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Reading Across American and Ottoman Archives: Diplomacy and Photography in the Nineteenth Century

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Album exchanges between American and Ottoman powers (c.1880-1910) reveal a networked history of photography across the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds. Shared themes across diplomatic survey practices suggest that these photographs were legible across oceans and national boundaries.

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In 1886, a photographic album from United States' president Grover Cleveland arrived in Istanbul as a gift to the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II. [1] This sumptuous bestowal, which included thirteen related volumes, marked just one episode in an ongoing photographic gift exchange between American and Ottoman powers that had enjoyed mutually beneficial trade and political relations since the 1830 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. The American photographs offered in the 1886 interchange principally feature Indigenous peoples and the nation's western territories.



Photographic album, "From the President of the United States of America to The Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Turkey," sent from President Grover Cleveland to Sultan Abdülhamid II, 1886 (henceforth, the Cleveland Album)

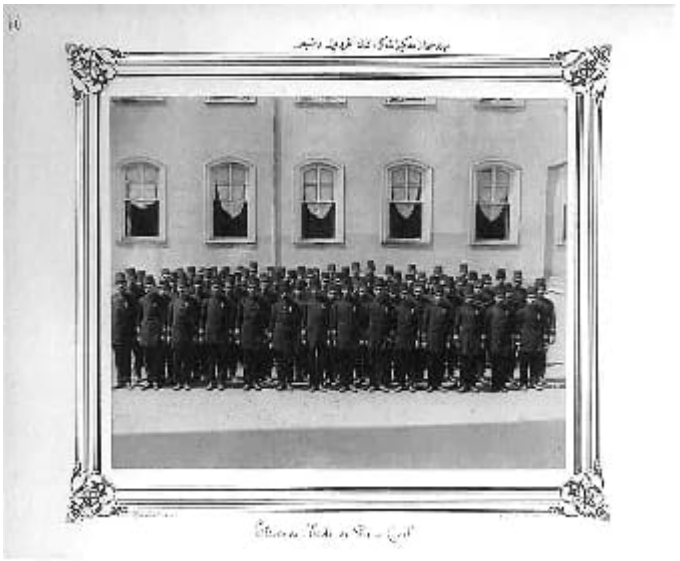
Source: Album 91462, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadır Eserler

Opening the album dedicated to "His Imperial Majesty, the Sultan," for example, the image sequence begins with albumen prints of Zuni Pueblo by US survey photographer John K. Hillers. The pictures show spaces and ceremonial subjects, in which both static and mobile figures appear across the community's central plaza, enveloped by tiered adobe structures populated by onlookers. [2] Punctuating these images of architecture and ritual is a photograph of Zuni school children posed against a wall with two figures in Euro-American dress standing above on either side. This rendering points to the government-enforced project of Native assimilation through reservation-based day and national boarding schools during this period. The image interplay in the album signals the paradoxes of contemporary US representations of Native Americans, shifting between preservation and display, versus violent erasure and containment.



John K. Hillers, *Zuni School Children, New Mexico*, 1879-1881, in the Cleveland Album, 1886

Source: İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadır Eserler 91462/5



Abdullah Frères, *Group photograph of the students of the Imperial School of Civil Engineering*, Albumen print, LOT 9542, no. 17

Source: Library of Congress

Yet, in viewing the Hillers photograph alongside one of Ottoman students by the Ottoman Armenian firm Abdullah Frères, which was a part of two nearly identical compilations of fifty-one albums sent by Abdülhamid II to the US in 1893 and Great Britain in 1894, we see that these images also function beyond the context of nation, demonstrating how nineteenth-century survey practices across the Atlantic spoke

directly to one another. The pupils at the Imperial School of Civil Engineering in Istanbul appear ordered in neat rows with rigid postures, wearing identical uniforms. They stand beneath the windows of the school facade, which echoes the planar backdrop of the structure against which the Zuni children appear. Both the Ottoman and American images visualize—and performed within—initiatives aimed at shaping the social body in their respective modernizing, imperialist contexts. The arrival of these American pictures at the Ottoman court in the 1880s coincided with Abdülhamid II's own large-scale photographic initiative to survey the imperial domains. Perhaps articulating the descriptive double caption—in both English and Ottoman—that sits below the Zuni photograph, the US material was imaginatively interpreted through the Hamidian court's own effort to record its multi-cultural and multi-confessional territories with the presentation of multiple and diverse photographic gifts to sovereignties across the Mediterranean and Atlantic. [3]

What does such a contingent and relational dynamic between Ottoman and American photographic objects communicate about international survey practices in the late nineteenth century? The history of the Cleveland album reveals how photographs were made and re-made beyond the prospects of national heritage through transnational, relational discourses that materialized in global government-funded imaging practices of the period. Perhaps more broadly, it suggests that nineteenth-century photographic surveys did not exist in isolation but were part of an international phenomenon that was legible across oceans, mountains and cities. While the Ottoman/American exchange represents just one iteration of the many and diverse paths that nineteenth-century survey pictures traversed back and forth across the Atlantic, this case study embodies a networked history of photographic exchange in which objects' epistemological values were transposed according to diplomatic visions, political milieu, and colonialist agendas. Our collaborative co-authorship—as specialists in the American (Voelker) and Ottoman (Hyde Nolan) worlds—reflects our interest in the ways in which nineteenth-century visual economies and twenty-first century archival ecosystems produce photographic meaning.

For the purposes of this paper, we define survey photographs as state-sponsored initiatives, intended to map and make legible populations, spaces, and technologies in modernizing, imperialist contexts. From Istanbul to Washington DC, these practices reveal aggressive agendas to demarcate empire and citizenry, during a period of militant expansionism, settlement, and colonization that relied on the classification of bodies within hardening categories of inclusion and exclusion. The official survey photograph, therefore, functioned as a fundamental agent in the interwoven project of global race-making during this era. A close reading of the sometimes messy and often unequal cross-pollination of pictures made in diplomatic programs reveals that the photographic album, in which survey pictures were most commonly assembled and presented, operated as an active material and conceptual mediator between imperial sovereignties. Especially in the arena of international expositions where they often appeared (and which enjoyed a heyday during the colonial period), survey photographs illustrate a descriptive means of statecraft, one that shaped—and was shaped by—imperial, national, and proto-national self-presentation.

In distinguishing the diplomatic networks that produced photographic meanings in the late nineteenth century and in an effort to trace their entangled and intersecting pathways, we draw on the larger body of literature about the Atlantic World, which interprets cultural meaning through links and connections rather than state formation. Scholars such as Lisa Lowe, Walter Mignolo, Saidiya Hartman, and Paul Gilroy explore regional constructions of race, nation, and difference in interlocking and emergent global systems. As their research suggests, these social and political structures were shifting, intertwined, and relative, fabricated relationally rather than in bounded, monolithic constructions. We pair such sophisticated readings of the Atlantic with parallel explorations of the Mediterranean, particularly through

the scholarship of Islamic Art Historians such as Eva Hoffmann, Elisabeth Fraser, Eva-Maria Troelenberg, Avinoam Shalem, and Mary Roberts. By combining these scholarly approaches, our text actively decenters Europe as the locus and originator of cultural exchange; it is informed by postcolonial thought and theory in the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty, among others. We chart the movement of albums over, around, and through the European continent, locating it as just one in a constellation of national sovereignties, reading across archives and topographies, recognizing intimacies between imperial architectures. In this way, our project considers bodies of water—the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea—as central to the formation of human, ideological, and archival constituents.

We analyze photographic albums as individual mediators that materialized international networks through micro-interpretations of often dizzyingly expansive state archives. Specifically, we consider the way albums condensed and communicated such massive archival formations on both sides of the Atlantic, translating imaginations of empire as tactile and transmittable. Interpreting these compilations as active agents that initiated new relationships and meanings, however, we trace their performance across geographies and agendas at different points along network channels, drawing on the actor-network theories of Bruno Latour and others. Although nineteenth-century state photographic archives appear configured across a range of registers—from the amateur to the commercial—formal gift or presentation albums, like the one commissioned by President Cleveland, functioned centrally in diplomatic cultures of the period. Recognizing the shared themes interconnecting populations, spaces, and technologies, we argue that official photographic albums enabled haptic and affective engagements with empire, and through their imaginative reinterpretations, demonstrate the intimacies between diverse geographies in nineteenth-century global imperialisms.

People and populations

The American photographs disseminated to Istanbul in the Cleveland album originate from archives in US national collections, primarily the Smithsonian Institution, in formation since the 1860s and used as a repository from which to create gift albums and sets for international distribution. The endeavor of systematically compiling negatives and photographs representing US western spaces and Indigenous populations dates to the post-Civil War period. During this time, four government-sponsored surveys were organized under the US War Department (headed by Clarence King and Lieutenant George Wheeler) and Interior Department (led by Ferdinand V. Hayden and John Wesley Powell) to map and image the expanding nation. Of the four survey leaders, Hayden with photographer William Henry Jackson and Powell with photographer John K. Hillers focused most extensively on Native American subjects and wide-scale global dispersal. Hayden and Jackson assembled a staggeringly large group of negatives of Native sitters, made both in the field and of visiting delegates in Washington, DC, from which they crafted numerous volumes for distribution over the course of the 1870s. Each of these tomes is unique in content and arrangement, tailor-made for institutional recipients across the Americas, Europe, and Asia, as apparent in select examples sent to the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Société d'anthropologie in Paris. The vast archives assembled by the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II at Yıldız Palace operated similarly, as an open repository from which to craft variable album sets depending on beneficiary, a corpus from which images easily slipped into the public sphere. In 1879, the US congressional surveys were disassembled and the Native American material sent to the newly formed Bureau of Ethnology (later the Bureau of American Ethnology), while the landscapes went to the incipient

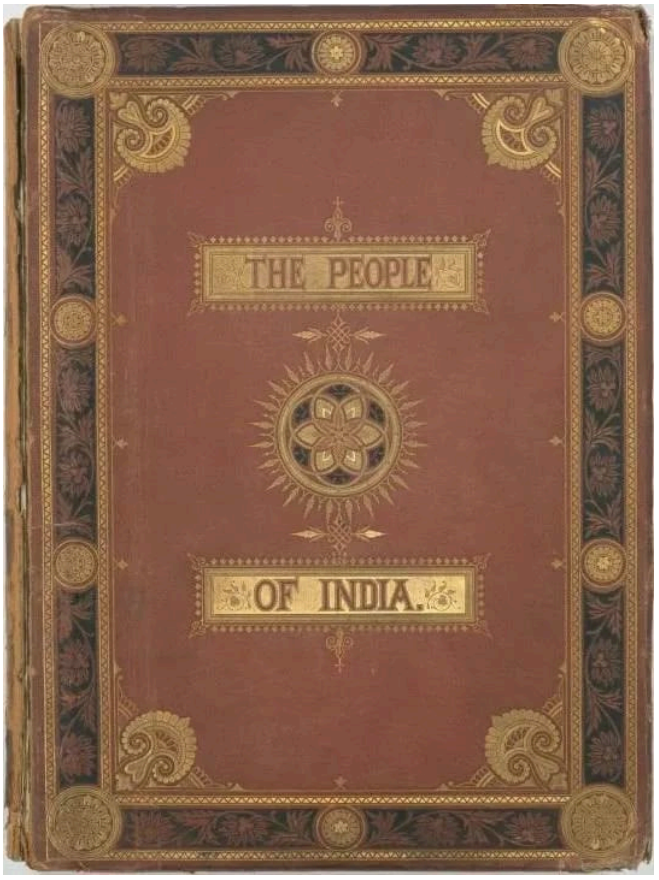
US Geological Survey. The assemblage and gifting continued through the 1880s, and the Cleveland album serves as an example that interweaves both Indigenous representation and landscape from these two American repositories, as do many of the related volumes.



Charles Milton Bell, *Ponca Delegation, Washington, DC*, 1870s, in the Cleveland Album, 1886

Source: İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadır Eserler 91462/11

The Native portraits in this vast US government archive largely consist of delegation photographs taken of Indigenous diplomats during trips to negotiate treaties in Washington, DC. Delegates who traveled to the capital—initiated by US government invitation—were usually high-ranking tribal members chosen to mediate fraught political circumstances aimed at territorial dispossession. This method of diplomacy long predated US independence, as European powers regularly invited American Indian leaders to their capitals across the Atlantic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when competing colonial interests in North America depended on Indigenous alliance. In the decades after the Civil War, these visits came to follow an established pattern, with a stop at a photographer's studio becoming an integral part. Coinciding with accelerated settler colonial expansion, as the US nation-state stretched toward the Pacific, photography was deployed to record and preserve Indigenous communities as the government enforced policies of containment and assimilation. In the context of the delegation visit, the photographic sitting functioned as a site for possible self-presentation and a form of performatively negotiating colonial power dynamics.



J. Forbes Watson and Sir John William Kaye, *The People of India*, 1868-75

Source: The New York Public Library

The impetus and organization of these Native American photographs in the US was directly influenced by another colonial photographic project circulating in the nineteenth-century Atlantic World, J. Forbes Watson and John William Kayes's, *The People of India*, published in 1868 through commission from the British government in India. Although the development of the archive that resulted in Jackson and Hayden's *Photographs of North American Indians* was linked to a US government institution, much of the funding for its creation derived from English lawyer, speculator, and ethnologist William Blackmore. Steeped in ethnological circles in London, Blackmore directly referenced Watson and Kayes's compilation —which pictures Britain's own colonial subjects—when providing backing and conceptual direction for Jackson and Hayden. [4] *The People of India* categorizes people of the different castes in India, pairing descriptive texts with photographs, a model that *Photographs of North American Indians* follows based on tribal designation. These volumes relate to other period photographs created in the developing field of anthropology, as directly linked to the colonial project. They visualize an epistemological process of image making and surveillance employed in the Ottoman Empire as well. Examples in the French context include those by Désiré Charnay taken in Madagascar and by Jacques Philippe-Potteau made through the Muséum d'histoire naturelle of visiting peoples in Paris.



Jacques-Philippe Potteau, *Maria Lassus, 19 ans, mulâtresse*, 1860

Source: Musée du quai Branly

This mode of mapping populations through visual and photographic imagery was also in operation in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman World. During his twenty-three-year rule, Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) authorized a systematic multi-media survey of imperial domains. Nearly identical album collections of 1,819 photographs each, the Ottoman images disseminated to Washington D.C and London in 1893 and 1894, respectively, originated in the enormous Hamidian archives now housed at the Istanbul University Library, which itself includes more than 36,535 images. Mirroring American and British statecraft, the Ottomans used photographic technology to record, control, and manage modernization efforts in all corners of the empire. The camera's eye was, by extension, the eye of the court. As a whole, these albums now at the Library of Congress and British Library are not based on topographical specificity, but rather on the photographic allusion to the historic and geographically expansive Ottoman territories. Assembled over a thirteen-year period between 1880 and 1893, they emerged in the midst of the international nineteenth-century survey movement (of which the 1886 Cleveland album was a part). For the Ottomans, as for French colonial campaigns such as the 1898-1900 Fourneau-Lamy Mission in Chad studied by Samia Henni, British operations Canada explored by Elizabeth Cavalier and as well as the Chilean-Argentine boundary case of 1902 examined by Matthias Pfaller, the photographic survey consisted of disparate images collected around a common theme. It centered on notions of imperial progress—military, industrial, cultural, and educational—which was readily recognized and applauded by the United States.

Through Ottoman diplomatic exchange, these photographs activated the spaces between Istanbul, London, and Washington, DC. As the American diplomat Samuel Cox's description can attest, while Abdülhamid II worked to combat the rapacious Euro-American desire for Orientalist tropes, he was guilty

of his own kind of Ottoman Orientalism. Indeed, the collection and classification of ethnographic types amassed under the Hamidian regime resituates Orientalist visualities beyond the European market, repositioning them as part of a broader aesthetic regime that served diverse interests. In his narrative of their visit on May 16, 1886, Cox details Abdülhamid II's fascination with photographs taken by J.K. Hillers of Zuni Pueblo:

> *The towns and houses of the Zuni Indians attracted his attention, for they are counterparts of certain towns in Asia Minor, which I have just seen in photographs. Besides, are not the Indians themselves Tartarie in custom and costume, and have they not an Oriental veneration for the sun?* [6]

The American ambassador's account equates Zuni and Central Asian peoples, positioning them both as eccentric specimens and timeless oddities of a pre-modern era. Photographs of these "Others," moreover, obfuscate all aspects of imperial hegemony and overlook the contemporary multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, and multi-cultural character of Ottoman society.

Part of the state-sponsored quest to establish and enforce a more homogenous social identity included a civilizing mission, embodied in the construction of the Imperial School for Tribes. It extended to three photographic albums gifted by Abdülhamid II to the chancellor of Germany, Otto von Bismarck in 1886 (the same year as the Cleveland album) that document the official Söğüt Photographic Expedition. The Ottoman court organized an official trip to survey the newly established Ertuğrul Sancak in the Hüdavendigar Province, a western imperial borderland, which includes the former capital city of Bursa. As discussed by Reşat Kasaba, these photographs—the first official ethnographic commission by the court—portray semi-nomadic Turkmen groups in costume as evidence of the Ottoman Empire's mythic and ethnic origin. Opened in October 1892 to educate the sons of notable tribal leaders, the Imperial School for Tribes, a five-year boarding school in Istanbul, asserted the Hamidian interest in aligning Arab provinces with the imperial center. Furthermore, it underscored the court's aversion toward nomadic cultures, which mirrored the American government's assimilating mission across the United States, a connection also drawn by Ahmet Ersoy. This is evident in two photographs of a student at school, posing in front of the same painted studio backdrop, but in different clothing. The fluid subjectivity in these two photographs translates as progressive action. This action reveals not simply what a Shi'i student from Mosul or Baghdad might look like, but also how the government wanted him to look—like a loyal bureaucrat.



Abdullah Frères, *Student, Aşiret School, Istanbul*, Albumen print, LOT 9530, no. 16-17.

Source: Library of Congress

The precedent of Ottoman photographic costume albums made earlier in the nineteenth-century prior to the Abdülhamid II's ascent, prefigures an emphasis on dress. Works such as Christopher Oscanyan's commercial project, *The Oriental Album* (1863) was created in New York by an American photographer, Jeremiah Gurney, staging a short taxonomy of Ottoman dress. Similarly, Osman Hamdi, Victor Marie de Launay, and Pascal Sebah's *Elbise Osmaniyye* (1873), which was made for the 1873 World Fair in Vienna (Weltausstellung 1873 Wien), present images that emphasized sartorial specificity in a heterogenous matrix of ethnographic types. [5] While photographs made in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman world rely on the same anthropological typecasting as those found in *People of India*, during the Hamidian era specifically, they visualized the fixity and uniformity of imperial agendas (rather than difference) through both government policy and the camera's lens. As a social experiment similar to the "Normal Schools" of the same period in the United States (such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the Hampton Institute), The Imperial School for Tribes aspired to create a specific type of Muslim "citizenry." Representations of the school constructed a typological classification of rural Arab populations (positioned much like Native American populations in the US) that became more Ottoman, and, consequently more cosmopolitan, by leaving their native lands for the imperial capital and conforming to official dress codes.



Pascal Sébah, *Elbise-i Osmaniyye*, Plate 24, part 3 "Diarbekir," 1873

Source: Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

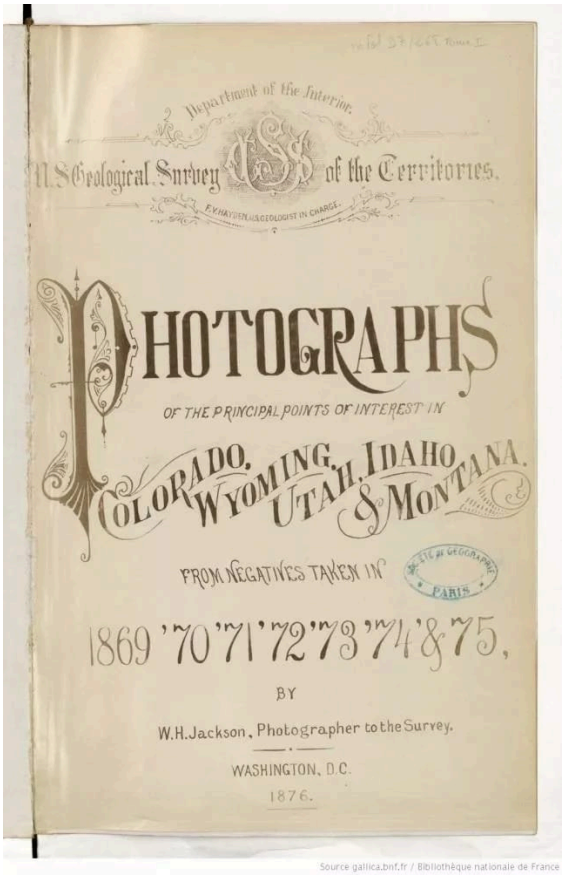
Landscape and place



William Henry Jackson, *Lake San Cristobal*, in the Cleveland Album, 1886

Source: İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadır Eserler 91462/12

Late nineteenth-century photographic survey movements across the Atlantic also visualized the ways in which land was controlled and ordered, in interconnection with the photographic mapping of populations. Indeed, the US pictures dispersed and presented in examples such as the Cleveland album often strategically intersperse sweeping landscapes with contained Indigenous portraits, demonstrating the entanglements and intimacies between these categories in global imperial projects. The landscapes in the US context concentrate almost exclusively on western spaces, created on the four congressionally funded surveys intended to map the US West for Euro-American settlement beginning in the late 1860s. Led by civilian scientists and military men—King, Wheeler, Hayden, and Powell—photographs played a fundamental role in imagining this space as majestically untamed in processes of settler-colonial expansion. The alternation of studio photographs with pristine and seemingly untouched views, such as Jackson's *Lake San Cristobal* in the Cleveland album, naturalizes the course of US expansion and belies the many forms of aggressive contact and erasure from which it preceded. By framing the landscape as empty, western landscape photographs construct it as primal, Edenic space waiting to be claimed, with the Indigenous nations that had long thrived in these places relegated to separate, controlled representations.



William Henry Jackson, *Photographs of the Principal Points of interest in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho & Montana from 1869-75,* US Geological Survey of the Territories, Ferdinand V. Hayden in Charge, Société de géographie, Paris (Gifted in 1877)

Source: Gallica

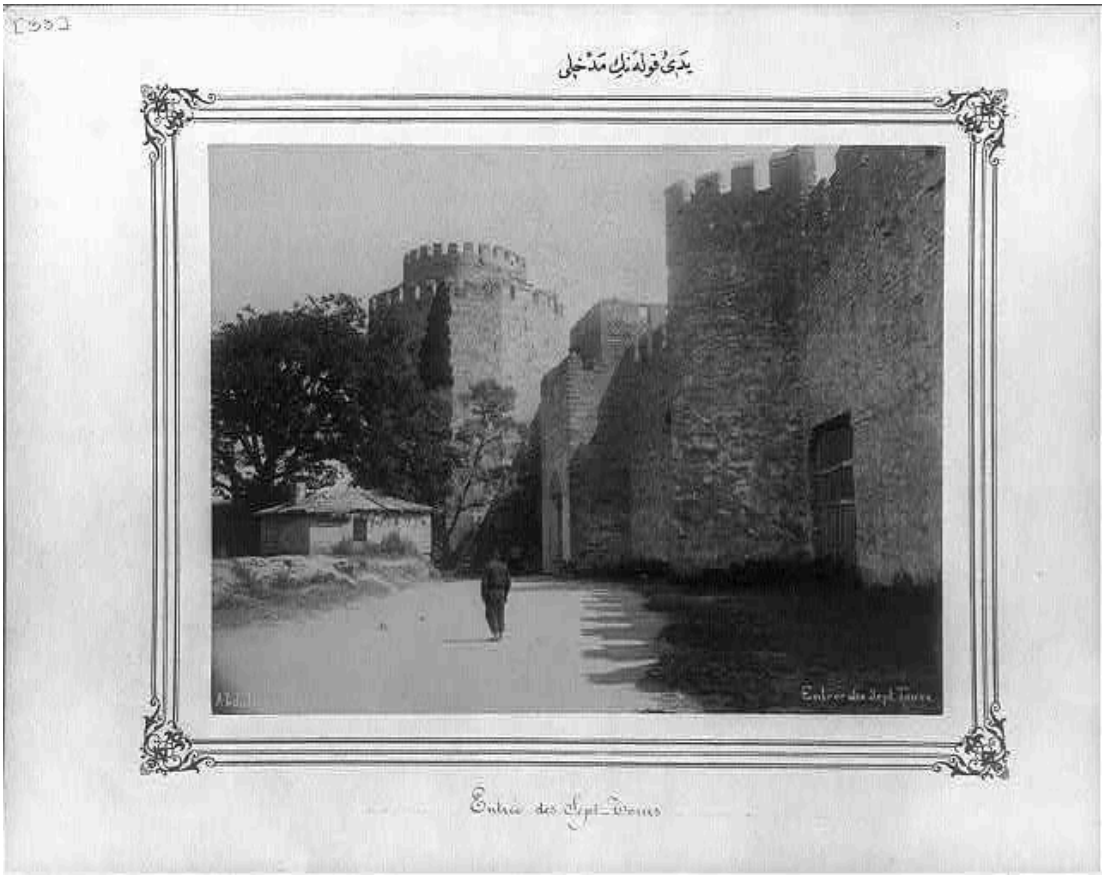
Just as with the "ethnographic" images of Native populations, the US survey leaders composed groups of landscape images for wide distribution abroad in luxury tomes. Gift inscriptions such as, "with the compliments of F.V. Hayden, U.S. Geologist" preface these diplomatic offerings, as demonstrated in one example given by Hayden to the Société de géographie in Paris. Landscape works by Hillers, Jackson, and Timothy O'Sullivan—employed as a photographer by the other two survey leaders King and Wheeler—abound in international collections across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. These pictures, such as the earliest images of Yellowstone National Park, communicate the sublime aspects of American wilderness, repeatedly picturing waterfalls and water features. In international circulation, especially as the US emerged more centrally on an international stage in the decades following the Civil War, such pictures functioned to construct a distinctive usable past and heritage through the works and sites of nature. Whereas European and Ottoman powers would focus heavily on cultural patrimony in the form of monuments and ruins in period survey movements, the US centered the natural wonders of North America and its Indigenous cultures—then ironically facing violent cultural erasure—in showcasing a deep national history.



William Henry Jackson, *Tower Falls, Wyoming*, 1870s, in the Cleveland Album, 1886

Source: İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadır Eserler 91462/17

Across the Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea, state-sponsored photographs of Ottoman lands operated not only as official reports on scientific exploration and investigation of the natural environment, but similarly as powerful records of imperial patrimony and cultural heritage that validated Hamidian policies of modernization, displacement, and even violence. Where the American photographic campaigns were guided by an interest in the untamed, natural world, the Hamidian albums profess a desire to capture ancient sites, ruins, and monuments, one that is often coupled with a narrative of modern innovation that legitimated and named this land as Ottoman. They render architectural remains—Roman, Byzantine, or Ottoman—as products of the imperial enterprise, merging pre-Ottoman and Ottoman histories of landscape, all the while emphasizing a dynastic legacy of the built environment. In one album, images of the Valens Aqueduct, completed in 368 CE, and ancient city walls built just decades earlier are interwoven with photographs of the fifteenth-century Yedikule Fortress (Fortress of the Seven Towers), a citadel built by Sultan Mehmed II in 1458 following his conquest of Constantinople in 1451-1452. These photographs elaborate on the nineteenth-century practice of archeological imagery created by Ottomans such as Osman Hamdi and Pascal Sébah and actively engaging with government-sponsored European photographic surveys of the "Holy Lands." Maxine Du Camp's images of Egypt, for example, and as Anjuli Lebowtiz writes, Auguste Salzmann's albums of Jerusalem were distributed in France in the 1850s. In England, a decade later, Francis Bedford's British Royal tour of Egypt, Palestine, and Constantinople appeared in publication.



Abdullah Frères, *The Entrance of the Yedikule (Seven Towers),* Albumen print, LOT 9528, no. 33

Source: Library of Congress

Like Jackson's view of Lake San Cristobal, Ottoman photographs emphasize natural resources and resonate with architectural images of the US Capitol building in Washington DC (of which there are many examples in the Hamidian archive including in the Cleveland album), therefore, communicating notions of statecraft defined by incorporation, supremacy, and surveillance.

In one Ottoman album (from the 1893 gift) dedicated to the Tophane neighborhood in Istanbul, the Bosphorus Strait shimmers in front of government buildings and coastal yalıs on the shore. Two minarets from the newly constructed Nusretiye Mosque pierce the sky, extending above the hills of Pera. The long facade of the Ottoman Imperial School of Civil Engineering separates the city from the sea, marking the boundary with an even density that stretches across the middle of the photograph and is only interrupted by an outcropping of leafy trees. By dividing this coastline into a distantly ordered cityscape, the buildings organize Istanbul as a center of regulation and control. For the Ottomans, the horizon does not represent an unsettled wilderness or the edge of empire as with the American albums, but rather suggests unified imperial progress—industrial, political, military, and religious. The shallow space in the photograph collapses the categories of land, people, objects, military, and technologies into one linear prospect.



Abdullah Frères, *Front view of Tophane and the Imperial School of Engineering*, Albumen print, c.1880-1893, LOT 9542, no. 1

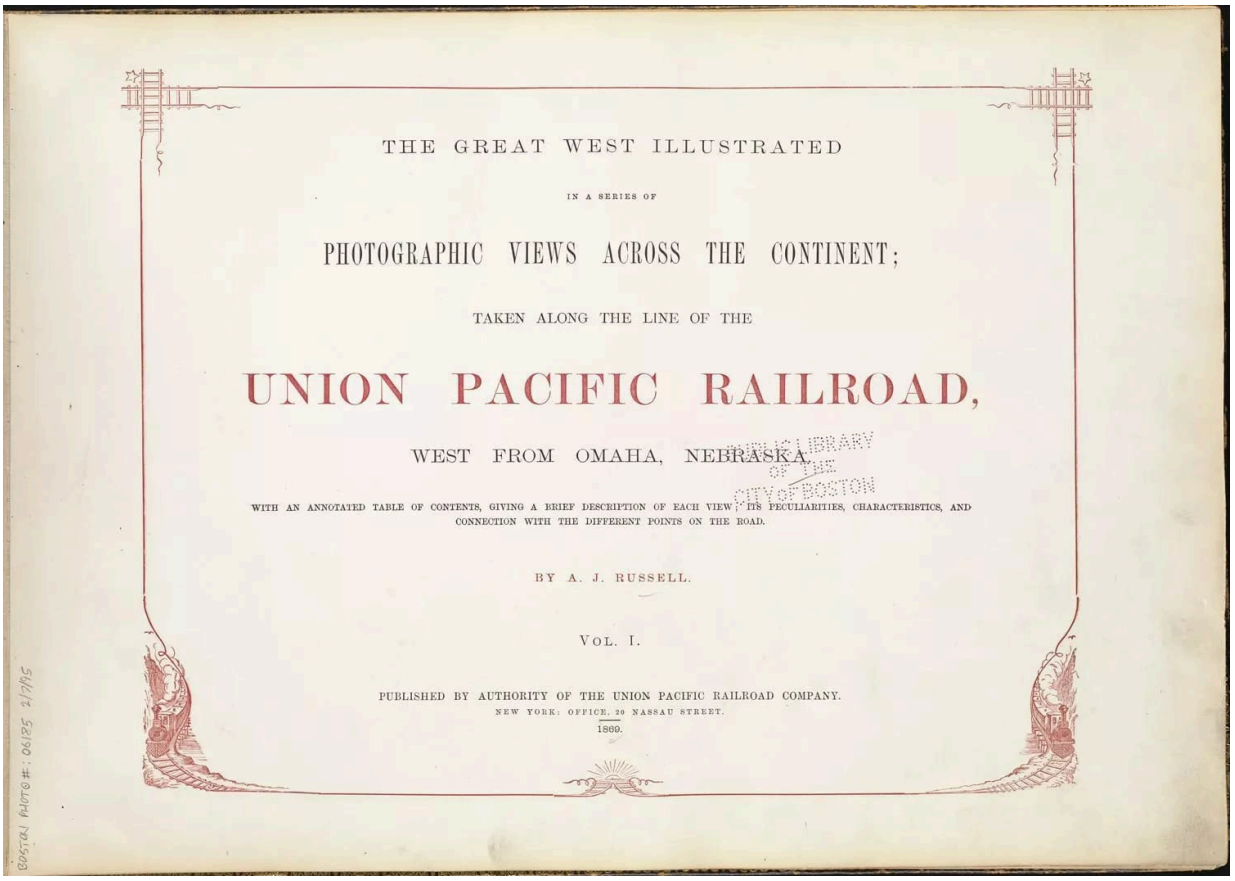
Source: Library of Congress

Technologies

International survey movements in the late nineteenth-century also emphasized emergent technologies directly linked to empire-building, embodied by industrial subject matter such as railroad infrastructure, as well as the camera itself. Édouard Baldus's railroad album, created for Napoleon III and presented to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1855 during their diplomatic visit to France, typifies the focus on industrial technology in survey imagery over the second half of the century. A [luxurious, red-leather bound tome] (https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/19/collection/2584455/itineraires-et-vues-du-chemin-de-fer-du-nord-visite-de-sa-majeste-la-reine) intermingles images of burgeoning French infrastructure and views seen along the route of the Chemin de Fer du Nord between Paris and Boulogne-sur-Mer.

As do many diplomatic photographic objects disseminated during this period, the album choreographs an interwoven national patrimony and national future. Train tracks and terminals intermingle with Gothic facades; iron structures compete with medieval stones. In the late 1860s, this subject matter also became central in US survey photography with projects such as A.J. Russell's *The Great West Illustrated*, created in 1869 for the Union Pacific Railroad Co., as it would in the Hamidian Ottoman projects as well. The volume similarly weaves together views of the technological sublime with tracks streaking through the terrain and vistas of the monuments of nature. Just as with the Baldus album, Russell's celebrates increasing industrialization and embodies the larger and shifting technologies of organizing space and

vision in this period. The camera itself was fundamental to these transformations, dictating conditions of seeing and being seen, while also entering into, and being quickly deployed within, the interlocking power systems of the period.



A.J. Russell, *The Great West Illustrated*, 1869, Boston Public Library

Source: Wikimedia

Modes of representing space and populations in the diplomatic renditions of the US survey material similarly communicate changing technologies of production and labor, articulating state-sponsored social control and engineering. As the Cleveland album unfolds, for example, the Native American portraits—concentrated at the volume's beginning—recede and are replaced with images of the seats of government, such as the US Capitol Building and Treasury. This progression communicates national self-presentation based on consolidation, incorporation, and surveillance. Given the increasing demarcation of racialized difference that was connected to processes of disenfranchisement in the United States, including these portraits alongside structures such as the US Capitol Building insinuates colonial containment and advancement of the imperial project through institutionalization. Interweaving photographs of industrialization, along with majestic, empty landscapes, the architectures of government, and isolated Indigenous peoples regulates vision around technologies of control in this period. The albums, therefore, materialize this tension between territorial expansion and the fact that this expansion was predicated on the confinement of Indigenous peoples, containing them on the album page and confining these spaces within the four borders of the photographic frame.



Abdullah Frères, View of the side facing the sea of the artillery engineering school (Imperial School of Artillery) which has been recently constructed, Albumen print, c.1880-1893, LOT 9542, no. 2

Source: Library of Congress



Abdullah Frères, *Target drills of the students of the Tophane school (Imperial School of Artillery)*, Albumen print, c.1880-1893, LOT 9542, no. 11

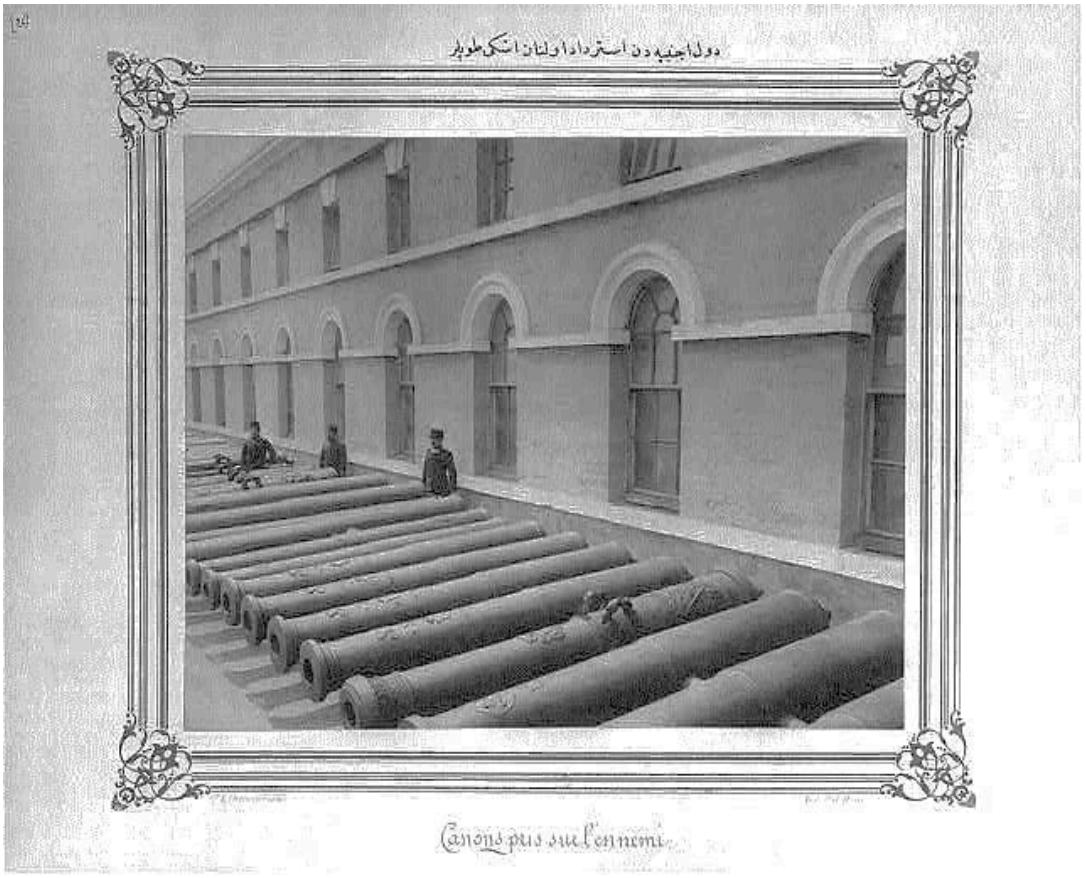
Source: Library of Congress

By weaponizing the photographic image as a technology of imperial supervision, the Ottoman court, like the United States government, relied on this very modern and highly protean relationship between different forms of nineteenth-century machinery. In the Tophane album, the camera and cannon are both objects of armament. Created by Abdullah Frères, these twenty-eight albumen prints make up a malleable set of images that could be arranged and rearranged. They ostensibly depict scenes of imperial artillery, engineering schools, students, and the shores of the Tophane neighborhood in Istanbul. Yet, in their sequencing the photographs evoke something more: a raw, labyrinthine and unpredictable narrative that moves quickly between the façade of the Imperial School of Artillery, target practice, the barracks and drill hall, student exercises in a courtyard, and a walled garden. The final eight photographs in the album shift between group portraits of engineering students and collections of imperial canons, the cylindrical forms of the figures mutating into cylindrical forms of the canons. As the album unfolds, the men and the machines merge—the rigid verticality of the students becomes a rigid horizontality. The intermingling of images of Ottoman soldiers and weapons echoes a similar consolidation of Ottoman weapons and photography, where images are employed as instruments of political warfare. An Italian album promoting the Royal Navy's colonial efforts off the coast of Somalia in 1907 makes similar associations by incorporating images of beach parties and illustrious guests together with scientific technology, including engineering equipment, survey tools, and a radio-telegraphic engine in Mogadishu.



Abdullah Frères, *Group photograph of the students of the Imperial School of Civil Engineering*, Albumen print, c.1880-1893, LOT 9542, no. 21

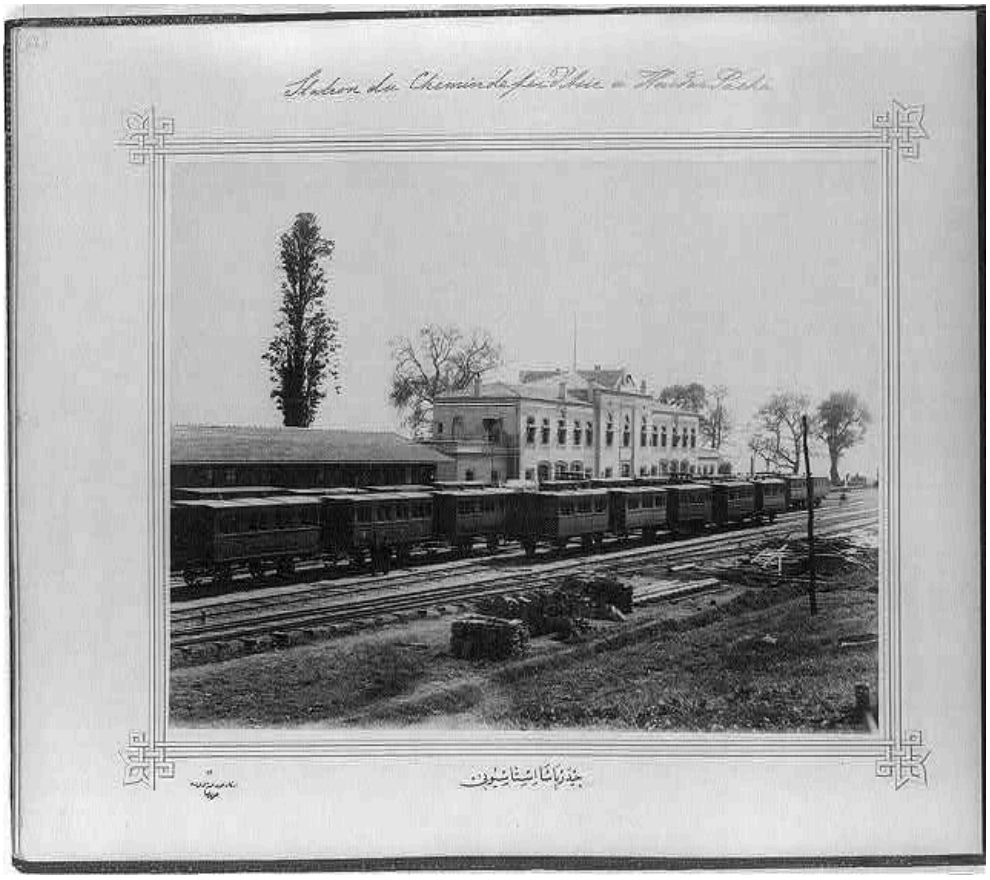
Source: Library of Congress



Abdullah Frères, *The ancient cannons captured from foreign states*, Albumen print, c.1880-1893, LOT 9542, no. 26

Source: Library of Congress

The artillery shown in the Tophane album represents a theme repeated throughout the Hamidian material. In an effort to assert technological innovation, the albums at the Library of Congress, for example, contain eighty photographs showcasing Ottoman factory interiors with novel machinery, assembly line production, and technical military advancements. A closely cropped submarine torpedo throbs as a modern and muscular instrument of warfare, especially in contrast to the legion of antiquated rifles featured in the palace coffers. Pictorial missiles discharged into the visual economies of London and Washington DC, these photographs were aimed at exploding anachronistic and antagonistic visions of Ottoman identity, instead proclaiming imperial military prowess.



Ali Rıza Bey, *The Railroad Station of Haydarpaşa*, Albumen print, c.1880-1893, LOT 9523, no. 28

Source: Library of Congress

The court also carefully documented railroad construction across the empire, articulating technological advancements that supported networks of trade and transport. Volumes from the Yıldız Palace collection map the 3,803 kilometers of railroad track laid down under Abdülhamid II's rule and reflect the intensive efforts toward industrialization. In both the Library of Congress and British Library collections, there are singular plates showing railroad stations in Ottoman lands, such as the one located in Haydrapaşa, Istanbul. Three large-scale and luxurious albums devoted to the new railroad systems now live in the Pierre de Gigord Collection at the Getty Research Institute.

While these were not disseminated as part of a specific diplomatic discourse, they circulated outside of the elite palace circles, and were purchased by the French businessman, in the late twentieth century. One of these albums, by the Swedish photographer Guillaume Berggren, includes twelve albumen prints of the Anatolian railway, a line financed by Deutsche Bank that initially connected Istanbul and Ankara. The previously discussed Bismark Gift albums embodied the German/Ottoman economic alliance, celebrating the first diplomatic discussions about their collaboration on the *Chemins de fer Ottomans d'Anatolie*.



Guillaume Berggren, *Chemin de fer d'Anatolie*, circa 1880, Albumen Print, Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. Series I. Large format albums, 1852-1920, 96.R.14(A20)

Source: Getty

Conclusion

While photographic albums were utilized as tools of identity formation in systemically unequal social and political structures within both imperial and colonial enterprises, our study considers how Ottoman and American power relations (and means of self-presentation) were transposed in different topographies and translated across geographies. Echoing the United States' efforts to construct national heritage through the intermingling of photographs that celebrate the monumentality of the American wilderness and showcase Indigenous peoples, the Hamidian albums present a vast ecosystem of photographs connecting Ottoman territories innovations, and people. The specific albums examined here, but also perhaps album making more broadly, animated nineteenth-century transatlantic exchange and facilitated diplomatic performances through intimate forms of embodied viewing and interaction. In their circulation through period network tentacles, they operate as more than visual embodiments of imperialism, but, in their larger archival histories, materialize situations of both intracultural and intercultural contact. The intimate encounters between the Ottoman and American albums reveal them as existing beyond systems of the pictorial or the singular image, but instead as active participants in the social and political formation of visual culture. The construction of the social body through survey practices in these multi-part, modernizing empires was imagined, revised, and reformed through the cross-pollination of archives across the Atlantic and Mediterranean Worlds, an evolving line of inquiry we continue to explore in our larger, developing book project centering this American-Ottoman exchange.

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NOTES

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2 The image of ceremonial activity at Zuni Pueblo entitled, *Women's Dance, Zuni Pueblo*, made 1879-1881 by John K. Hillers is plate 2 in the Cleveland Album (Istanbul Üniversitesi Nadır Eserler 91462/2). However, the photograph has not been reproduced here in observance of Pueblo image restrictions on ceremonial life.

3 There are many other uses, purposes and considerations of "survey photography." While amateur survey movements like those written about by Elizabeth Edwards and Justin Carville, as well as commercial survey endeavors like those studied by Douglas Nickel, Fredrick Bohrer, and Martha Sandweiss, undoubtedly inform and overlap with state-sponsored projects, endeavors formulated in the context of official diplomatic relations sit at the heart of this project.

4 William Henry Blackmore, Blackmore collection, box 8, item 0070, diary 17, 1868, p. 17, History Library, Museum of New Mexico.

5 Osman Hamdi Bey, Victor Marie de Launay and Pascal Sébah. Les Costumes Populaires De La Turquie En 1873: Ouvrage Publié Sous Le Patronage De La Commission Impériale Ottomane Pour L'exposition Universelle De Vienne. Constantinople: Imprimerie du Levant Times & Shipping Gazette, 1873.

6 Samuel Cox, *Diversions of Diplomat in Turkey* (New York: C.L. Webster & Co, 1887), 41.