sup>32</sup> The majority of Ottoman immigrants hailed from rural areas and lacked formal education, leading to their unfamiliarity with the host country’s culture, resulting in their exclusion when compared to Europeans. In other words, examination of the population characteristics and economic circumstances of Ottoman emigrants who came to Argentina unveils a nuanced and diverse landscape that exhibits significant variations within the different factions. Although it is a fact that a significant portion of these migrants originated from rural regions, specifically those from areas like Anatolia and broader Syrian countryside, encompassing present-day Lebanon and Syria, this generalization does not consistently apply to every migrant.<sup>33</sup>

The unfamiliar and unusual names of these immigrants were a crucial factor in their acceptance by the locals and presenting obstacles to their integration. Missoui gave an example as following: due to this particular reason, a considerable number of individuals have made the choice to alter their given names and family names to establish credibility within their communities and secure employment opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hekimian, “Armenian Immigration to Argentina:1909-1938,” 86.

<sup>32</sup> Hekimian, “Armenian Immigration to Argentina:1909-1938,” 87.

<sup>33</sup> Karpat, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” 177.

<sup>34</sup> F. Z. Missaoui, “La Presencia Árabe En América Latina Y Su Aportación Literaria en Brasil, Cuba Y Colombia, Siglo XX,” *Centro Virtual Cervantes*, (2015): 49.

Nevertheless, this influx of immigrants has not received adequate attention in historical research. In contrast to the extensive research on Italian, Spanish, Irish and various European immigrant communities, there has been a relative dearth of studies exploring the historical context and identity construction experiences of migrants from the Ottoman Empire. Within the realm of migration and diaspora studies, a vast array of literature is dedicated to analyzing immigration patterns in Argentina, with particular emphasis on the multifaceted contributions made by immigrants in terms of economics, society and culture, alongside considerations of identity formation and integration.<sup>35</sup> A significant influx of individuals from various countries migrated to the Americas for comparable motives on a large scale. Literature is wealthy for migration groups such as Italians or Irish; however, not many studies showed migration to the Americas as an “Ottoman” identity. In other words, significant multitude of relocated to the Americas from the Ottoman lands; furthermore, this Migration significantly shaped both the Ottoman Empire and recipient countries for a prolonged period. Despite this importance, the scholarly examination of Ottoman transatlantic Migration has been notably scarce. There could be various reasons contributing to this lack of attention. One aspect could be that the Ottoman Migration to the New World held little significance due to their perceived small size in contrast to the other groups, as mentioned before.

As per the information gathered from research carried out, it is estimated that around 150.000 individuals who were citizens of the Ottoman Empire decided to migrate to Argentina during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> A study conducted revealed that around 5.000 migrants made their way to Mexico from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine back in

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<sup>35</sup> Germani, “Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina,” 165.

<sup>36</sup> Mehmet Temel, *XIX. Ve XX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Latin Amerika İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 2004), 10.

1905.<sup>37</sup> Mexico and Argentina are not the only countries in Latin America that have experienced immigration; Brazil and Chile have also been significant in this regard. <sup>38</sup> However, according to the Alejandro Schamun's work, titled as *La Siria Nueva: Obra Histórica, Estadística y Comercial de la Colectividad Sirio-Otomana En Las Repúblicas Argentina y Uruguay*, Ottomans were positioned as fifth most sizable immigrant cohort to reach Argentina.<sup>39</sup> According to this source, the Ottoman population living in the Argentina is categorized based on their place of origin, whether it be regions or provinces, into the subsequent groups: Turks, Syrians, Arabs, Lebanese, and Ottomans; the classification of individuals as Turks is based on their birth in Turkey, Syrians are identified by their roots in the Syrian province, Arabs are recognized by their language of Arabic, Lebanese are associated with the Mount Lebanon governorate, and Ottomans are united by their political alignment with the Ottoman identity.<sup>40</sup> But not only Syrians or Arabs, also Jews and Armenians emigrated to the New World because of different reasons. There are various studies about Armenians and Jews from Ottoman lands and their Migration to the Americas. It is essential to interpret the events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire within the broader context of the global order of the time, which can be called as worldwide interconnectedness. At that time, the world was primarily characterized by a dominant adherence to liberal economic beliefs, leading to only minor limitations on the circulation of labor, capital and products. According to Mehmet Temel's points, the rise in unemployment as a result of the economic slowdown in the Ottoman Empire

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<sup>37</sup> Patricia Jacobs Barquet, "Los inmigrantes libaneses y su innovadora aportación al comercio en México," *Historias* 95 (2016): 43.

<sup>38</sup> Armando Escobar, "'Arabescos brasileños' en Relato de un cierto Oriente de Milton Hatoum: identidad, memoria y lengua", *LI Journal* 17 (2016).

<sup>39</sup> Alejandro Schamun, *La Siria Nueva: Obra Histórica, Estadística Y Comercial De La Colectividad Sirio-Otomana En Las Repúblicas Argentina Y Uruguay* (Buenos Aires: Empresa "Assalam", 1917).

<sup>40</sup> Schamun, *La Siria Nueva: Obra Histórica, Estadística Y Comercial De La Colectividad Sirio-Otomana En Las Repúblicas Argentina Y Uruguay*, 18-19.

during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influx of millions of refugees from regions such as the Caucasus, Crimea, and Balkans following the Crimean War, the shift in trade routes due to the opening of the Suez Canal, the concerns raised by Syrian Christians regarding their safety amidst a growing Muslim population, the turbulent situation in the Syrian region and hundreds of thousands of people who thought they they were negatively affected by these developments in the Empire emigrated despite the dissuasive policies of the governments.<sup>41</sup>

There were a couple of approaches that Ottoman inhabitants employed in order to relocate. The initial step involved acquiring authorization from the government and departing the nation with their official identification documents, while the subsequent action entailed escaping discreetly. One instance that illustrates this scenario is when international vessels linger at sea close to the coast, taking on board individuals secretly hiding. In his research, Said Bahajin provided a concise overview of the situation, noting that the journey of stowaway would originate from the Port of Beirut; the smugglers would compensate the police for escorting the immigrants onto the vessel clandestinely, and they would journey to Marseilles under the guise of being workers; over there, another person engaged in unlawful practices would receive them and transport them to the America.<sup>42</sup>

As highlighted in the literature review, a significant portion of the studies concerning Ottoman migrations have concentrated on the influx of Syrian and Arab migrants. One possible explanation for the absence of a viewpoint on “Ottoman migration” in academic works could be attributed to this scenario. Due to the fact that

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<sup>41</sup> Mehmet Temel, “XIX. Ve XX. Yüzyılın Başlarında Osmanlı Devleti ve Avrupa’dan Brazilya’ya Yönelik Göçler,” *Tarihin Peşimde- Uluslararası Tarih ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, no.2 (2009): 125.

<sup>42</sup> Said Bahajin, “El Modelo Latinoamericano En La Integración de Los Immigrantes Arabes,” *Ra Ximhai Revista de Sociedad, Cultura y Desarrollo Sustentable* 4, no.3 (2008): 752.

the Ottoman Empire were essentially made up of diverse ethnic and religious groups, and they were managed to effectively bring together under the collective identity of “Ottoman” over an extended period. Nevertheless, as time progressed, due to the impact of the rising prominence of nationalist movements worldwide and the First World War, it began to shed this characteristic starting from the 1800s. From this perspective, Kemal Karpat made an effort to introduce a fresh approach. He made an effort to shift the focus of this subject away from this particular perspective towards Ottoman studies, highlighting the significance of emigration as an imperial phenomenon during the late 1800s and early 1900s. He emphasized the need to strengthen this argument by pointing out that the Migration to the New World was not limited solely to the Syrian region but was also evident in comparable forms on the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>43</sup>

One of the main factors contributing to the lack of attention given to Ottoman Migration in Argentine historical studies could possibly be the strong and widespread impact of Eurocentrism. As mentioned above, Argentina’s immigration policies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were geared towards drawing in European immigrants, especially from nations such as Italy and Spain, which were considered culturally and racially suitable for Argentina’s objective of “whitening” its population. Consequently, a significant portion of the academic research has been directed toward these European migrants, highlighting their contributions to molding the nation’s economic progress, cultural landscape, and societal structure. Conversely, non-European migrants, including those originating from the Ottoman Empire, were viewed as less preferred and less significant in the national context.

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<sup>43</sup> Karpat, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” 175-209.

Apart from these reasons, the most important is the Ottoman Empire's fragmented and diverse origins. The Ottoman Empire, characterized by its diverse ethnic and religious composition, attracted migrants hailing from a wide array of origins, such as Arabs, Armenians, Syrians, Lebanese, Greeks, etc. The diversity among these groups extended to their ethnic and religious compositions, with a multitude of reasons influencing their decision to migrate. For example, and mentioned above, a significant number of Ottoman immigrants who arrived in Argentina consisted mainly of individuals from Syria and Lebanon. Their decision to relocate was commonly motivated by financial struggles, political unrest, and, in some instances, the chance to avoid being drafted into the Ottoman military. However, even among this particular group, there existed migrants from Muslim, Christian and Druze backgrounds, each bringing their own unique cultural customs and diverse migration narratives.

On the other hand, a portion of individuals were escaping from oppression, such as the Armenians whereas another group were in pursuit of better financial prospects. The wide range of backgrounds among Ottoman migrants posed a challenge for historians in categorizing them as a unified entity, unlike the more homogenous groups of Italian or Spanish migrants. The intricate nature of these identities posed a difficulty for historians in formulating a cohesive account of Ottoman migration, leading to their marginalization in the broader Argentine immigration narrative.

## CHAPTER III

### **Beyond Boundaries: The Odyssey of Migrants from the Ottoman Empire**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a vast number of individuals left the Ottoman Empire for various countries in the New World, where they either settled permanently, temporarily resided, or eventually returned to their homelands, each driven by unique motivations. The prevalence of financial struggles, especially in less urbanized areas, played a pivotal role in driving a considerable number of individuals to explore better job prospects in foreign countries, particularly in the Americas, where nations like Argentina and the United States provided employment opportunities in burgeoning industries. The prospect of attaining wealth and prosperity served as a strong incentive for numerous people, whereas some were fleeing the lack of progress and destitution in their country of origin.

Fahrenthold puts forth the idea that it was not just Syrians, Italians, and Greeks who participated in the immigration endeavor; “Anatolian Turks, Armenians, Kurds from Cilicia, and Sephardic Jews from Palestine were also actively engaged, cohabiting in the same-third class quarters, settled in the same cities, and pursued the same roads in order to improve their life standards.”<sup>44</sup> In addition to those, Karpat makes a pointed observation that the predominant inclination of the emigrants in the beginning was directed towards North America; nevertheless, it is noteworthy to mention that a substantial number of them also found settlement in Latin American

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<sup>44</sup> Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 15.

regions such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.<sup>45</sup> The number of Ottoman citizens relocating to the United States was notably lower when contrasted with the significant numbers heading to Argentina and other countries across Latin America. The key reason behind this was the United States' practice of being discerning in granting entry to individuals rather than accepting all who wished to come into the nation. Back then, moving to America and simply stepping foot on its soil posed significant difficulties, as it could only be achieved through a rigorous and painstaking verification process.<sup>46</sup>

According to Genç and Bozkurt, the movement of individuals from the Ottoman Empire to the southern part of the American continent, notably Argentina, commenced during the 1870s and has been steadily gaining momentum ever since the early 1900s; furthermore; as per the records, it was documented that over 150.000 Ottoman subjects had established residence in various countries such as Argentina, Peru, Colombia, and Chile by the commencement of 1908.<sup>47</sup>

Due to the various challenges faced by the Ottoman Empire in the realms of economy, military, and politics, starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a significant number of individuals decided to migrate in pursuit of a better and more prosperous life. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire faced challenges in adjusting to the shifting world dynamics, resulting in unfavorable occurrences within the Empire. Due to the prolonged warfare and ongoing decline, the Ottoman Empire's economic state could not withstand the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism. In particular, during the rule of Selim III (1761-1808) and Mahmud II (1785-1839), the Ottoman recovery deteriorated even more as a result of the continuous conflicts with

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<sup>45</sup> Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914," 178-179.

<sup>46</sup> Rıfat N. Bali, *Anadolu'dan Yeni Dünyaya Amerika'ya İlk Göç Eden Türklerin Yaşam Öyküleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Hamdi Genç and Murat Bozkurt, "Osmanlı'dan Brezilya ve Arjantin'e Emek Göçü ve Göçmenlerin Sosyo-Ekonomik Durumu (1850-1915)" *Marmara Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi* 28, no.1 (2010): 74.

Tsarist Russia, which were consistently unsuccessful and the increasing number of internal uprisings because of the nationalistic aims. As Donald Bloxham mentioned, establishing “the ethnic identity,” which involved identifying oneself with others of the same group and distinguishing them from “outsiders,” was not solely dependent on ideology or sentiment; tangible actions could also promote it.<sup>48</sup> This distinguishment was not about ethnicity or nationality in the Ottoman Empire until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Until then, this diversity was mostly coming from religion. The individuals who did not adhere to the Islamic faith yet willingly submitted to the authority of the Ottoman Empire’s ruler and diligently fulfilled their obligation of paying the *cizye* found themselves firmly within the care and protection of the sultan. As long as non-Muslims faithfully carried out their duty of paying *cizye*, they were entitled to the shield and refuge offered by the sultan. *Cizye*, in historical context, was a form of tax imposed on non-Muslim individuals residing within the jurisdiction of an Islamic state in exchange for the assurance of receiving equivalent protection and rights as their Muslim counterparts.<sup>49</sup> As Faruk Alpkaya underlines, the Ottoman Empire gradually transformed into a state located in the semi-periphery of the capitalist world economy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the wave of independence that started in 1789, the response of the Ottoman elites to successive uprisings of local administrators and subject peoples within the state was the Tanzimat Edict of 1839.<sup>50</sup> The Edict essentially guaranteed to enhance the conditions for Ottoman citizens, particularly by eliminating the disparities between Muslims and non-Muslims through the official elevation of non-Muslim status and the establishment of equality for both

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<sup>48</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17.

<sup>49</sup> Halil İncik, "Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire." In *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History*, by Halil İncik. (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2010), 108.

<sup>50</sup> Faruk Alpkaya, “Geçiş Çağı’nda Cumhuriyet Üzerine Düşünmek”, In *Bir Büyük Dönüşümden Kesitler: Dünya ve Türkiye*, edit. Bülent Eken and Barış Ünlü (Ankara: Dipnot, 2023), 20.

groups under the legal system.<sup>51</sup> In order to address the worries of the Christian community, the Ottoman Empire introduced a new decree known as the Islahat Edict (1856), which enhanced and clarified the rights of the Christian population more explicitly than the previous decree. With this decree's implementation, non-Muslims were allowed to work in governmental roles and be admitted into military educational institutions. The insulting and belittling expressions towards non-Muslims were excluded from the formal correspondence. Furthermore, non-Muslims are permitted to establish a separate council where they can engage in discussions regarding their own internal affairs.

Nevertheless, this fresh reform initiative managed to escalate the existing discontent among Muslims and planted the beginnings of their hostility towards Christians. The Tanzimat Edict was followed by the Kanun-i Esasi (1876) and the Second Constitutional Era/ II. Meşrutiyet (1908). The Tanzimat Edict and Islahat Edict initially pledged to guarantee the safety of people's lives, honor, and possessions, ensure the collection of taxes under just regulations, and uphold equality before the law for all Ottoman citizens, irrespective of religious beliefs.<sup>52</sup> The primary purpose of all these changes was closely related to the desire of the new elite, mostly Muslims, who gained power over time, for the modernization of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire's geographical and demographic complexities, as pointed out by Alpkaya, hindered its ability to function as a nation-state.<sup>53</sup> Following the establishment of the Second Constitutional Era in 1908, a new and contemporary

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<sup>51</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 103-104.

<sup>52</sup> Fikret Adanır, "'Ermeni Meselesi'nin Doğuşu.'" In *1915: Siyaset, Tehcir, Soykırım* edit. Fikret Adanır and Oktay Özel (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınlar, 2015), 12.

<sup>53</sup> Alpkaya, "Geçiş Çağı'nda Cumhuriyet Üzerine Düşünmek," 21.

concept of governance emerged within the Ottoman Empire, placing a significant emphasis on the principle of equality among its citizens.

Additionally, compulsory military service was extended to non-Muslims to adhere to this principle and address the army's workforce requirements. In line with this new structure, those of a non-Muslim faith were compelled to become part of the military forces. Despite the fact that a few individuals willingly enlisted in the military, a significant number of them sought ways to evade this responsibility and fled to Egypt or America.<sup>54</sup>

The coup d'état (23<sup>rd</sup> January 1913) that the Young Turks orchestrated represented a crucial and momentous shift in the course of events. After the coup, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was rendered incapable of exerting influence surreptitiously, prompting them to instigate a brutal regime of terror throughout the empire.<sup>55</sup> Fahrenthold supports this point of view as follows: "Although the CUP placed emphasis on individual rights and local autonomy to unite disparate political groups in 1908, these ideas quickly took a backseat to developmental issues and to Young Turks brand of cultural assimilationist plans and centralizing goals. The postrevolutionary Ottoman government envisioned the state's role as the main instrument of change and was pointedly illiberal in terms of means and methods."<sup>56</sup> On the one hand, the outcome of the 1877-1878 War between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) served as the catalyst for a brand new surge of refugees, whose migration into Ottoman lands effectively rekindled the numerous processes of adjustment, fierce competition for resources, and the establishment of

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<sup>54</sup> Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayr-i Müslimlerinin Askerlik Serüven* (İstanbul: Simurg Yayınları, 2000), 183.

<sup>55</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, "Now and Then: Historical Perspectives on the Armenian Catastrophe" In *The Armenian Genocide Legacy*, edit. Alexis Demirdjian (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 15.

<sup>56</sup> Fahrenthold, "Between the Ottomans and the Entente," 43.

political alliances; moreover, the arrival of these new refugee communities brought about lasting impacts on the trajectory of the Ottoman Empire in its interactions with its populace and their wider international sphere.<sup>57</sup> Following the conclusion of the Turco-Russian War of 1877, a vast number of refugees from the Caucasian Muslim community entered Ottoman lands as a means of escaping the widespread violence and bloodshed they had experienced. A considerable number of individuals chose to establish their homes in Anatolia and Rumelia, specifically on land owned by the state; while the precise figures remain unknown, a small but significant portion of them, estimated to be in the thousands, were relocated to Greater Syria.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, the advancements ushered in by the Industrial Revolution in manufacturing through innovative creations and the establishment of automated industry led to a rise in wealth accumulation in Europe and America. The economic landscape in the Ottoman Empire, a country deeply rooted in agriculture, suffered adverse consequences with the enforcement of the Constitution in 1876 (Kanun-i Esasi). The predominant belief among researchers is that the financial status of individuals who migrated was commonly poor, resulting in a general tendency to move away from the country primarily for economic motives. The research conducted by historian Kemal Karpat regarding the migration flow from the Ottoman Empire to America highlighted that the majority of migrants were individuals with limited financial resources, with a notable number of them resorting to selling off the bulk of their assets to cover the costs associated with their voyage.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878-1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 4.

<sup>58</sup> Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914," Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 115-118.

<sup>59</sup> Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914."

However, it was not only economic motives that led to the migration decision. The simultaneous failures of the Ottoman armed forces in battles resulted in a substantial alteration in principles and administration. Young Turks' early ideals, which were liberal in nature, ended up being transformed into a notably Turkish-nationalistic and state-oriented stance. The escalation of Turkish nationalistic rhetoric and dissemination in both the political and cultural arenas, furthermore, instigated Christian antipathy towards the regime. As mentioned before, Armenians were also an important part of this migration pattern. But their motivation changed with time from economic to political. The interplay between displacement and Migration holds great significance in the recollections and present-day realities of Armenia. They have been required to depart from their dwelling for an extended period due to political and religious oppression, challenging economic circumstances, and natural calamities. The Armenian communities were dealt a severe blow in 1915, as Talat Pasha and the ruling Committee for Union and Progress initiated the forced displacement of millions of Armenians.<sup>60</sup> The narrative belonging to the Armenian American diaspora is intricately intertwined with the profound and enduring impact of the Armenian Deportation, as well as with the subsequent movements of individuals seeking refuge in new lands. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were numerous instances of Armenian individuals emigrating from their homeland due to ongoing political turmoil. During this time, there was a significant number of individuals who were fervently yearning for a safe haven and a chance to begin a new in the United States, a nation renowned for its commitment to liberty and possibilities. Avakian underlines that most of the settlements were not connected to collective action, they were merely the results of

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<sup>60</sup> Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek, "Migration and Its Impact on Armenia: Introduction" In *Migration and its Impact on Armenia: A Field Practice*, edit. Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek and Maria Six-Hohenbalken (Vienna: Austrian Studies in Social Anthropology, 2017), 3.

individual choices during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>61</sup> However, after the violent political chaos, this individual emigration has become a mass emigration. According to Hekimian, “Armenians were actually refugees. They are distinct from other migrants to Argentina in that they left their country not only for economic reasons, but because of religious, political and racist persecutions.”<sup>62</sup> Avakian underlines that “among the emigrating Armenians, who evaded the danger of physical extermination, were a great number of cultivators, artisans and workers of the towns and boroughs from all the Armenian-inhabited regions of the Empire: Harput, Sivas, Erzurum, Trabzon, Bitlis, Klikya, etc.”<sup>63</sup>

The surge of Armenian migrants at that time stemmed from the highly grave situations they were confronted with in their homeland, propelling them to undertake a voyage in pursuit of security and steadiness in a land far from their own. Upon their arrival in a foreign land, these immigrants introduced a myriad of personal aspirations, past struggles, and nostalgic reflections, all of which undeniably impacted the social dynamics and relationships within their community. As the 1880s drew to a close, the United States, which 1500 Armenians already inhabited, had also turned into a sanctuary and a domain of unimpeded actions for the heads of the Armenian revolutionary parties. Having acquired American citizenship, these leaders effortlessly infiltrated the Ottoman Empire and advanced revolutionary causes among the Armenian community.<sup>64</sup> Similarly to the United States, Argentina emerged as a place where Armenians and other individuals from the Ottoman Empire found solace from

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<sup>61</sup> K. Avakian, "The Emigration to the Armenians to the United States of America and Formation of the Armenian Community (Beginning of XVII Century till 1924)", *Review of Armenian Studies* (2017): 53.

<sup>62</sup> Kim Hekimian, Hekimian, “Armenian Immigration to Argentina:1909-1938,” 85.

<sup>63</sup> Avakian, "The Emigration to the Armenians to the United States of America and Formation of the Armenian Community (Beginning of XVII Century till 1924)," 62.

<sup>64</sup> K. Avakian, "The Emigration to the Armenians to the United States of America and Formation of the Armenian Community (Beginning of XVII Century till 1924)," 60.

oppression and avenues for political engagement. The establishment of diasporic communities in Argentina offered a space for the conservation of Armenian identity and remembrance, as well as for involvement in political and cultural activism linked to the Armenian issue. The interaction between migration and transnational connections showcases the ability of movement across borders to establish deep-rooted links that go beyond mere economic or social assimilation, impacting political advancements and cultural recollections in both the home country and the diaspora.

It should be noted that it has been comprehended from the regulations and decrees issued at different times, as well as immigrant records, the Ottoman Empire was not open to idea of migration to other lands for the Ottoman citizens. In the era of Mahmud II, the mandate to carry a passport for journeys abroad was established, and subsequently, the Nationality Regulation of 1869 decreed that individuals who departed Ottoman citizenship without official consent or joined the armed forces of another country would face the consequences of losing their citizenship, being denied reentry, and having their foundation-based real estate assets seized.<sup>65</sup> Temel underlines that following the decision made by the Council of Ministers on June 21, 1896, a prohibition was imposed on Armenians travelling to the United States and subsequent actions were taken in 1903 and 1907 to restrict the emigration of Ottoman citizens to America; nevertheless, as the anticipated advantages of the immigration restriction were thwarted by individuals exploiting the system to acquire European passports for various purposes and by corrupt Ottoman officials overlooking Armenians leaving the country for personal gain, numerous Ottoman citizens, including Armenians, were permitted to migrate to the American continent under the condition that they would

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<sup>65</sup>Temel, "XIX. Ve XX. Yüzyılın Başlarında Osmanlı Devleti ve Avrupa'dan Brazilya'ya Yönelik Göçler," 127-128.

not come back, liquidate their abandoned possessions, and ultimately sever all connections.<sup>66</sup> Avakian also underlines another critical point. He emphasized that the Ottoman authorities' sudden change in approach towards the Armenians moving to the USA, a group for which they had previously not established a concrete strategy, can be attributed to their growing concern about the potential spread of subversive concepts from overseas; thus, they promptly initiated measures to restrict and, on occasion, obstruct the emigration of Armenians to Americas.<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, The Ottoman government was additionally and anxious and apprehensive regarding the schemes of Armenian revolutionaries being devised in the United States, as well as the potential prospect of those individuals eventually making their way back to the Empire. Upon coming to the realization that their attempts to halt the emigration movement were unsuccessful, the government officials subsequently reached the conclusion that Armenians would be allowed to engage in Migration, provided that they complied with the stipulation of selling off their immovable possessions and completely severing all connections with the state.

On the other hand, Fahrenthold states that “the Ottoman Empire announced its amnesty for all Turkish, Syrian and Armenian exiles accused of ‘political crimes’ during the reign of Abdulhamid II on July 31, 1908. This was important, especially of Armenians who had taken asylum in the U.S. following the violent pogroms in the 1890s.”<sup>68</sup> In the modern era, Armenians have formed diverse communities worldwide, mainly due to the displacement. Despite being a minority group of lesser numerical significance when juxtaposed with the demographic presence of other immigrant

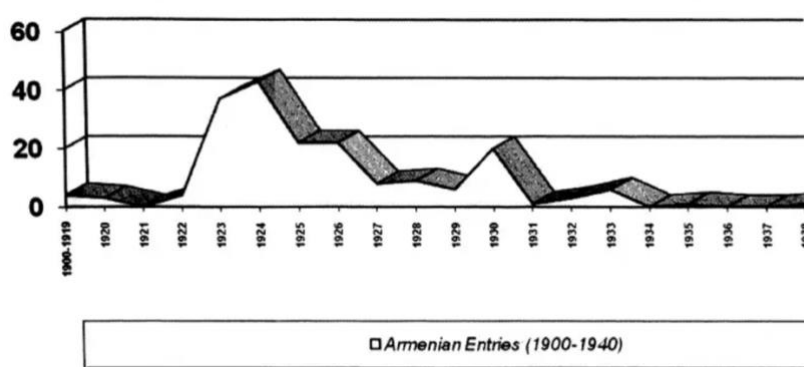
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<sup>66</sup> Temel, “XIX. Ve XX. Yüzyılın Başlarında Osmanlı Devleti ve Avrupa’dan Brazilya’ya Yönelik Göçler,” 128.

<sup>67</sup> Avakian, “The Emigration to the Armenians to the United States of America and Formation of the Armenian Community (Beginning of XVII Century till 1924),” 60

<sup>68</sup> Fahrenthold, “Between the Ottomans and the Entente”, 34.

communities, Armenians had already established their presence and formed communities in diverse cities across the United States.<sup>69</sup> These movements made the USA, Canada, Europe, and Argentina their new diasporic homes. Not only displacement, but they began going around the world in order to be safe and to have prosperity. According to Carlos Antaramián's following graphic that was used in his article, between 1895-1940, nearly 175.000 Armenian went to abroad, 63.000 to France, 96.143 to United States, and 16.000 Armenians migrated to Uruguay, Argentina, and Mexico.<sup>70</sup>



Armenian immigration (estimated by periods)

|                       | France<br>(1925-1938)    | United States<br>(1895-1931) | Uruguay<br>(1888-1940) | Argentina<br>(1909-1930) | Mexico<br>(1897-1940) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Entries               | 63,000                   | 96,143                       | 5,547                  | 10,000                   | 312                   |
| Population<br>in 1940 | 80,000 (1925)<br>143,000 | 215,000 (1947)               | 6,000 (1943)           | 19,000 (1943)            | 344                   |

Table 1. Armenian immigration (estimated by periods), "Armenians in 1930's Mexico City," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 19, no. 1 (2010).

Those who could escape from the forced displacement relocated to Lebanon, Syria, Russia, Europe, and the Americas. According to Rasuly-Palczek's study, most of the

<sup>69</sup> Ben Alexander, "Contested Memories, Divided Diaspora: Armenian Americans, the Thousand-Day Republic, and the Polarized Response to Archbishop's Murder," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 27, no 1, (2007): 35.

<sup>70</sup> Carlos Antaramián, "Armenians in 1930's Mexico City", *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* (Society for Armenian Studies) 19, no.1 (2010).

surviving Armenians “live in the U.S. 1.4 million, in France 400.000, in Argentina 130.000”<sup>71</sup>

The Armenian population from the Ottoman Empire emerged in the Argentina scene, with their Migration traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The origins of the Armenian community in Argentina can be attributed to the relocation of families from Adana province in the 1920s. Their numbers grew significantly from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the persecutions they experienced.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the Armenian diaspora that found a new home in the southern expanse of Buenos Aires was predominantly composed of individuals who originated from the bustling cities of Maraş, Hadjin, and Antep. Argentina, which was perceived as a “country of immigration,” received Armenians as immigrants even though some were holders of legal refugee status.<sup>73</sup> In accordance with the regulations established in the 1951 Refugee Convention, “a refugee is characterized as a person who has been compelled to escape their nation as a result of enduring persecution, armed conflict, or brutality, and is unable to go back due to a legitimate and substantiated apprehension of facing further persecution.”<sup>74</sup> By way of contrast, immigrants are people who proactively decide to relocate to another country, often with the primary goals of enhancing their financial situation, reuniting with family members, or fulfilling other personal aspirations. The primary focus of these definitions is to illuminate the key disparity: refugees are impelled to leave their home country as a result of external treats that

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<sup>71</sup> Rasuly-Palczek, “Migration and Its Impact on Armenia: Introduction,” 5.

<sup>72</sup> Nélide Boulgourdjian, “Del Imperio otomano a la Argentina. Recepción de los armenios post-genocidio: ¿Inmigrantes o refugiados?”, *Diversidad* no.10 (2015): 65.

<sup>73</sup> Boulgourdjian, “Del Imperio otomano a la Argentina,” 66; Nélide Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian, *Los Armenios en Buenos Aires, La Reconstrucción de la Identidad (1900-1950)*,; Kim Hekimian, “Armenian Immigration to 1909-1938”, *Armenian Review* 43 no.1 (1990), 89.

<sup>74</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol*, September 2011, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/modellaw/unhcr/2011/en/83363> [accessed 09 July 2024]

endanger their safety, while immigrants willingly opt to move to a different country. According to Boulgourdjian's point of view, in Argentina, immigrants were perceived as settlers who would make valuable contribution to nation-building rather than being viewed as refugees in need of special attention.<sup>75</sup> In other words, in no other region across the entire expanse of the Americas were the request for labor more rigorous and demanding than they were in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina after the abolition of slavery, what is more, the movement of workers was deemed by all three states as essential to the economic prosperity and evolution of the nation, resulting in the implementation of open immigration policies aimed at attracting migrants through a series of encouraging programs and financial aid from the state<sup>76</sup>. Robert Mirak presents a precious case in point of evolution in the American industrial system and the escalating necessity for labor as demonstrated in the following: "The boot and shoe industry, which came to employ many Armenians, was a classic example of technological change. Although the sewing machine and the metal fastener had been invented by 1885, as of that date Yankee cobblers in Lynn, Massachusetts, still arduously nailed heels and sewed buttonholes by hand – a skilled nailer could fasten only 100 to 125 pairs of heels per day. After 1903, however, there were important improvements in nailing machines which permitted a semiskilled laborer and an apprentice to nail over 1,080 pairs of heels in a mere three hours, and this saved the wages of 48 additional shoe workers per day"<sup>77</sup>. Karpas's quotation of Paulo Duval, a landowner of São Paulo supported this view. According to this quotation, "Paulo Duval asked permission to bring large numbers of immigrants to work on his lands. He wrote that he was particularly impressed with 'the activities, sobriety, and facility

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<sup>75</sup>Boulgourdjian, "Del Imperio otomano a la Argentina," 67.

<sup>76</sup> Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 25.

<sup>77</sup> Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War*, 78.

of adaptation of oriental workers, among whom the Armenians, it seems to me, appear to embody the qualities necessary for agricultural labor.”<sup>78</sup>

Binayán commences the narrative by delving into a comprehensive analysis of the specific historical factors and contexts that played a crucial role in shaping the Armenian community’s decision to migrate to Argentina. According to Narciso Binayán’s detailed work, those who emigrated to South America between the 1922-1930 went to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay and most of them originally were from Cilicia and they were part of the Armenian Church. On the other hand, Armenians, whose were originally from Mardin and Catholics went to Venezuela and Chile.<sup>79</sup>. Another essential data that Binayán mentioned is about the numbers based on the records of the National Directorate of Migration (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones). Those data’s have mostly come from Nansen Passports. According to these, first wave of Migration emerged between 1922-1930 with the number of 7753 Armenians.<sup>80</sup>. He also explains in depth the emergence and development of Armenian neighborhoods, community centers, and churches, all of which gradually emerged as central focal points designated explicitly to preserve and perpetuate their cultural identity.

Fahrenthold also emphasized that “Neither US, nor Argentina, nor Brazilian immigration agents considered ‘Syrians’ as distinct from ‘Turks’ before the turn of the century”.<sup>81</sup>. Even, John Tofik Karam quoted 1930s commentator Guilherme de Almeida’s reflection as follows: “What’s the recipe for a Turk? Take the 25 de Março street cocktail shaker and put in a Syrian, an Arab, an Armenian, a Persian, an

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<sup>78</sup> Karpát, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” 179.

<sup>79</sup> Binayán, *La Colectividad Armenia en la Argentina*, 63.

<sup>80</sup> Binayán, *La Colectividad Armenia en la Argentina*, 68.

<sup>81</sup> Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 23.

Egyptian, a Kurd. Shake it up really well and -boom- out comes a Turk.”<sup>82</sup> It is important to note that, at that time, people who emigrated to the Latin America, were called “Los Turcos” because there was not any protocol to identify emigrees roots. According to the Steven Hyland Jr., by 1915, Argentina had seen the arrival of more than 100.000 Arabic-speaking individuals with Ottoman citizenship as part of the immigrant population.<sup>83</sup> Determining the precise count of individuals who have relocated on a national scale proves to be a rather challenging task. The lack of official records in numerous nations, coupled with the common practice of individuals changing their names upon arrival, contributes to the complexity in ascertaining the exact starting count for the respective country. Despite encountering numerous difficulties in the Latin American nations where they settled, the Ottoman immigrants were initially viewed as inferior citizens due to language and cultural disparities; however, most of them were able to adapt and become valued members of their new societies over the course of time. Through the passage of time, the concept of Los Turcos has evolved to occupy a prominent position within the societal framework, playing a pivotal role in shaping the social, cultural, and economic dynamics that have come to define these regions.

Argentina’s particular position within the wider framework of Ottoman migration is influenced by a number of exceptional elements. In contrast to various other destinations across the Americas, like the United States, Argentina took an active stance in promoting European immigration as a crucial component of its efforts in nation-building, particularly throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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<sup>82</sup> John Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>83</sup> Steven Hyland Jr., “‘Arisen from Deep Slumber’: Transnational Politics and Competing Nationalisms among Syrian Immigrants in Argentina, 1900-1922”, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, no.3 (2011): 553.

Argentina stood out due to its comparatively lenient approach towards non-European immigrants, including individuals originating from the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman migrants discovered in Argentina a sanctuary where they were able to not only find shelter but also establish economic and social niches for themselves within a swiftly modernizing society.

Despite the presence of these opportunities, there are still significant voids in the literature concerning the experiences of Ottoman migrants in Argentina. The predominant focus in existing scholarly works lies on the movement of Europeans, failing to give due attention to the substantial contributions and obstacles confronted by communities tracing their roots back to Ottoman Empire. The study of the migration experiences of people from Ottoman Empire is still lacking in cohesion, as research tends to focus on individual ethnic or religious perspectives rather than offering a comprehensive overview of their journey. The gap in scholarly works leads to unresolved inquiries about how these societies managed their cultural identities, upheld their memories of being displaced, and enriched the social tapestry of Argentina.

It could be questioned whether way history is written about Italian, Armenian, Arab, and other Ottoman migrants depends on factors such as the population size, level of education, or unique traits of each dispersed group. To certain degree, these elements have played a role in determining which stories have gained more attention than others. Nevertheless, the historical prominence of community does not rely on its size; factors such as political engagement, connections across borders, and the extent to which these groups-maintained links with their country of origin also played pivotal roles. Although a singular, recognizable pattern elucidating the historiography of

Ottoman migrants to Argentina may not exist, it is evident that the unique historical circumstances of each community whether stemming from persecution, economic incentives, or political involvement have significantly influenced the manners in which their narratives are commemorated and analyzed. The main aim of this chapter is to shed light on these trends, acknowledging the requirement for further exploration in order to gain complete understanding of the intricate process of Ottoman migration to Argentina. Through a comprehensive analysis of these communities, not only considering their individual experiences but also drawing comparisons between them, we can delve deeper into understanding how migration played a pivotal role in shaping Argentina's ever-evolving identity, and how the narratives of Ottoman-origin groups intertwine with memory and history.

## CHAPTER IV

### Memory: Illustrated Book Of History

*“Memory is infinite; all consciousness is mediated through it.”<sup>84</sup>*

*“Past events, it is argued, have no objective existence but survive only in written records and human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. And since the Party is in full control of all records and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past It is whatever the Party chooses to make it.”<sup>85</sup>*

Karl Marx writes the following sentence in one of his well-known books, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.”<sup>86</sup> This feeling demonstrates that the intricate connection between previous events and the current moment, especially as societies confront distressing pasts and shared recollections. The role of memory has grown in importance as a potent factor in determining how communities recollect or suppress past events, particularly in the context of healing and the consequences following conflicts, oppressive governments, or mass exterminations. It may be argued that in the pursuit of reconciliation, there could be

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<sup>84</sup> James Fentress & Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), x.

<sup>85</sup> George Orwell, *1984* (Evergreen Classics, 2017), 121.

<sup>86</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 10.

an argument in favor of minimizing the importance of the past. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the past is not easily erased from memory, and it is exceedingly challenging to completely move past all the turmoil, aggression, infringements upon human rights, and the enduring repercussions they bring about. This complexity is particularly evident in situations like reaching a consensus between opposing parties following a civil war or transitioning to a democratic system. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century unfolded, the exploration and comprehension of memory developed into a sprawling and nuanced domain of academic investigation, running parallel to meticulous examination of the enduring and harrowing effects of global conflicts such as world wars and totalitarian governments on the social fabric and the personal psyche of individuals. In other words, the notion of memory has emerged as a prominent subject for discussion and debate, indicating an increasing recognition of the significance of preserving recollections of historical occurrences, traumas, and injustices. The importance of determining what course of action to pursue regarding that past escalates significantly. Pondering deeply on whether it is preferable to erase it from memory altogether or to retain it through remembrance; reflecting on how to reminisce about and pay tribute to it if the decision is made to remember and celebrate it; contemplating whether to dismiss and bury it, compelling society to wipe from its memory, or to confront it head-on and accept its presence, allowing society to make peace with it. For example, implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Committees<sup>87</sup> which mandate perpetrators to openly and honestly confess their offenses in return for amnesty; these accounts then transitioned into memoirs, museum's exhibit, films, works of fiction, and diverse art forms as separate communities of victims and

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<sup>87</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Committees are institutions put in place with the specific purpose of tackling and remedying the consequences left in the wake of profound societal disputes, breaches of human rights or deep-rooted systematic inequities.

perpetrators strived to collectively navigate through “recollections of brutality, loss, guilt and, shame.”<sup>88</sup> These debates encompass inquiries into which events merit remembrance, the appropriate methods of commemoration, the individuals entitled to engage in remembering, and the proper emphasis to place on specific aspects of the past.

Fentress and Wickham remind us that “Memory has an immense social role. It tells us who we are, embedding our present selves in our pasts, and thus underpinning every aspect of what historians often call mentalités.”<sup>89</sup> On the one hand, the intricate and delicate nature of memory as it holds the potential to serve as a potent instrument for healing, justice, and the forging of collective identity; on the other hand, memory is also vulnerable to manipulation, distortion, and deliberate acts of selectively remembering. Our memory of by past is closely intertwined with the oral and written practices that have been bequeathed to us through various means. These include the historical knowledge disseminated to us in educational settings, the influence of media outlets like television, movies, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, as well as the stories and traditions shared within our familial and social milieu.<sup>90</sup> Here, one may safely bring Fentress and Wickham’s words into the light once again: “Discourses about the past are hegemonic and totalizing: alternative memories are to be regarded as irrelevant, inaccurate, and even illegitimate, though the harshness of this delegitimization will vary according to the intolerance of the national culture and the degree to which it has, on any given occasion, been challenged. But national memory can also be oppositional.”<sup>91</sup> They clearly emphasize that the manipulation and exertion

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<sup>88</sup> Karyn Ball, “Trauma and Memory Studies”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, (2021): 4.

<sup>89</sup> Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, 201.

<sup>90</sup> Leyla Neyzi, “Giriş”, in *Nasıl Hatırlıyoruz? Türkiye’de Bellek Çalışmaları*, ed. Ali Berkay (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2011), 2.

<sup>91</sup> Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, 134.

of authority over collective memory by individuals in positions of power can yield profound and extensive ramifications. It has the capacity to mold public perspectives, reinforce societal hierarchies, and function as a mechanism for validating specific ideologies or preserving political dominance. According to their view, “Knowing something and remembering it are independent of each other.”<sup>92</sup> The notion put forward here posits that history is not solely a compilation of verifiable facts but is also influenced by how it is interpreted, remembered selectively, and sometimes even fabricated. In other words, those are commonly employed to cultivate a feeling of national belonging or solidarity; furthermore, they hold considerable importance for the memory, shaping the way in which societies recall and connect with their previous experience. Through establishing a collective historical narrative, communities can form a unified sense of self and rationalize contemporary political and social organizations. Frequently, the collective memory at a national level can take on a confrontational stance, particularly migrant groups like Ottoman immigrants residing in Argentina, who might find themselves pushed to the fringes of predominant historical accounts. Their acts of remembrance, as a result, serve as a pivotal battlegrounds for resistance and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) further illuminates the relationship between space and memory. As Nora suggests, “Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and relations between things.”<sup>93</sup> According to him, being willing to remember is the first important thing in order to understand the *lieux de mémoire*. In this perspective, places of memory far from being reduced to physical, material, and palpable objects are objects where history and memory

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<sup>92</sup> Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 9.

converge. They range from the most natural places (cemeteries, anniversaries, or museums), and they remain, witnesses of another era, that swing between the fixation of meaning and the opening to resignifications. Crane emphasizes that “the sites most associated with historical consciousness have been studied as *lieux de mémoire*, but the process of making historical consciousness exceeds any single combination of place or time and occurs as locally as a person’s private thoughts.”<sup>94</sup> Huyssen adds an important point about the politics of remembering by saying that “Discussions about how to remember the past have morphed into an international debate about human rights, restitution, and justice, replete with NGOs, extradition requests, and prosecution across borders.”<sup>95</sup> Because according to Nora’s words, “History’s goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place.”<sup>96</sup> For Ottoman migrants, erecting memorials and monuments plays a crucial role in preservation of memory. These areas serve as significant indicators of past occurrences and serve as emblematic depictions of the joint hardship, successes; and sense of belonging of those individuals.

Space is a key component in memorialization processes: whether as a social framework or material anchor, it constitutes an active element in the meaning and the representation of the past and the configuration of memories. The diaspora, conceptualized initially as a temporary space, transitioned into a fixed settlement where the emigrants systematically reconstructed the fundamental community institutions. They diligently replicated their places of worship, educational institutions, political factions, philanthropic bodies, local groups, athletic teams and artistic

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<sup>94</sup> Susan A. Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum”, *History and Theory* 36, no.4 (1997): 45-46.

<sup>95</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 95.

<sup>96</sup> Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, p. 9.

ensembles by mirroring the structures found in their native regions. There are objects and devices explicitly used in societies to evoke memory: museums and other buildings that are artifacts referring to past events, which remember or promote forgetfulness around the collective history and the definition of “we.” Research has shown how places of memory, monuments, and certain points of sites became fundamental identity references for consolidating shared stories, historical narratives, and possible identification with the mythology of the nation-state.

Ottoman migrants who adjusted to the societies they moved to and achieved significance in those communities, not only play a crucial role in the economic growth and progress of the nation through their efforts, but also oversaw the construction of notable structures in certain cities. Through these actions, they possibly sought to indicate that they had not neglected their personal identities. As previously stated, these sites of remembrance hold significance as a crucial element in shaping our historical storytelling. One of the important sites is the clock tower in Mexico. Mexico received the clock as token of thanks for its hospitality towards migrants and refugees from areas that were part of the Ottoman Empire during that period. In Buenos Aires, there stands a significant monument known as the Monumento de los Sirios a la Nación Argentina (Monument from the Syrians to the Argentine Nation), which was constructed in the year 1913 by the Syrian community. Situated within a well-known public square, this monument functions as a dual expression of appreciation towards Argentina for welcoming Syrian immigrants and as a method of solidifying the Syrian community’s visibility within the country’s scenery. The monument embodies the ideas of togetherness and acknowledgement, hinting at the Syrian community’s intention to blend into Argentine society while still upholding its cultural identity. Another one is that the Syrian Community in Colombia, marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary

of the country's independence by unveiling the Monumento a la Libertad on June 20, 1910. At first, the monument was situated within Centenario Park, but it was subsequently transferred to San José Square.<sup>97</sup> The message inscribed on the monument in both Spanish and Arabic conveys the sentiment of gratitude and solidarity from the Syrian Community to the ancestors of Colombia, symbolizing their shared commitment to freedom and international camaraderie on the occasion of the initial centenary of political liberation.

Not only Syrians and Arabs made memorials, but also Armenians used memorials. However, their intention is different from the others that was mentioned above. As previously indicated in the preceding section, it is worth nothing that a significant factor contributing to the large-scale movement of Armenians was the series of aggressive events they were subjected to. Armenian communities used remembrance memorials in order to strengthen their ethnic identities in contrast to other communities. For example, one of the important space in context of Armenians in Argentina is the *La Plazoleta Monte Ararat (Mount Ararat Square)* that symbolize the specific geographical location known as the region and the prominent landmark of Mount Ararat. This square, at the down of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was officially designated and consecrated as a symbolic tribute to the Armenian community situated in Argentina, and as a poignant commemoration for the victims of the historically significant mass deportation of Armenians. It was in the month of March in the year 1998 when the Armenian community in Buenos Aires introduced a striking fountain to the public that serves as a symbolic representation of Mount Ararat, thereby enriching the environment with heightened symbolic and cultural significance. In front of the fountain is a crafted plaque serving as a testament to the historic movement of

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<sup>97</sup> S. Osta Lefranc, *Inventario y Valoración del Patrimonio Mueble en Espacio Público de Brranquilla* (Barranquilla: Grupo Conservar, 2019), 55.

the inauguration of the fountain.<sup>98</sup> As Antaramián's words: "Nevertheless, faced with this overwhelming assimilation process, Armenians still managed to organize remembrance and commemorations for their martyrs...." (Antaramián 2010, 56) In Argentina, we can see the example of this point. *La Plazoleta Monte Ararat* has also another memorial very close to this fountain. One of the Catholic churches in Buenos Aires belongs to the Armenians. *Catedral de Nuestra Señora de Narek* (Our Lady of Narek Cathedral) has another monumental sculpture on the Church's grounds. This sculpture also is also dedicated to the victims of the mass deportation of Armenians. In the light of Huyssen's view, "Monuments, memorials, commemorative sites, museums, are being created at an accelerated pace the world over."<sup>99</sup> The ability of such sites to maintain narratives related to collective memory, instead of only recording history, is a subject under intense scrutiny in diverse areas.

These memorials give us some hints for the why Ottoman migration is lack of interest. Even though Ottoman migrants played a part in the advancement of Argentina's economy and contributed to the building of significant landmarks, they constitute a minority in terms of population. As an example, the Syrian and Lebanese communities have indeed left behind cultural legacies in Argentina. Yet, these are commonly seen as secondary rather than primary aspects of the nation's identity. Moreover, Ottoman migrants upheld ties to their individual identities by engaging in acts of remembrance, like constructing monuments and memorials, as a way to honor their heritage and history. The endeavors made by migrants indicate a desire to maintain their unique cultural backgrounds while also blending into the fabric of Argentine society.

Nevertheless, the simultaneous process of integrating into the dominant culture of the new country while preserving connections to their cultural roots might have

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<sup>98</sup> [https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Memorial.5/current\\_category.51/memorials\\_detail.html](https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Memorial.5/current_category.51/memorials_detail.html)

<sup>99</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*. 94.

played a role in their somewhat limited representation in historical records. Another reason might be that the monuments constructed by Syrian and Arab communities served primarily as expressions of appreciation and efforts to foster unity, rather than serving as means of defiance or strengthening of cultural identity, which was the case with the Armenians. It appeared that Syrians, Lebanese and Arab communities were more inclined towards showing appreciation and solidarity towards their host nations rather than emphasizing a specific cultural story linked to being displaced or experiencing trauma.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **Conclusion**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Argentina's nascent state and high demand for workers and skilled individuals across various sectors made it appealing to populations from Europe, Asia, and even Africa, alongside other newly established nations worldwide. Through Argentina's immigrant-friendly policies and amenities, the nation successfully drew in the necessary workforce on a daily basis. It would be accurate to seek out the underlying cause for Argentina's urgent labor requirement during the Spanish colonization era. The distant Latin American colonies, separated from the Spanish Empire's base in Europe, had been catering to Spain's demands for resources and various essentials for a considerable duration. However, the newly independent Latin American states struggled to make up for their lack of experience, absence of established governmental structures, and shortage of skilled and unskilled labor force.

People departed their homelands, possibly leaving behind their residences and loved ones, to journey thousands of kilometers across continents during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries for two primary reasons. The initial reason behind their migration was their dire circumstances in their native land, compelling them to seek a better life elsewhere. Additionally, the affluent individuals were driven by the desire to further enhance their wealth through new investments in their chosen destinations. It is undeniable that the occurrence of the former has been significantly more frequent, and it is indisputable that, akin to every significant event, migration has also resulted from desperation and requirement. The role of political instability and social unrest was

significant as well. The Ottoman Empire encountered a multitude of disputes which resulting in the displacement of a significant number of people who then sought refuge in foreign lands. Furthermore, it was common for religious and ethnic minority groups, such as Christians, Jews, Armenians to experience discrimination and brutality, leading them to relocate in order to evade mistreatment and violence. Migration emerged as a means to escape compulsory military service, political turmoil, and societal prejudice within the empire, allowing individuals to seek refuge elsewhere.

The movements of people from the Ottoman Empire to Argentina, which started without much organization or planning, quickly caused concern for the Ottoman Empire. This led to the state realizing the potential loss of labor and military strength in the country, prompting immediate action to control the migration. Not only losing labor and the army strength, but also possibility of separationist movements as Armenians played an important role for these action in order to clamp the lid on migration. While the measures enacted by the Ottoman State to prevent migration may have had some positive aspects, they ultimately failed to deter individuals who were steadfast in their intention to migrate.

On the other side, Argentina was experiencing a phase of economic growth, fueled by the flourishing agricultural industry and the progress in industrial development. The favorable conditions for migrants were established due to the high need for labor in the country and the government's welcoming stance on immigration. Despite official declarations, the reception of non-European migrants, particularly those hailing from the Ottoman Empire, often fell short of the inclusive narrative promoted by authorities. The integration process of Ottoman migrants into Argentine society was hindered by the cultural and religious disparities they faced with the predominantly Catholic, European-descended Argentine community.

Recently there has been a surge in interest towards migration studies, a discipline dedicated to unearthing the untold stories of minority groups within historical context. The attention towards Ottoman migration to Argentina is gradually increasing as researchers delve into the diverse ethnic and cultural composition of immigrant communities in Argentina and challenge the Eurocentric biases found in earlier historical writings. Historians have been motivated by the increasing prominence of post-colonial studies, multiculturalism, and global history to shift away from the traditional concentration on European migration and investigate non-European immigrants' experiences in places such as Argentina. As a result of this, there has been an increase in scholarly investigations focusing on Ottoman migrants, their social networks, and how they have influenced Argentine society, even though this area of study is still in its nascent stages of development.

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the examination of memory has evolved into a crucial area of investigation, developing alongside the study of historical tragedies like the conflicts, authoritarian regimes, and the consequences of colonization. The focal point of these discussions frequently concerns the decision between recalling or disregarding historical events, and the strategies that communities can employ to appropriately handle the responsibilities associated with collective memory. The inquiry gains greater significance for marginalized groups like Ottoman migrants settling in Argentina, as memory not only acts as a link to their pasts, but also functions as a tool to safeguard their cultural heritage in a foreign territory. The establishment of monuments and memorials serves as essential instruments for these communities to uphold connections to their histories while adapting to fresh social and cultural surroundings. One possible reason for the limited focus on Ottoman migration in Argentine historical literature could be attributed, at least partially, to the

characteristics of these memorial traditions. Despite making substantial contributions to Argentina's economy and constructing significant landmarks, Ottoman migrants were a minority faction whose cultural heritage frequently got eclipsed by that of European migrants. For instance, the Syrian and Lebanese populations were inclined to emphasize demonstrations of unity with the countries they resided in, rather than emphasizing a unique cultural heritage linked to being displaced or experiencing trauma. In contrast, Armenian monuments frequently function as locations of resistance, guaranteeing that the mass deportation history of their community continues to be a fundamental aspect of their collective identity. Exploring these sites of memory allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how marginalized communities negotiate their position within national narratives, and how the politics of remembrance can have both unifying and divisive effects on societies.

The primary goal of this thesis was to delve into the deficiency in academic literature regarding the migration of Ottomans to Argentina, thereby making a substantial contribution to the field of migration history. By focusing on a demographic often neglected in historical research, this study aimed to broaden the current accounts of migration to Argentina, shedding light on the varied and culturally diverse composition of the nation's immigrant community. In addition, this thesis endeavored to challenge prevailing historiographical paradigms and introduce novel approaches to understanding the complexities of migration in the Age of Migration by providing interpretive examination of the factors contributing to the limited historical focus on Ottoman migration. According to the interpretation in this thesis, some of the points are important. One of them is that Ottoman migrants were segregated due to the distinctions in their ethnicity, religion, and language. This fragmentation led to the emergence of numerous smaller and unique communities, including Armenian, Syrian,

and Lebanese, each possessing their individual community institutions, newspapers, and social connections. Due to limited interaction among these communities, the task of comprehending Ottoman migration as a cohesive event in Argentine historical accounts becomes even more intricate. For example, Armenians whose place great importance on the preservation of their national identity, contrasting sharply with Arabic-speaking Muslims from Syria or Lebanon, whose community life is centered on their cultural associations. The absence of interaction among the different Ottoman-descendant groups in Argentina resulted in a situation where their shared histories and impacts were seldom recognized as components of a larger, cohesive pattern of Ottoman immigration.

Conversely, they were frequently examined and comprehended independently, as historians concentrated on the distinct encounters of particular groups rather than considering them within the broader context of the Ottoman diaspora. Therefore, the diverse nature of the Ottoman migrant community resulted in a fragmented historical archive, complicating efforts in constructing a cohesive account of their movement as assimilation. The fragmentation stemming from this community-based approach further added layers of complexity to the tasks undertaken by historians. It is challenging to encapsulate the diverse experiences of Ottoman immigrants in Argentina within a singular framework, given that every community charted its individual course, encountering its specific set of trials, triumphs, and influences on the fabric of Argentine life.

One criticism might be made for the conclusion. The absence of these scattered narratives in the more comprehensive historical accounts mirrors the conventional methods historians typically employ when studying Migration. The tendency for them to direct their attention towards more extensive and more uniform collectives, such as

the Italian or Spanish communities, which left a more noticeable mark on the country's story due to their significant numbers and close cultural ties to Argentine society. Ottoman migrants, on the other hand, were widely scattered and fragmented, which posed challenges in capturing their shared experiences in mainstream historical narratives.



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