

## **THE OTTOMAN PHILIPPINES RELATIONS DURING THE AMERICAN CONTROL OF THE PHILIPPINES (1898-1916)**

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### **Abstract**

The present study attempts to investigate the resistance of Philippine people against Spanish rule in 1521 and American rule in 1898, along with their resistance against the colonialists in the Philippines, island country of Southeast Asia. Additionally, the attitude of the Ottoman Empire towards these controlled and Ottoman-Philippine relations will also be analyzed. The Philippines remained under Spanish rule for several centuries until the Americans arrived. Given that the geographical location of the Philippine islands is on one of the historically important trade route networks stretching from Europe to the Far East and the China Sea, these relations have become more crucial. During this period Captain John P. Finley, the U.S. governor of Zamboanga in the Philippines made a visit to Istanbul and tried to persuade the Ottoman administration that Muslims should not resist the American occupation by using the influence of the caliph on Muslims. The main resources of our research are based on the documents in the Presidential Ottoman Archives and their background. National and international research on the Philippines have also guided us through our research.

**Keywords:** *Philippines, Moro Muslims, Seyid Sheikh Mehmed Vecih Efendi, Ottoman Empire, United States of America, Spain.*

### **Öz**

#### **Filipinler'in Amerikan Kontrolü Döneminde (1898-1916) Osmanlı Filipinler İlişkileri**

Bu araştırmada Uzakdoğu'nun ada devletlerinden biri olan Filipinler'in 1898 sonrası Amerika Birleşik Devletleri hâkimiyetine girişi ile birlikte Filipin halkının direnişi ve sömürgecilerle mücadelesi, bu mücadele karşısında Osmanlı Devleti'nin tutumu ve Osmanlı-Filipin ilişkileri incelenecektir. Filipin Adaları'nın bulunduğu konumun, Avrupa'da başlayıp Uzakdoğu ve Çin Denizi'ne kadar uzanan uluslararası ticaret güzergâhının önemli uğrak yerlerinden birisi olması XIX. yüzyılın sonlarında bu ilişkileri daha önemli hale getirmiştir. Bunun yanında işgal boyunca

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gayrimüslim halkın yanı sıra Müslümanların da direnişi ile karşı karşıya kalan Amerika, bu direnişi kırmak için Osmanlı Devleti'nden yardım istemiştir. Bu süreçte İstanbul'a bir ziyaret gerçekleştiren Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Filipinler'deki Zamboanga valisi Yüzbaşı John P. Finley, halifenin Müslümanlar üzerindeki etkisini kullanarak Müslümanların Amerikan işgaline karşı direnmemeleri konusunda Osmanlı yönetimini iknaya çalıştı. Çalışmamızda araştırma konumuzun kaynaklarını Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivinde bulunan belgeler ve bunların arka planı oluşturmuştur. Bunun dışında Filipinler üzerine yurt içinde ve yurt dışında yapılan araştırmalar da araştırmamız boyunca bize yol göstermiştir. Son araştırmalar Osmanlı belgeleri ışığında yeniden analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Filipinler, Moro Müslümanları, Seyid Şeyh Mehmed Vecih Efendi, Osmanlı Devleti, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, İspanya.*

### Introduction

Being a member of the Malay race, the Philippines were divided into 100 different sub-groups in terms of language, culture and ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> The Philippines was initially under the Malay states' control, where the influence of the Indian culture spread. Then, the Majapahit Empire took control between 1325 and 1405. China also ruled the Philippines between 1405 and 1440. From 1440 to 1565, Japan controlled the northern Philippines and the sultanate of Brunei seized the southern Philippines.<sup>2</sup>

Islam first reached the Philippines with the arrival of Arabian traders in the ninth and the tenth centuries. Following the trade route from Borneo to China, these early Muslim traders came to the islands to transport luxury goods such as pearl, spices and tortoiseshell, and they started plying to the shores of the present-day Philippines. From the ninth century to the early sixteenth, trade routes were controlled by Arab traders.<sup>3</sup> After the Arab traders' visit to the region and the Gujarati people's contact with the natives, local people, who had the Animistic belief, were attracted to Islam.<sup>4</sup> Although Arab Muslim traders came to the region in the ninth and tenth centuries, the spread of Islam in the Philippines only accelerated in the fifteenth century with the arrival of Bruneian people. The Sultanate of Sulu, whose capital was Jolo, was founded on 17 November 1405 by the Johore-born explorer and religious scholar Sharif ul-Hashi under the influence of Islam. The Sultanate of Maguindanao was later founded by Shariff Muhammed Kabungsuwan in 1515, under whose Sultanate Islam spread rapidly. The spread and settlement of Islam was interrupted by the arrival of the Spaniards<sup>5</sup>. The Spanish colonials immediately implemented a policy of Christianity. Although they did not convert the Muslims into Christianity, they did discourage the spread of Islam.<sup>6</sup>

There has been very little academic work on Ottoman-Philippine relations, particularly during the time of the spread of Islam in the Philippines. Hasan Türker's study, entitled "*The Assignment of Mehmet Vecih to the Philippines as Sheikh al-Islam*

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<sup>1</sup> Majul 1996, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Eberhard 2018, p. 342.

<sup>3</sup> Majul 1973, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Dawah 2015, p. 23; Kiefer 1972, p. 3; Özay 2009, p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> Majul 1996, p. 83; Arif 1991, p. 170; Göksoy 1998, p. 126, 127; Pandapatan 1985, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Türker 2018, p. 524; Majul 1973, p. 17; Kiefer 1972, p. 3.

*Deputy on the Request of the United States (1913)*”, has been a vital source in this field. The Centre for Ottoman-Malay World Studies founded by Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University published a series of research based on documents in the Ottoman Archive

Amongst these valuable academic sources, we can highlight the following books: “*The Coming and Spread of Islam to Southeastern Asia, Ottoman-Turkish influences in Southeastern Asia*” written by İsmail Hakkı Göksoy and other works on Southeastern Asia conducted by the same author, along with Cesar Adip Majul’s works. “The “white man’s burden” and the Islamic Movement in the Philippines: the Petition of Zamboanga Muslim Leaders to the Ottoman Empire in 1912”, by Kawashima Midori and “Middle Eastern States and the Philippines under Early American Rule, 1898–1919” by William Clarence-Smith, and editorial books “Ottoman-Southeast Asian Relations” by İsmail Hakkı Kadı and A.C.S. Peacock’s studies are valuable academic sources in these fields. It is important to note, however, that the Ottoman archives were not used, or even partly used, in the studies mentioned above. By using documents in the Ottoman Archive and the American press, we thus sought to help potential and future researchers who might attempt to work on the relationship between the Philippines, the island country in the middle of the ocean, and where Muslims live as well, and the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, we attempted to perform background research from this particular archive of documents. Lastly, we attempted to interpret secondary and archive resources and make them easier to understand. As Chassonoff expressed “The types of archival materials used by historians often relate to their topics of research. Humanities scholars' needs may range from broad exploratory searches to in depth examination and analysis of source documents. Humanities scholars and historian tend to use a wide array of materials, with an emphasis on archive sources.”<sup>7</sup> For this reason, in this research, primarily archive documents that revealed from the contemporary Ottoman Archive were used and analyzed. “Even in the earliest user studies, humanities scholars expressed a strong preference for having access to original archive documents. Secondary materials were often used for background information or to gain awareness of current research in a field.”<sup>8</sup>

### **1. The Strategic Importance of the Philippines and the American Control of the Philippines**

Following the arrival of Magellan at the Philippine islands on March 16, 1521, the Spanish set up a colony in an invasion that lasted effectively until 1898. Although the Japanese attempted to gain rulership of the island on several occasions, each of these failed; indeed, in 1582, the Japanese were expelled from the island completely. The Chinese gang chief Li Ma-hung attempted to conquer the Philippine Islands in 1574, but similarly failed<sup>9</sup>. During the Spanish occupation, the Filipino people revolted against the

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<sup>7</sup> Chassonoff 2013, p. 460-462.

<sup>8</sup> Chassonoff 2013, p. 460.

<sup>9</sup> Eberhard 2018, p. 543.

Spanish government hundreds of times, beginning to fight in a collective resistance against the Spanish colonialists in the last years of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Since the region encompassing Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, the Sultan of Sulu and the Philippine Islands was important in terms of trade between Australia and China, the region was of particular significance, and for this reason also attracted the attention of many colonial states such as Britain, Holland, France, Italy, Germany and the United States.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, Spain was naturally reluctant to give up its position and so was forced to send reinforcements from continental Europe to the Philippines to continue its occupation there and suppress the local resistance. Therefore, the importance of the Red Sea, located on the trade route between Europe and the Far East, came to the fore for Spain as this was one of the most important destinations for the international trade routes that extended to the Far East and the Chinese Sea. As a result, the Spaniards attempted to capture several of the gulfs around the Red Sea area, subsequently using one of them as a warehouse area on the pretext of buying. Spain also attempted to purchase the Ottoman-controlled Sugar (*Zugar*) Island located between Hudeyde and Muha in the Red Sea. For this reason, the Ottoman administration asked the Yemeni governor to increase security in the region, make a temporary lighthouse and provide security with eight to ten soldiers. He was also instructed to transport the Jizan to Farasan island, deploying sufficient troops to provide security and to deny Spain ownership of any land in the region, such as a gulf or island, through purchase.<sup>12</sup>

The strategic importance of the African coasts, which were formerly part of the Ottoman territory, came to the fore in the American-Spanish or the German-Spanish war. However, the safety of the coasts was at stake since the Ottoman Empire was inevitably affected by the colonial war in the Far East. Archives clearly reveal the strategic importance and problems of the coastal zone in the African region. To illustrate, the British warship arriving off the coast of Somalia both started to control the beaches and marked the beaches with the excuse that the English ferries were stranded<sup>13</sup>. The Italians also allowed Spanish vessels to use the Gulf of Assab near the mouth of the Red Sea and to store coal before sailing to the Philippines. Unfortunately, the Ottoman administration could do nothing but protest the situation through the embassies in Madrid and Rome.<sup>14</sup>

The Ottoman State was one of the frequent destinations for ships and boats sailing to the Far East colonies and was of strategic importance. Consequently, the rebellion against the Spanish administration in the Far East, and especially against that on the Philippine Islands, was on the agenda of the Ottoman State. The American administration provided weapons to insurgents who revolted against the Spaniards in Cuba, the Mindanao Islands in the Philippines, as well as other regions, in the early months of

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<sup>10</sup> Eberhard 2018, p. 544.

<sup>11</sup> Andaya 1984, p. 185.

<sup>12</sup> Presidential Ottoman Archives (BOA), *DH.MKT*, 465/120; MV, 20/71.

<sup>13</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1470/7.

<sup>14</sup> BOA, *MV*, 25/54; Y.A.HUS, 206/54; HR.SYS, 994/62.

1895.<sup>15</sup> The Ottoman administration was also disturbed by the rebellion and closely followed the situation through its embassy in Madrid<sup>16</sup>. Spain ultimately had to accept the victory of insurgents, stirring heated debates in the National Assembly of Spain. Besides, Spain's poor administration in the Philippines island led to a heated debate in Spanish newspapers and Spain's National Assembly.<sup>17</sup> The Spanish parliament also criticised the presentation of the certificate of achievement to the former General of Philippine Islands despite his poor administration. Since the local insurgents, who were described as rebels by the Spanish, were supported by America, the Ottoman ambassador to Madrid also expressed his opinion on the strategy that should be followed in case America themselves gained control over the Philippines.<sup>18</sup> The American administration supported the local insurgents before they invaded the island, thus could be said to have helped remove the Spanish from the island. The British administration also supported the United States against the Spanish and cooperated secretly with the American administration. The rumours hit the headlines, implying the cooperation between America and Germany. After the rumours, since there were nearly 20 million Germans living in America, the Ottoman Ambassador to Washington informed the Ottoman government about the positive and adverse aspects of such cooperation. The Ottoman Ambassador also asserted that America's cooperation with Germany was not in Germany's and Ottoman's interests.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. The Beginning of the American Control of the Philippines and Ottoman-Philippine relations**

With America's support of the Philippine's revolution against Spanish rule, Filipino insurgents were finally able to declare the independence of the island in 1898. Initially, 150 Spanish soldiers died in combat with the insurgents. The 3000 insurgents then occupied the city of Panor, holding 320 people captives. The insurgents continued attacking and 1500 further people were captured in Malolos. Afterwards, they moved to Manila. Although the Spaniards sent 4000 reinforcements, they were forced to surrender after a 70-hour battle.<sup>20</sup> The Spanish suffered nearly 400 casualties in the last of these

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<sup>15</sup> BOA, *Y.PRK.EŞA*, 32/63.

<sup>16</sup> BOA, *Y.A.HUS*, 323/133; *Y.MTV*, 163/46.

<sup>17</sup> BOA, *Y.A.HUS*, 386/76.

<sup>18</sup> BOA, *Y.A.HUS*, 386/143.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, *Y.PRK.EŞA*, 27/11.

<sup>20</sup> We see from the report sent by the Ottoman ambassador in Madrid to Istanbul about Spain's military situation that Spain did not have the power to take control of the Philippines island. According to the report dated September 20, 1885, in case of war between Germany and Spain, Spain would need its troops in Europe. Spain had 149 battalions, 98 cavalry squadrons, 117 artillery batteries, 10 fortress squadrons, telegraph, railroad, and four topographic squadrons. The 60 regiments were composed of 120 battalions of infantry, 20 battalions of skirmishers, six battalions of marine corps, three battalions of trainer soldiers and these battalions consisted of four squadrons, each of which was made up of 1000 soldiers. In addition to that, the cavalry soldiers composed of 98 squadrons, four of which were spearmen and hunters, though they were reported to be less well trained. It was also reported that the horses that pulled the gun carriages

battles. During the American-Spanish war in the Philippines, America lost 49 soldiers and 300 soldiers were injured. There is no clear information in the documentation as to how many insurgents lost their lives. Even though there were small skirmishes between the Spaniards and the insurgents, after this larger battle, the insurgents reached Manila Bay, ultimately seizing control of the entire island of Luzon and declaring the independence of the Philippines in Kawit on June 12, 1898.<sup>21</sup> Spain, on the other hand, sold the Philippines to the United States for 20 million US dollars in the Treaty of Paris on 10 December 1898, beginning American rule began in Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.<sup>22</sup> This rule was also widely covered in local and national American newspapers.<sup>23</sup> The next generation paid the price for the Philippine-Spain and the American-Philippine wars with the epidemic disease, poverty, civil war and hard working conditions, as well as the harsh conditions of the war.

Although the insurgents, who successfully fought against Spanish rule with the support of America, took control of the island, the Americans did not keep their promises to Aguinaldo, the leader of the insurgents. Aguinaldo started a large-scale revolt against the American administration on February 4, 1899. Upon the start of a new rebellion on the island, America sent 100,000 new American soldiers and reinforcements specially to seize the Luzon islands. Although American forces dominated the region from Manila to Malolos, they failed to dominate the entire island. In order to fully dominate the Philippines, the USA focused on the consignment of soldiers and declared that it officially established colonial rule in the Philippines in 1902. The Philippine-America war lasted for about 17 years, during which 4,234 American soldiers were killed and 2,779 injured

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were well-maintained; the artillery guns were made of new-style steel, and they were as good as the guns of other states. It was also mentioned that the Spanish army would not be successful in any conflict against a state such as Germany because it did not have a railway, so was forced to use people and animals for transportation and it did not have a General Staff despite its military strength, including nearly 200,000 soldiers. Spain, being aware of its disadvantage, sold the Pacific Islands and 'insignificant' islands such as Karolin, Palau and Mariana, located in the north of New Guinea, to Germany for 25 million pesetas in 1899 in an effort to turn the remaining colonies into cash. Thus, Spain, which lost the American-backed Philippine-Spain war, had to withdraw from many of the islands in the region, not just the Philippines. In accordance with the agreement between Germany and Spain, Spain had the right to establish a warehouse on every island for commercial purposes and to use these warehouses during war time. Even though Spain gave the Philippines to America and sold the islands of Karolin, Palau and Mariana to Germany, it had not given up its ambitions in the region. For example, we understand from another document that Spain wanted to buy a bay in the islands on condition that it could build fortifications and deploy soldiers and thus made an offer to Sultans of Sulu and Tulu. Later, they accepted Spanish suzerainty. As a result, Spain offered to pay salary of 200 Spanish rials a month and 300 Spanish rials in the following years for the bay (BOA, *HR.TO*, 67/99; BOA, *HR.SYS*, 20/20, 22.06.1899; BOA, *Y.A.HUS*, 397/90, 26.06.1899; BOA, *Y.PRK.UM*, 45/40, 3 April 1899; Kadı 2019, p. 443).

<sup>21</sup> BOA, *Y.A.HUS*, 386/116; Y.PRK.PT, 11/19; Famy 2019, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Özkan 2019, p. 301.

<sup>23</sup> "Will Seen be Issued", *The Haskell Free Press*, Vol. 14, No. 52, December 24, (1898), p. 1-5; Eberhard 2018, p. 344; Kadı and A.C.S. Peacock 2019, p. 880.

in the years until 1902.<sup>24</sup> The American commander, in the Philippines, reported that 184 soldiers died and 976 soldiers were injured in the Philippines between February 4 and April 4, 1899.<sup>25</sup> James Parker, the head of the chief commissioner's office, reported that 2561 clashes took place between February 4, 1899 and 30 April 1902 and there were a total of 4135 officers and 123,803 soldiers, of whom 282 and 4188, respectively, were killed whilst a further 47 and 2335, respectively, died from disease. These figures, in total, account for 9.7 per cent of the total number of soldiers. The majority of drowning deaths occurred during operations against the enemy.<sup>26</sup>

Table 1: Distribution of American soldiers who died during the Philippine Wars

Military Rank	Wounds	Accidents	Drowned	Suicided	Murdered	Wounded	Total	Disease
Officer	69	6	6	10	1	190	282	47
Enlisted Men	936	125	257	72	91	2707	4188	2535
<b>Total</b>	<b>1005</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2897</b>	<b>4470</b>	<b>2582</b>

After the capture of General Emilio Aguinaldo in March 1901, the rebellion in the Philippines was finally quashed.<sup>27</sup> Thus, America took control of the Philippines, advancing American commercial interests in Asia considerably. Given that around 850 million people lived in neighbouring territories during the early years of the rule in the Philippines, American goods were vital.<sup>28</sup> In his remarks at a banquet in honour of the beginning of the American rule of the Philippines in Boston in February 1899, President McKinley's postmaster manager justified the administration, arguing that the intention was merely to find a market for their surplus production.<sup>29</sup> While the US Army was still fighting against the rebels, the Philippine Commission, composed of Jacob Gould Schurman (Commission President), George Dewey (Admiral of the US Navy), Major-General Ewell S. Otis (General of the Army of the United States), Charles Denby (Commissioner), Dean C. Worcester (Commissioner) and John E. MacArthur (Commissioner) released an 11-point statement on April 4, 1899, in the name of American President to ensure peace and end resistance in the island as follows:

1. The supremacy of the United States must and will be enforced throughout every part of the archipelago, and those who resist it can accomplish no end other their own ruin.

2. To the Philippine people will be granted the amplest liberty and self-government reconcilable with the maintenance of a wise, just, stable, effective and

<sup>24</sup> Yılmaz 2016, p. 316-325; Merriman 2018, p. 909.

<sup>25</sup> "The War Not Over", *The Haskell Free Press*, Vol. 14, No. 15, April 15, (1899), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Loses of Army", *The Haskell Free Press*, Vol. 17, No. 32, August 9, (1902), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Göksoy 1995, p. 85; Türker 2018, p. 523; Zinn 2005, p. 331, 332.

<sup>28</sup> Ataöv 1967, p. 249; Eberhard 2018, p. 344.

<sup>29</sup> Zinn 2005, p. 333.

economical administration of public affairs and compatible with the sovereign and international rights and the obligations of the United States.

3. The civil rights of the Philippine people will be guaranteed and protected to the fullest extent, religious freedom will be assured, and all persons shall be equal and have equal standing in the eyes of the law.

4. Honor, justice and friendship forbid the use of the Philippine people or the islands they inhabit as an object or means of exploitation. The purpose of the American government is the welfare and the advancement of the Philippine people.

5. There shall be guaranteed to the Philippine people an honest and effective civil service in which to the fullest extent to which it is practicable, natives shall be employed.

6. The collection and application of all taxes and other revenues will be placed upon a sound, economical basis, and the public funds, raised justly and collected honestly, will be applied only to defray the regular and proper expenses incurred by and for the establishment and maintenance of the Philippine government and such general improvements as the public interests may demand. Local funds collected will be used for local purposes and not be devoted to other ends. With such prudent and honest fiscal administration, it is believed that the needs of the government will in a short time become compatible with a considerable reduction in taxation.

7. A pure, speedy and effective administration of justice will be established whereby may be eradicated the evils arising from delay, corruption and exploitation.

8. The construction of roads, railroads and similar means of communication and transportation and of other public works, manifestly to the advantage of the Philippine people, will be promoted.

9. Domestic and foreign trade and commerce, agriculture and other industrial pursuits tending toward the general development of the country in the interests of the inhabitants shall be objects of constant solicitude and fostering care.

10. Effective provision will be made for the establishment of elementary schools, in which the children of the people may be educated, and appropriate facilities will be provided for higher education

11. Reforms in all departments of the government, all branches of the public service and all corporations closely touching the common life of the people, will be undertaken without delay and effected conformably with right and justice in a way to satisfy the well-founded demands and the highest sentiments and aspirations of the people<sup>30</sup>

Following the victory over Spain in 1898, the United States declared full sovereignty over the Philippines. Although the United States issued the abovementioned 11-point statement in April 1899, as an elite layer in the Philippines they always benefitted from the invasion in the post-war period. The Philippine people, however, suffered insults, violence, extreme poverty and racism. Despite people's demands and the above statement, America failed to implement these reforms.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Wilson and Herman 2000, p. 55; "Proclamation", *The Haskell Free Press*, Vol. 14, No. 15, April 15, (1899), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Yılmaz 2016, p. 317.



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Ottoman intervention in the Philippines occurred almost as soon as American troops had landed in the southern islands of the Archipelago, for the Americans were unsure how to handle their disconcertingly belligerent Moro Muslim subjects. Meanwhile, Secretary of State John Hay wrote to Ambassador Oscar Solomon Straus in Istanbul at the end of March 1899<sup>32</sup>. After a while the American administration signed an agreement with the Sultanate of Sulu on August 20, 1899, to make the Filipino insurgents ineffective on the islands of Luzon and Visaya. According to the treaty, the United States would pledge not to interfere with the Muslim religion and customs and pledge to respect the Sultan's rights. In return, Muslims would stop resisting the American army and recognise American sovereignty. Yet, the American administration did not abide by this agreement and the insurgents in Luzon and Visaya were neutralised. Additionally, they unilaterally broke the agreement with the Muslims and occupied the Sulu and Mindanao Islands. Thousands of soldiers and civilians died during the American-Philippines war. While some died in clashes, according to Yılmaz over 100 thousand people died from starvation.<sup>33</sup> A general who returned from the Philippines to the United States in 1901 said, "In Luzon, one-sixth of the locals were either killed or died of infectious pyrexia in the past few years." The minister responsible for the island of Luzon in Batangas stated that one-third of the 300,000 inhabitants in the region died from conflict, hunger and disease.<sup>34</sup>

The United States wanted stability in the territories it had seized. To this end, the legislative structure set up in 1907 was replaced by a law enacted in the American Congress in 1916 and a 24-member senate elected by qualified voters of the country was formed<sup>35</sup>. The American administration guaranteed religious freedom to Muslims whereby they were allowed to practice their religion, traditions and cultures freely after 1914. The American administration also made investments in Muslim-led regions. As American officials implemented popular policies to obtain support and trust from the Muslim people, they became accustomed to the American presence in the region over time, ending their military operations. In 1915, Sulu Sultan Jamul al-Kiram II officially transferred the sovereign rights of the regions to the United States in exchange for an annual salary of \$6,000.<sup>36</sup> Rather than living under Christian Philippine rule,<sup>37</sup> Filipino Muslims eventually adopted the American administration, giving up their independence.

After the American administration took over the island, America made a deal with the Sultanate of Sulu and defined the legal status of Muslims in the Islands under the Immigration Law. When compared to Spain, America allowed greater religious freedom. This situation manifested itself in the regions where Muslims lived. In this sense, America continued to pledge not to interfere with Filipino Muslims' religion and their ceremonies. Article 7 of the agreement signed between America and the Sultanate of Sulu specified

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<sup>32</sup> Clarence-Smith 2019, p. 200.

<sup>33</sup> Yılmaz 2016, p. 317.

<sup>34</sup> Zinn 2005, p. 334, 335.

<sup>35</sup> Majul 1996, p. 83; Göksoy 1995, p. 85, 86.

<sup>36</sup> Göksoy 1995, p. 94, 95; Kiefer 1972, p. 4; May 1977, p. 215, 216.

<sup>37</sup> Majul 1973, p. 20-21.

that restrictions on foreigners' admission to the United States did not depend on any religious beliefs or practices. According to the law, Muslim men could officially and legally have multiple wives. This was also in force in the Philippines. In the United States and its dependencies, a Muslim male could have more than one wife and live with multiple wives as long as that he/she complied with Islamic law. This was regarded as a part of Islam, the official religion of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the practice of polygamy was not a violation of law in a Muslim state. America, therefore, did not enact any law prohibiting this practice. In a broad sense, America did not enact any other law banning Muslims from the United States' borders or indeed any of its dependencies. Legal restrictions were also specified in five items.<sup>38</sup>

In efforts to establish its rule over the whole of the Philippines island, the American administration used different strategies other than military operations. Among these, the most interesting was that the American president Theodore Roosevelt invited Lord Cromer<sup>39</sup>, who served as British colonial governor of Egypt from 1883 to 1907, to Washington in 1908 to consult him.<sup>40</sup> Since Lord Cromer had been serving for a long time in Egypt, the American administration knew very well that he must have gained a certain insight into Middle Eastern Societies. Therefore, the American administration wanted to get more information about the British presence in Egypt to apply the same form of administration in the Philippines. In the meantime, the Ottoman Embassy reported this meeting to the Ottoman government.<sup>41</sup> Lord Cromer's abilities were well-suited to such a consultation. Ultimately, he played a key role in the spread and expansion of British Imperialism.<sup>42</sup>

The appointment of Necip Halil Efendi, the former Consul General of Ragusa, to Manila Consulate General on July 27, 1910, was a crucial turning point in Ottoman-Philippine relations.<sup>43</sup> In his report dated June 8, 1911, Necip Halil reckoned that there were more than 300,000 Muslims in the Philippine Islands. Additionally, he made a list of the Ottoman citizens living on the island. According to the report, there were approximately 200-220 of such citizens in residence; 70-80 were from the province and 140-150 from Mount Lebanon. 60 inhabited Manila, whilst the others were dispersed throughout the Islands.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> BOA, *BEO*, 4174/313019.

<sup>39</sup> Lord Cromer served as British colonial governor of Egypt from 1883 to 1907 (Johnston 1908 p. 239).

<sup>40</sup> BOA, *Y.A.HUS*, 521/63.

<sup>41</sup> BOA, *HR.SYS*, 50/57, 07.04.1908.

<sup>42</sup> Tignor, 1963, p. 142-143.

<sup>43</sup> BOA, *İ.HR*, 423/22.

<sup>44</sup> BOA, *HR.İD*, 117/38; Özkan 2019, p. 308.

Table 2: Distribution of the Ottoman Citizens Registered with the Embassy of Manila

Occupational Groups		Place of Origin		Ethnic Origin	
Occupation	Number	Province	Number	Sect and Nationality	Number
Dealer	56	Lebanon	55	Greek	33
Merchant	37	Beirut	15	Maronite	31
Servant	6	Syria	13	Jewish	12
Land Holder	2	Istanbul	12	Druze	12
Merchant's clerk	2	Jerusalem	6	Melkite	11
Milkman	1	Egypt	3	Latin	5
Ophthalmologist	1	Aleppo	3	Protestant	5
Optician	1	Edirne	2	Islam	2
Agriculture Officer	1	Philippines	1		
Observer	1	Izmir	1		
Candy Seller	1				
Governorate Employee	1				
Guest	1				
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>

### 3. The Assignment of Muhammad Wajih bin Munib Zayd al-Kilani Al-Nablusi to the Philippines as Sheikh al-Islam Deputy and Ottoman-Philippine Relations

During the American control of the Philippines, Captain John P. Finley, the United States' governor of Zamboanga in the Philippines, considered that if the Caliph would announce the appropriate order, he could convince Muslims with a jihadist mindset not to resist or kill American soldiers, whom they saw as invaders. He assumed that if the Caliph sent a couple of clerics to teach Islamism, the inhabitants of the islands would hear the religious order from a 'primary' source and would not undertake such acts if they believed they were incompatible with the essence of Islam. Despite many previous failed attempts, it was thought that a fresh attempt would help America occupy and rule the Philippines and it was thus worth the attempt.<sup>45</sup> With Finley's efforts and upon the proposal of Sheikh al-Islam Esad Efendi, Palestinian Kâtip (writer) Muhammad Wajih bin Munib Zayd al-Kilani al-Nablusi, working as Sheikh al-Islam Deputy under the authority of Sheikh al-Islam, was appointed as the Ottoman Mufti to the Philippines on 13 May 1913. This assignment represented another turning point in Ottoman-Philippine

<sup>45</sup> BOA, *MV*, 231/123; *BEO*, 4174/313019.

relations. Finley was also satisfied with this assignment. He expressed his satisfaction during his talks with others.<sup>46</sup>

Thanks to his efforts and a memorandum containing some information about the Muslims in the Philippines, Finley received a letter addressed to the Muslims in the Philippines from the Ottoman Sultan, as holder of the caliph title, meaning leader of all Muslims.<sup>47</sup> In this letter, the Caliph expressed his satisfaction with regard to the commitment of the inhabitants of the island to Islam, stressing that they were following the right path and building asceticism [*zuhd*] and piety [*taqwa*]. However, some of the Muslims living on the island were advised to stay away from forbidden deeds such as murder and robbery as being contrary to the religion of Islam. Finley asked the Muslims to moderate the violent attitude adopted towards the American administration.<sup>48</sup> Besides, the Ottoman Caliph sent a painting [elvâh-ı mübâreke] to be hung up on the wall of the Taluksangay mosque which was built in 1885 at Zamboanga, the island of Mindanao, the Philippines, with the help of Abdul Hamid II.<sup>49</sup>

After the Assignment of Muhammad Wajih bin Munib Zayd al-Kilani al-Nablusi to the Philippines as Sheikh al-Islam Deputy, he and his entourage attempted to gain the appropriate travel allowance. We understand from the letter written from Sheikh al-Islam to the Grand Viziership on 19 May 1913, the salary problem of Seyit Mehmet Vecih Efendi was solved. However, the question of how the salaries of his entourage would be covered had become a problem. We understand from the correspondence that the travel expenses and salaries of religious officials to be sent to the Philippines would not be covered by the Ottoman Government. After this correspondence and bureaucratic procedures had been completed, Muhammed El-Vecih al-Geylani el-Nablusi Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih left Istanbul in October 1913 and arrived in Jeddah via Beirut and Alexandria. There, he met 106 Moro Pilgrims returning from *Hajj*. He reached Singapore with this convoy. In Singapore, he met with Arab Modernist Mohammed bin Akil bin Yahya, Hadramut, who was an influential name in Southeast Asian countries. He then left Singapore and arrived in the Zamboanga district on January 28, 1914. He was welcomed by Finley and Ottoman Muslims in the region. After Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih arrived in Zamboanga, he established warm relations with Moro Muslims in the region. However, local Catholic politicians were uncomfortable with Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih's arrival on the island. Consequently, they propagated the idea that Vecih Efendi came to the island to lead Muslims in revolt against the American administration by declaring *jihād*. The American governor in the region, Francis Burton, could not negate the allegations of local administrators. Resisting the pressure to leave the Philippines, Vecih Efendi had to leave the island despite the support of the Syrian Christian Doctor Necib Salibi, who was one of the influential names there. Vecih Efendi and Finley, who

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<sup>46</sup> Midori 2019, p. 886; "Muhammed El-Vecih El-Geylani El-Nablusi Malay Dünyası'nın Osmanlı Şeyh-ül İslâmî", Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, Osmanlı-Malay Dünyası Çalışmaları Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2019; Türker 2018, p. 529.

<sup>47</sup> Esad 1913, p. 229.

<sup>48</sup> BOA, *BEO*, 4174/313019; *BEO*, 4160/311965.

<sup>49</sup> BOA, *BEO*, 4173/312948.

invited him to the Philippines, arrived in Manila after a four-day trip with a ship sent by governor-general Francis Burton Harris. Vecih Efendi and Finley were welcomed by the Governor General in Manila. Although Finley dealt with the assignment and arrival of Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih to the island with great difficulty, he was unable to secure his position on the island. Nevertheless, Finley gave a report to the Governor General about the appointment process and purpose of Vecih Efendi's presence. Vecih Efendi left the Philippines, where he had come with great hope and desire, and returned to Istanbul on April 3, 1914.<sup>50</sup>

Considering the sensitive balances on the island, the American administration in the Philippines announced that Vecih Efendi had to leave the island because of health problems, which was to some extent true, and provided an opportunity for America. During the return of Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih to the Ottoman lands, one of the leading newspapers of the Malay World, *Neracha*, hosted a welcome ceremony in Singapore in honour of Vecih Efendi. At the reception, Vecih Efendi was treated as the Sheikh al-Islam Deputy of the entire Malay World, not just that of the Philippines. Vecih Efendi then moved to Penang, which is located within the borders of present-day Malaysia, after leaving Singapore. Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Mohammed Vecih, who was treated as the Sheikh al-Islam Deputy of the Malaysian world, even brought an Arabic report summarizing the situation for Muslims, especially that of Arabs, living in Burma, Java, the Philippines and India. In this report, the challenges faced by Muslims were presented where it was underlined that Ottoman Muslims, in particular, who came to the region with their passports were denied entry by the Dutch and even sent back by force.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of US pressure, Vecih Efendi returned to birthplace of Palestine, and settled in Nazareth. He contacted Otis A. Glazebrook<sup>52</sup>, who played an active role in American politics as well as being a close friend of President Wilson<sup>53</sup> and who was also appointed as the representative to Jerusalem, hoping that he could return to the Philippines again. Glazebrook thus wrote a letter addressed to President Wilson requesting that Vecih Efendi could return to his duty in the Philippines and handed the letter to Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih. Cemal Pasha, Commander of the Fourth Army, heard of Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih's attempt to return, and, since Pasha was planning to mobilise Muslims in the Far East and British colonies, he considered that Vecih Efendi might be the right person to serve his plans, in view of Vecih Efendi's service in the Far East. As a result, The Pasha started an investigation. According to his investigation, the Police Headquarters informed the Fourth Army Command, stating that Muhammed Vecih

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<sup>50</sup> BOA, *BEO*, 4174/313019; Clarence-Smith 2019, p. 204; "Muhammed El-Vecih El-Geylani El-Nablusi Malay Dünyası'nın Osmanlı Şeyh-ül İslâmı", Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, Osmanlı-Malay Dünyası Çalışmaları Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2019; Türker 2018, p. 529, 532; Kadı 2019, p. 887; Midori 2019, p. 888.

<sup>51</sup> BOA, *HR.SYS*, 1883/15, 16, 27.03.1914.

<sup>52</sup> Otis A. Glazebrook was born in Richmond, Virginia, where Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Vecih Efendi passed away on May 4, 1916. (Cohen 2013, p. 40.)

<sup>53</sup> Kark 1994, p. 161.

Efendi might be intending to declare *jihad* in India and the surrounding regions.<sup>54</sup> The Ottoman administration and Pasha must have done a prior research on this issue given that a security investigation was carried out as to Mohammed Vecihi's identity and his reliability before his departure from the Ottoman region.<sup>55</sup> Before Vecih Efendi began the journey to take up his new duty, Pasha gave him four hundred liras as an allowance from the discretionary fund to get by until he obtained further funding. After receiving the allocation and Pasha's support, Vecih Efendi went to the USA on an American ship, the *Tennessee*, sailing from Syrian ports.<sup>56</sup> During this voyage, he had a private servant, Tahir, whom he brought from the Philippines and a secretary assisting his translation business. The U.S. Ambassador to Istanbul, Morgenthau, had written to Washington about Vecih Efendi and his entourage's departure on the *Tennessee*, but had not received any response until the ship's departure time. Although the American administration declared its neutrality in the First World War, they did not welcome Sheikh al-Islam Deputy Muhammed Vecih Efendi's return to the Philippines as a religious scholar. As a result, when the ship departed from the port of Beirut, the United States administration informed the Navy Command by remarking that they did not approve of Sheikh Vecih's travel to the USA. Garrison also informed the Ministry of State and noted that Sheikh Vecih's journey to America would not be appropriate and that the American administration in Manila opposed this attempt. However, the *Tennessee* left Beirut on 26 June 1915, before the telegraph arrived in Istanbul.<sup>57</sup>

Although Sheikh Vecih Efendi arrived in America after considerable effort, he was unable to return to his duty in the Philippines. Vecih Efendi, whose health problems worsened after he returned to America, had to be hospitalized due to kidney failure, a problem he had been living with for a long time. Since Sheikh Vecih had no one to look after him, Celal, Consul General of New York, wrote a letter on 18 December 1915 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking for help from the Consulate General of New York. The Consulate General requested information from the Ottoman government on whether they would help Vecih Efendi or not.<sup>58</sup> Vecih Efendi ultimately died in Richmond, Virginia on May 4, 1916, and was buried by the *imam* of the Washington embassy, Mehmed Ali Efendi, in the Richmond cemetery. After the burial, two bags, a chest, a wooden box, and a bag belonging to Vecih Efendi were delivered to the Consulate General by an Ottoman citizen.<sup>59</sup> The death of Vecih Efendi was also reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 July 1916 by the New York City Chief. His family must have heard that Vecih Efendi passed away given that they asked for information from the

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<sup>54</sup> BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, 52/82, 23.03.1915.

<sup>55</sup> BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, 468/23, 19.04.1915.

<sup>56</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.KLU*, 9/12, 20.08.1915.

<sup>57</sup> "Muhammed El-Vecih El-Geylani El-Nablusi Malay Dünyası'nın Osmanlı Şeyh-ül İslâmi", Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, Osmanlı-Malay Dünyası Çalışmaları Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi 2019.

<sup>58</sup> BOA, *HR.UHM*, 186/61-1, 17.12.1915.

<sup>59</sup> BOA, *HR.UHM*, 186/61-3, 12.07.1916.

Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>60</sup> After his death, three open letters and some money in dollars and his belongings reached the mufti of Thessaloniki, which were sent to Syria by the Consul General of Thessaloniki to be handed over to his family, who were still living in Nazareth.<sup>61</sup> Vecih Efendi had left behind two unmarried sisters, aged seven and eighteen, three unmarried daughters, and a young son, along with his mother and wife. In return for his services to Cemal Pasha, the government assigned a salary to his remaining family members. Talat Pasha, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, reported that the government would not assign a regular salary to the family of Vecih Efendi, who died at a young age and whose family was in need, but would give one-off financial aid. Considering the state of the Ottoman State and the region in those days, we are unsure as to whether this aid was actually given.<sup>62</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Ottoman Empire had fallen on hard times in the nineteenth century. It paid close attention to Muslim populations living in the Empire, while endeavoring to defend its borders. In this respect, the Philippines is one of the places with which the Ottoman Empire developed diplomatic relations. However, the island's controls by the U.S. began immediately after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Philippines. Both Christian and Muslim Filipinos revolted against the American control, as they did against the previous Spanish occupation. In the meantime, in efforts to break the resistance of Muslims, the local American authorities requested the Ottoman Government to send a religious officer assigned by the Caliph. The Palestinian secretary, Muhammad Wajih bin Munib Zayd al-Kilani al-Nablusi was assigned to the Philippines as Sheikh al-Islam Deputy. Winning the hearts of Muslims on the island, Sheikh Wajih was closely followed by Catholic politicians with concern. Because of the heavy pressure on him, Sheikh Wajih had to leave the island. Although he returned to United States of America, he did not subsequently live long enough to continue his duty.

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<sup>60</sup> BOA, *DH.EUM.4.Şb*, 8/20, 12.07.1916.

<sup>61</sup> BOA, *HR.UHM*, 186/61-3, 12.07.1916.

<sup>62</sup> BOA, *DH.KMS*, 42/13., 21.11.1916

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