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## THE OTTOMAN CENSUS SYSTEM AND POPULATION, 1831–1914

No problem has perplexed students of modern Ottoman history more than that of determining the state of the empire's population during its last century. Foreign travelers and diplomats and various nationalist leaders claimed that the Ottoman government had no census of its own. They made self-serving estimates of its population to support their own political or diplomatic ambitions, using at best methods such as multiplying by preset figures the number of males found in neighborhood coffeehouses or Sunday religious services, or simply accepting the estimates of local priests. In the face of this, the Ottomans did no more than publish their figures without providing supporting data or bothering to explain their census procedures. As a result, the Ottoman census system and its data were largely ignored in the outside world, and the rough and inaccurate estimates of foreigners were generally accepted in preference to the official figures.

In fact, the Ottomans did develop a reasonably efficient system for counting the empire's population only a quarter century after census procedures were introduced in the United States of America, Great Britain, and France. Sultan Mahmut II (1808–1839) initiated a census as part of his effort to create a new army and bureaucracy following the destruction of the Janissary Corps in 1826. Only men were included, since only they served in the army and paid taxes, and the count was long delayed because of the Ottoman–Russian war that followed, and was completed only in 1831. The census takers tried to determine the exact number of Muslim and non-Muslim males in each *sancak* (district), *kaza* (county), and *nahiye* (locality) of the empire. In most places, Muslim men were registered in three categories according to age: those below sixteen, between sixteen and forty, and above forty, with the men in the middle group being listed in separate conscription registers turned over to the army. Because of the difficulty of securing valid statements of age from men wishing to avoid army service, in many districts the census takers contented themselves with recording only whether individual men had full-grown beards or mustaches, considered to be sufficient signs of their maturity and resultant availability for conscription.

Christian and Jewish males were not yet subject to military service, but because of their status as *rayas* (*reāyā*, the 'protected flock' of the sultan) subject to the head tax (*cizye*) they also were counted and divided into the traditional three categories of wealth according to ability to pay: the highest (*ālā*), middle (*evsat*), and lowest (*ednā*). Those unable to pay because of destitution, old age, or infirmity were listed separately. In the larger villages and in all cities and

towns, non-Muslims were recorded according to *millet*, with separate registers for foreigners, who were termed 'Franks'.

There is considerable evidence that the census was carried out throughout the empire, but it was accomplished under such severe difficulties that its results must be considered no more than estimates. The census takers themselves were untrained and, for the most part, unsupervised. Since the bureaucracy was being reorganized, the sultan turned instead to the religious hierarchy, which had its own organization. But its members seem to have been hardly equal to their own religious and judicial duties at the time, let alone to the kind of task that was now being imposed on them. In any case, they received only general instructions from Istanbul and were allowed wide latitude in their methods. Some prepared detailed records for each individual counted, but most did not. Only a few census takers were assigned to each province, so inevitably they did not reach the more isolated areas, and many people were left uncounted. Efforts then in progress to hunt down and kill surviving members of the Janissary corps and to create a new army by a crude conscription system also caused many Muslims to hide from the census takers even when they did reach their localities. The major nomadic tribes were assumed to be entirely Muslim, and were counted on the basis of estimates supplied by their chiefs. The largest city of the empire, Istanbul, does not seem to have been counted at all, since its men still retained their traditional exemption from military service as well as from forced labor and various taxes. The non-Muslim millet leaders encouraged evasion to avoid increased government control over their followers. And, finally, females were not counted, leaving the census a record of only one part of the population. It is not surprising, then, that the data of the 1831 census seem very low, or partial, compared with those compiled later in the century (Table 1). Yet they do give us at least some idea of the state of the population of the empire in the early years of the century, before the Tanzimat reforms and the large-scale influx of Muslim refugees from persecution in Christian lands brought substantial changes to its makeup and distribution.

However limited and incomplete it was, the 1831 census remained the only empire-wide count of the population available for official and private use for at

TABLE I *Ottoman population, 1831*

City	Muslim	Greek Orthodox	Gypsy	Jew	Armenian-Gregorian	Total
Rumelia	513,448	811,546	29,532	11,674	3,566	1,369,766
Anatolia	1,988,027	366,625	7,143	5,338	16,743	2,383,876
Total	2,501,475	1,178,171	36,675	17,012	20,309	3,753,642

SOURCES: Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ilk nüfus sayımı* (Ankara 1943); Ahmet Lütüfi, *Tarih-i Lütüfi* (Istanbul, 1290/1873), II, 175, III, 142-146.

least fifteen years. The early Tanzimat provincial reforms, which actually began during the last decade of the reign of Mahmut II, included provisions for census counts as part of the process by which the tax and property systems were reformed. The local mayors (*muhtars*) and millet religious officers were assigned locally to count the people, to announce and enforce state regulations, and, ultimately, to issue the census receipts (*nüfus tezkeresi*) and travel permits (*mürur tezkeresi*) which became the basis for population control as well as for the count in subsequent decades. Bursa and Gallipoli were the models for these early efforts, and other provinces followed as the Tanzimat reforms were extended.<sup>1</sup>

To provide general supervision and control and to compile and keep empire-wide population records, a separate Census Department (Ceride-i Nüfus Nezareti) was established for the first time as part of the Ministry of the Interior when it was organized in 1835. Its initial activities involved extension of the 1831 census to Istanbul,<sup>2</sup> and the assigning of millet and guild leaders as assistants to the local census takers.<sup>3</sup> It seems to have been dissolved after a decade or so, however, with census activities in the central government subsequently being subordinated to other interests in the Treasury, Army, and Cadastral ministries. There is evidence that census officers continued to be stationed at key points throughout the empire recording population changes, but as the result of disinterest in Istanbul, the counts were brought together and presented in empire-wide census reports only sporadically, in 1835, 1838, 1844, and 1857, and even these have not yet been uncovered.<sup>4</sup>

It was only following the Crimean War that renewed attention was paid to the census as part of Fuat Pasha's efforts to reform and revive the empire's finances.<sup>5</sup> A new Department of Cadastres (Tahrir-i Emlāk Nezareti) was established in the Ministry of Finance with the duty not only of registering property for tax purposes, but also of registering and counting male subjects and issuing to each a population tax certificate (*vergi nüfus tezkeresi*), which stated his tax obligation and also served as an identity card.<sup>6</sup> Completion of the census in each province was followed by registration of Muslim males subject to military service, thus retaining the close connection between the two. But limitation of the conscription service terms to five years seems to have made most men far more

<sup>1</sup> S. J. Shaw and E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. II, *Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge, New York, and London, 1977), pp. 40-47; Istanbul University Library, TY 8949.

<sup>2</sup> 5 Safar 1254/30 April 1838, Başvekalet Arşivi (hereafter BVA) Buyuruldu defteri, II, 124.

<sup>3</sup> 11 Safar 1254/6 May 1838, *ibid.*, pp. 114-119.

<sup>4</sup> Istanbul University Library, TY 8949; the census of 1844 was partly used by A. Ubcini in *Lettres sur la Turquie* (Paris, 1853) and by E. Boré in *Almanach de l'Empire Ottoman pour l'année 1849 et 1850* (Constantinople, 1849-1850).

<sup>5</sup> BVA, Buyuruldu defteri, II, 125.

<sup>6</sup> BVA, Irade Dahiliye 3507; *Düstur*<sup>1</sup> (Ottoman Code of Public Laws; hereafter *Düstur*<sup>1</sup>) (8 vols.; Istanbul and Ankara, 1863-1943), I, 201.

willing to register than was the case previously, so the count was considerably more complete and accurate.<sup>7</sup> This time Bursa and Janina were used as model provinces, with the Danube Province, governed by the famous Tanzimat provincial reformer Midhat Pasha, being added after its organization in 1864. The entire system was incorporated without change into the Provincial Reform Law issued later in the same year.<sup>8</sup>

Among the Tanzimat leaders, Midhat Pasha in particular seems to have had the broadest view of the nature of the census system and its uses in the processes of modernizing government. In the Danube Province, he used the census figures as bases for educational, economic, and social reforms, and also as arguments to the central government for the allocation of further funds to meet local needs, in particular that of settling the thousands of Muslim refugees then fleeing into Bulgaria from Serbia and Romania. During his short first term as Grand Vezir (1872), he formed a commission to investigate the census system and its use in resolving the empire's problems. On the basis of its report, a general census regulation was issued for the first time in 1874, making the Census Department far more independent than before by reinstalling it in the Ministry of the Interior as a separate section, rather than under the Cadastral Section of the Ministry of Finance, where it had been left since 1858.<sup>9</sup>

Conscription continued to be the *raison d'être* of the census under the new regulation, so only male subjects were included, though by this time the Tanzimat leaders hoped to include non-Muslims as well as Muslims in the army, an ideal that was never fulfilled because of the intervention of the Powers and disinclination of the millet leaders. The entire empire was counted with the exception only of the Hicaz and the Yemen, which had not yet been fully organized under Tanzimat administrative procedures. Instead of using financial or military officers to take the census counts, as had been common in recent years, independent census takers again were appointed to each district, including a census supervisor (*nüfus nazırı*), census deputy (*nüfus vekili*), census recorder (*nüfus mukayyet*), and scribes (*kâtip*), all paid with Treasury funds as well as by fees that they were allowed to charge in return for the performance of their official duties. Foreign consuls provided registers of the names and residences

<sup>7</sup> BVA, Irade, Meclis-i Mahsus, 886, 4976, 1216.

<sup>8</sup> *Düstur*<sup>1</sup>, I, 608–624; G. Aristarchi Bey, *Législation ottomane, ou recueil des lois, réglemens, ordonnances, traités, capitulations, et autres documents officiels de l'Empire Ottoman* (7 vols.; Constantinople, 1873–1888), II, 273–295; Baron Ignatz de Testa *et al.*, *Recueil des traités de la Porte ottoman avec les puissances étrangères depuis 1536* (11 vols.; Paris, 1864–1911), VII, 484–493; Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 146–151; *Takvim-i Vekayi* 872 (9 Şevval 1283/14 Feb. 1867), 894 (5 Cemazi II 1284/4 Oct. 1867), 1314 (2 Zilkade 1287/25 Jan. 1871), 1376 (14 Rebi II 1288/3 Aug. 1871), 1433 (5 Ramazan 1288/19 Sept. 1871), 1618 (7 Ramazan 1290/30 Oct. 1873), 1623 (16 Şevval 1290/7 Nov. 1873), 830 (5 Ramazan 1282/22 Jan. 1866), 837 (3 Zilkade 1282/20 March 1866), 850 (11 Safar 1283/25 July, 1866).

<sup>9</sup> The entire dossier for this regulation, including several reports and commentaries that contributed to it, is found in BVA, Irade Meclis-i Mahsus, 2089; the Irade authorizing it was issued on 10 Rebi II 1291/28 May 1874.

of their subjects in each locality to serve as checks and guides to the census activities. Army officers were not used so as to dissociate the census from military service in the popular mind and thus to encourage men to be registered and counted. Instead experienced scribes and administrators were hired, at first on a temporary basis for the initial census counts, but ultimately on a permanent basis to build up a corps of experienced census personnel.

The district census supervisors were in complete charge of the census takers and their activities in the subordinate counties, where local elders and religious leaders did the registering in the company of census recorders sent especially for the purpose. The supervisors were appointed and controlled directly by the Census Department in Istanbul, but the provincial and district administrative councils did have the right to investigate the honesty and accuracy of their work and to supervise their activities, complaining when necessary to the Ministry to secure their removal.

As the registration work proceeded, the recorders were helped by Muslim and non-Muslim scribes appointed by the local administrative officials on the advice and nomination of the *millet* leaders in proportion to their part of the population. When available, scribes who had participated in the earlier population counts accompanied the census groups, bringing along the old registers for purposes of comparison. All males found in their houses as the count was taken were brought to the local council of elders, which had to certify their status and the information provided, before their names and descriptions were entered in the registers and their identity cards issued. Special mention was made whenever persons mentioned in the older registers or known to be resident locally did not appear, with explanations of their absence provided when available. Each completed register was certified by the local administrative committee before being sent on to the next higher authority from the villages or quarters to the counties, then to the districts, and finally to the provincial capitals, where figures were compiled for dispatch to the Census Department once a year. Separate registers of Muslim and non-Muslim males were sent to the provincial military authorities for conscription purposes. People who came to each locality subsequent to the count were entered into the registers and counted only if they certified that they were becoming permanent residents. Those present only temporarily when the count was made, for business or as members of the police or the armed forces, had their registration papers sent to their permanent home countries, where their identity papers were issued and where they were included in the count. Only persons less than three years old and those certified as permanently or seriously ill were exempted from registering or, in certain cases, allowed to register through representatives.<sup>10</sup>

Work on the new census proceeded rapidly for about one year,<sup>11</sup> but then foundered owing to the military and financial crises that led to the successive

<sup>10</sup> *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 1678 (29 Cemazi II 1291/13 Sept. 1874).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1705 (4 Zilhicce 1291/12 Jan. 1875), 1706 (18 Zilhicce 1291/28 Jan. 1875), 1709 (1 Muharrem 1291/18 Feb. 1874).

depositions of Abdulaziz and Murat V and the accession of Abdulhamit II in 1876. It was only following the conclusion of the Ottoman–Russian war and the signing of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) that the new sultan turned to the census as a basis for the program of modernization he hoped to introduce. Since the census organization established in 1874 had largely broken up, he decided to create an entirely new system, and for the purpose hired a French expert, M. Bolland, to investigate the situation. The latter reported, however, that the old system was logical and suited to the Ottoman situation, so it was revived in the new Regulation of Population Registration (*Sicil-i Nüfus Nizamnamesi*), enacted in 1878, which became the basis for all subsequent Ottoman census activities.<sup>12</sup>

The new regulation accepted the traditional attachment of the census to conscription and taxation. In addition, it stressed the need for a comprehensive picture of the empire's population for economic and financial reasons as well as to provide a base for measures that would care for public order, welfare, and security, thus manifesting the increasing tendency of the state to assume functions in areas formerly reserved for the *millet* organizations of the subjects. As a result, a far more comprehensive and effective census system than the empire ever had seen before emerged during the remaining half century of its existence.

The Department of the Census (*Nüfus-u Umumi Idaresi*) remained an independent unit (*müdürlük*) in the Ministry of the Interior, entirely separate from the army and cadastral departments. It was divided into three major bureaus: for correspondence (*Tahrirat Kalemi*), statistics (*Ihsaiyat Kalemi*), and archives (*Evrak Kalemi*), with an additional Forwarding Department (*Irsalat Memuriyet*) which cared for the dispatch and receipt of correspondence. Each department was headed by a chief clerk (*mümeyyiz*) and staffed by a corps of census scribes (*nüfus kâtibi*). Outside the capital, census staffs headed by directors (*nazır*) were assigned to each provincial capital to direct the work of the officials (*müdür*) stationed at the *liva/sancağ* and *kaza* levels. At the local level, each quarter (*mahalle*) or village (*karye*) was provided with a census officer assisted by the religious chiefs as well as by the mayor and council of elders. Little guidance was provided as to the qualifications of the census officials beyond the need for them to be honest and experienced and for their work to be certified periodically as correct by the local administrative councils.

The essential basis of the system was the initial compilation of permanent population registers (*sicil-i nüfus*) in each village and each quarter of the larger towns and cities. Census scribes (*nüfus kâtibi*) who accompanied the religious leaders and mayors recorded the name and characteristics of each person found

<sup>12</sup> Bolland's report is found in BVA, Yıldız K14 no. 88/20. The Regulation of Population Registration, dated 8 Şevval 1298/21 Aug. 1297/3 Sept. 1881, is found in BVA, Şurayı Devlet 3148, and BVA, Tanzimat defteri, VII, 97–104; it was published in two *zeyils* (supplements) to *Düstur*<sup>1</sup>, both numbered as *zeyil* II, in one on pp. 15–24 and in the other on pp. 3–8; and in a separate booklet, along with detailed instructions for carrying it out, as *Sicil-i Nüfus nizamnamesi* (Istanbul, 1300/1882–1883).

in their districts, including for the first time women. Places were provided in the registers for each person's place of birth and residence, age, religion, craft or occupation, marital status, and health, and for men their military status and the style of their mustache and beard. Separate registers were provided for Muslims and the members of each recognized millet. Each person recorded and counted in this way was provided in return with a signed and sealed Population Certificate (*Nüfus Tezkeresi*), more or less a receipt for the registration, which contained the same information set down in the register, and which for all practical purpose served both as birth certificate and identity card and had to be produced in all governmental and legal dealings. No one could buy or sell property, appear in court, travel within or outside the empire, or have any dealings with police or municipal officials without producing the document. Men of military age who could not produce their identity cards were conscripted without additional formalities. Severe financial penalties and, occasionally, imprisonment were imposed on those found not registered who refused to provide the requisite information to the census officials. Following the initial census itself, all births and deaths, marriages, divorces, and changes of residence were recorded locally as they took place, with periodic reports being made to the census officials at the *kaza* and provincial levels so that the overall records could be kept up to date. By such means the empire was assured of maintaining a permanent and continuous record of the current state of its population long after the initial census surveys were made.

The registration procedure required in the case of births set the pattern for the procedures followed for other changes in personal status. For each newly born child, the *imam* or other local religious chief, or *muhtar*, had to set down its name, place and date of birth, and name of mother and father when available, in a Notification Certificate (*İlmühaber*), which was sent to the *kaza* census officer. He recorded it in this register and issued the child's Population Certificate. Births that took place in hospitals, at sea, or in foreign countries had to be certified by the local director, captain, or Ottoman consul, respectively, and two witnesses aged at least twenty-one added their signatures to assure the accuracy of the information. In such cases, the Notification Certificates were sent to the census officials of the home *kaza* of the parent, where the information was registered and the certificate issued. Charges of from one to five kuruş were authorized for each document issued, with the collections being shared among the various census, religious, and local officials who participated.

Normally, for those not registered at birth, each individual had to be present at his or her own registration, but for women aged over nine and men temporarily not present, substitutes (*vekil*) could provide the necessary information as to their name, age, and principal relatives, with that concerning appearance and occupation being omitted until the person appeared. By such means, husbands were allowed to register their wives and other women in the household without the census takers actually being able to verify the information provided, a means by which women and children were undercounted in the census

reports. While the initial census counts were made under the supervision of the local administrative committees, in localities where such censuses had not yet been made or were not complete, temporary census commissions (*nüfus komisyonu*) were organized to supervise the census officials, with members including one representative of the latter as well as representatives of the *kaza* and municipal administrative councils, the local military reserve (*redif*) unit, and the largest local non-Muslim millet.

On the basis of the new regulation, the census procedures were carried out slowly but steadily throughout the empire during the next decade.<sup>13</sup> The central provinces of the empire were counted completely, with the exception of mountainous and/or desert areas in Erzurum, İşkodra, Tiflis, Bağdad, Basra, Aleppo, Zor, Kosova, Mamuret ul-Aziz, Musul, Monastir, Syria, and Van, where partial estimates had to be made. In addition the census was not extended to the Yemen, the Hicaz, Tripoli of Libya, and Bengazi, where regular Tanzimat provincial administration was not yet established, or to Egypt, Tunisia, East Rumelia, Bulgaria, Crete, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, and the Lebanon, which were only nominally under the sultan's control because of foreign and/or autonomous local control. The total population of the provinces counted by 1885 came to 17,375,225 persons, with an estimated 3,100,000 in the areas where the count was not yet complete, and 11,306,091 in those under local and/or foreign control. Of the total, there were 9,304,035 men and only 8,071,190 women, a disparity that most likely resulted from undercounting. The largest millet was that of the Muslims, with 6,691,990 men and 5,893,960 women, followed by the Greek Orthodox (1,233,435 men; 1,096,341 women), the Armenian Gregorian (532,283 men; 456,604 women), the Bulgarian Exarchate (445,501 men; 373,461 women), Jews (102,197 men; 81,942 women), Catholics (83,094 men; 67,072 women), and Protestants (19,271 men, 16,958 women), the latter two presumably composed mainly of converted Greeks and Armenians. In addition, there were 171,675 male and 64,015 female Franks counted in the course of the census. In the city of Istanbul and environs, for which there was no separate figure in the 1831 census, there were 873,565 people in all, including 508,814 males and 364,751 females, compared with only 236,092 males counted in 1854 and 193,692 in 1844. While the tremendous increase may well be attributed to more efficient methods of counting developed in the intervening four decades, one must also remember that Istanbul was thronged with thousands of Muslim refugees fleeing from persecution in the Christian lands of the Balkans as well as from Russia and Algeria, and while most of these subsequently were settled in the countryside, inevitably thousands were always in Istanbul awaiting settlement. The substantial economic development of the city during the late nineteenth century also could be a logical reason for the population increase. Whatever the cause, it should be noted that at this time less than half the city's population was Muslim (201,339 male and 183,571 female), with substantial

<sup>13</sup> The census report issued in 1303/1885-1886 is found in the Istanbul University Library, TY 4807.



communities of Greeks (91,804 male and 60,937 female), Armenian Gregorians (83,870 male and 65,720 female), Bulgarians (3,977 male and 400 female), Jews (22,394 male and 21,967 female), Catholics (3,209 male and 3,233 female), and Protestants (448 male and 331 female).

Throughout the remaining years of the reign of Abdulhamit II, the census system continued with little basic change, though the sultan's interest in making it more efficient, and willingness to utilize foreign experience and advice did result in a number of modifications over time. For the most part, the Census Department was directed by the Armenian Migirdich Efendi who, following a common practice at the time, tended to staff it with young members of his own *millet* and sent a number of them to England and France to study modern census techniques.<sup>14</sup> A tendency among local officials to delay reports of vital statistics, particularly of births and deaths, led to efforts to increase the fees paid them from a few kuruş to as much as a gold piece.<sup>15</sup> Sloppiness in keeping records also caused the government to increase the staff of inspectors sent around the provinces to look into the registers and certificates.<sup>16</sup>

With the Census Department revising its figures annually, the government had a more or less continuous idea of the overall state of the population under its rule, at least in the provinces under its direct administration, where the census system could be kept and enforced.

While the figures in Table 2 manifest a slow and steady population increase during Abdulhamit II's reign, further investigation of the sources is needed since it is known that substantial numbers of Muslims emigrated into the empire as refugees at this time, while thousands of Christians fled into neighboring states as a result of the increasing unrest into which the provinces were falling.

The last major revision of the empire's census organization and procedures, the Population Registration Regulation (*Sicil-i Nüfus Nizamnamesi*), was issued originally in 1900 and then reissued, with minor revisions, two years later.<sup>17</sup> The previous structure was essentially retained on both the central and provincial levels, with additions made only to correct difficulties that had arisen in practice over the years. To make certain that all individuals were registered and counted, provisions requiring display of the Population Certificate were made more specific. All subjects had to show their certificates whenever they purchased, transferred, or even abandoned property, whenever they were chosen to serve

<sup>14</sup> Muhtira-i Hümayun. BVA, Yıldız K9 nos. 2631 and 2632.

<sup>15</sup> BVA, Irade Meclis-i Mahsus 3897.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 4454 (13 Ramazan 1306/13 May 1888), 5356 (17 Safar 1309/23 Sept. 1891).

<sup>17</sup> The initial regulation, dated 22 Safar 1318/14 June 1316/21 June 1900, is found in BVA, Irade Kavanin ve Nizamat, 1318 Safar/1900 June no. 1; BVA, Nizamat defteri, IX, 14-25; it is printed in the *Düstur*<sup>1</sup>, VII, 433-451. The revised, definitive copy, dated 5 Rebi I 1320/29 May 1318/12 June 1902, is found in BVA, Kavanin ve Nizamat, 1320 Rebi II/1902 July-Aug., no. 1; BVA, Nizamat defteri, IX, 260-280; BVA, Yıldız archives K17 no. 47/52; Istanbul University Library, TY 1080, fol. 31a-49b; and it is published in *Düstur*<sup>1</sup>, VII, 864-883; the changes made are indicated in the Irade, dated 5 Rebi I 1320/12 Aug. 1902, found in BVA, Irade Kavanin ve Nizamat 1320 Rebi II/1902 July-Aug., no. 1.

TABLE 2 *Ottoman population, 1884-1914*

Year	Muslim	Non-Muslim	Total
1884	12,590,352	4,553,507	17,143,859
1885	12,707,638	4,578,774	17,286,412
1886	12,824,924	4,603,041	17,427,965
1887	12,942,210	4,637,308	17,579,518
1888	13,059,496	4,661,579	17,721,075
1889	13,176,782	4,685,842	17,862,624
1890	13,294,068	4,701,109	18,400,177
1891	13,411,354	4,734,376	18,145,730
1892	13,411,361	4,763,381	18,174,742
1893	13,578,647	4,776,738	18,316,295
1894	13,645,903	4,804,942	18,450,845
1895	13,763,249	4,832,149	18,595,398
1896	13,890,910	4,848,849	18,739,759
1897	14,111,945	4,938,362	19,050,307
1906	15,518,478	5,379,139	20,897,617
1914	15,044,846	3,475,170	18,520,016

SOURCES: Devlet-i Osmaniye, Nezaret-i Umur-u Ticaret ve Nafia, Istatistik-i Umumi Idaresi, *Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniyenin Bin Üçyüz Onüç Senesine Mahsus Istatistik-i Umumi-sidir* (Istanbul, 1316/1898), p. 15; Istanbul University Library, TY 5651; S. J. Shaw and E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. II, *Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge, New York, and London, 1977), pp. 240-241. The 1906 figures are in Istanbul University Library, TY 947; those for 1914 are in *Tableaux indiquant le nombre des divers éléments de la population dans l'Empire Ottoman au 1 Mars 1330 (14 Mars 1914)* (Constantinople, 1919), and Dahiliye Nezareti, Sicil-i Nüfus Idare-i Umumiyesi Müdüriyeti, *Memalik-i Osmaniyenin 1330 Senesi Nüfus Istatistiği* (Istanbul, 1330/1914).

in any position, official or unofficial, when they were admitted to public or private schools at all levels, and when they retired and asked for a pension from the Treasury. Severe penalties were imposed on those caught adding unauthorized or false information to the certificates or actually forging the documents, a practice that became increasingly profitable as subjects found it necessary to display them in connection with most actions in their daily lives.

To curb sloppiness and corruption in the registration process, the law now required that all register pages be numbered consecutively and sealed so that false pages could not be substituted for the real ones. Instead of the empty pages left at the ends of the original registers in previous censuses, separate registers of daily census changes (*vukuat*) were now introduced, with the *kaza* and provincial administrative councils being required to certify their accuracy before the information was sent on to Istanbul for incorporation into the empire-wide statistics. Printed information certificates were now provided, and most of the fees went to the local informants so that reports would be regular and prompt.

For the first time the prerequisites for serving as census officials were made specific. *Kaza* officials had to be graduates of the secular middle schools

(*rüşdiye*), or have had five years experience in the civil service, or have served three years as assistant in the lower ranks of the census department. Those serving on the *liva* level had to be graduates of the *idadi* (high) schools or have experience of at least five years in census offices, while provincial census officials had to be graduates of one of the higher technical schools (*mekatib-i aliye*) or have five years' census or ten years' civil service experience. All such officials had to be Ottoman subjects, know how to read and write Ottoman Turkish, the official state language, and be able to perform all the operations required in the census procedures, with examinations being administered on a regular basis in order to prevent favoritism or corruption from playing a role in appointments.

Registration procedures were made far more detailed than previously. Birth certificates and registers now indicated not only whether the child was male or female, but also its name, place, date, and day of birth, names of the mother and father, the quarter, street and house number of residence, and all instances of travel away from the locality. There was such detail that the certificates were insufficient, so identity booklets (*hüviyet cüzdam*) were provided as substitutes, in a form that has survived with little change in the Turkish republic right to the present day. If the father and/or mother of the newly born child were not known, then the local religious chiefs had to provide the *kaza* census officials with the necessary information within three months, with corroboration by two witnesses aged at least twenty-one years. If a newly born child died, the census officials had to be notified promptly, within five days if in Istanbul, one month in a provincial city or town, and two months elsewhere.

Provision was also made for regular inspection of the work of the census officials who were protected from arbitrary action on the part of superiors and others by insistence that all dismissals be subject to the final decision of the administrative courts.

Under the stimulus of the new regulation, a new overall census survey of the empire was begun in 1903 and completed three years later.<sup>18</sup> According to its report, the empire's population now had reached 20,897,617 of whom 11,208,628 were male and 9,738,989 female. The continued immigration of Muslims and flight of non-Muslims left a far more substantial majority of the former than before, 15,518,478 (8,271,244 men and 7,247,234 women), compared with 2,822,773 Greek Orthodox (1,484,762 men and 1,338,011 women), 1,050,513 Armenian Gregorian (556,824 men and 493,689 women), 762,754 Bulgarians, 256,003 Jews, and 197,700 Franks (141,909 men and 55,791 women). The population of Istanbul was about the same as in 1890, now with 469,418 men and 312,813 women, including 91,884 male and 65,281 female Greek Orthodox, 30,412 male and 29,551 female Armenian Gregorian, 317 Greek Catholics, 9,332 Armenian Catholics, 1,370 Protestants, 47,779 Jews, 101,211 Franks, and 212,149 male and 158,194 female Muslims, the proportion of the latter to the total being about the same as it had been earlier despite the changes that had taken place in the empire as a whole.

<sup>18</sup> Istanbul University Library, TY 947.

The final census of the Ottoman population, issued on 14 March 1914,<sup>19</sup> shortly before the outbreak of World War I, was not based on a new overall survey, but simply involved modifications in the 1906 report on the basis of the information sent in by the local census officials during the intervening eight years. As a result of the substantial territorial losses in Europe suffered during the Balkan wars, the total population of the empire fell to 18,520,016, of whom an even larger percentage than before, 15,044,846, was Muslim, with 1,729,738 Greek Orthodox, 1,161,169 Armenian Gregorian, 187,073 Jewish, 62,468 Greek Catholic, 68,838 Armenian Catholic, and 65,844 Protestant. No separate figures were given for Franks. Istanbul, on the other hand, increased slightly, to 909,978, excluding Franks, with 560,434 Muslims, 205,375 Greek Orthodox, 72,963 Armenian Gregorian, 52,126 Jews, 387 Greek Catholics, 9,918 Armenian Catholics, 1,213 Protestants, and 2,905 Latins.

A continuous record of Ottoman population statistics thus was compiled and maintained by the Census Department during the last fifty years of the empire. How accurate were the results? Even censuses compiled a century later by highly organized and advanced governments are accused of error, so one cannot discount the possibility in the Ottoman Empire during the years of Abdulhamit II and the Young Turk era. Surely the counts in the mountain and desert areas were still no more than estimates. The substantial disparities between the figures supplied for women and men suggest that the former were undercounted, particularly in the countryside. But attachment of the census to the identity card system and strict enforcement of the provisions requiring use of the latter in all contacts with the government seem to have had their effect, and there is little evidence of large-scale avoidance of registration and counting by men as well as women in the heavily populated centers of the empire. There is no evidence to substantiate accusations that the records were falsified for political purposes. Indeed, Ottoman reluctance to publish their figures as well as procedures, if anything, seems to indicate the reverse. There was a conscious effort to make the count as complete and up to date as possible throughout the period under discussion, and the figures seem to reflect this ideal. Not perfect, then, by any means, but probably as good as contemporary efforts in the other nations of Europe, and far more accurate than the rough estimates left by foreign visitors, the Ottoman census reports stand as a vital indication of the state of Ottoman society at the time and an important source for all those who seek to understand its history.

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<sup>19</sup> *Tableaux indiquant le nombre des divers éléments de la population dans l'Empire Ottoman au 1er Mars 1330 (14 Mars 1914)* (Constantinople, 1919); Dahiliye Nezareti, Sicil-i Nüfus Idare-i Umumiyesi Müdüriyeti, *Memalik-i Osmaniye'nin 1330 senesi nüfus İstatistiği* (Istanbul, 1330/1914).

APPENDIX I

Population Statistics of the Ottoman Empire, 1885-1914, by Religious Community

Major religious community	1885	1897	1906	1914
Muslim	12,585,950	14,111,945	15,518,478	15,044,846
Greek Orthodox	2,329,776	2,569,912	2,822,773	1,729,738
Armenian Gregorian	988,887	1,042,374	1,050,513	1,161,169
Bulgarian	818,962	830,189	762,754	—
Greek Catholic	} 150,166	} 120,479	60,597	62,468
Armenian Catholic			90,050	67,838
Protestant	36,229	44,360	53,880	65,844
Latin	18,240	22,335	20,447	24,845
Jew	184,139	215,425	256,003	187,073
Maronite	n.a.	32,416	28,726	47,406
Frank	235,690	n.a.	197,700	n.a.
Grand Total (including minor communities)	17,375,225	19,050,307	20,897,617	18,520,016

SOURCES: 1885: Istanbul University Library, TY 4807; 1897: compiled by the Department of Statistics in the Ministry of Trade and Public Works and published as *Devlet-i Osmaniye, Nezaret-i Umur-u Ticaret ve Nafia, Istatistik-i Umumi Idaresi, Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye'nin Bin Üçyüz Onüç Senesine Mahsus Istatistik-i Umumisidir* (Istanbul, 1316/1898); 1906: Istanbul University Library, TY 947; 1914: *Tableaux indiquant le nombre des divers éléments de la population dans l'Empire Ottoman au 1 Mars 1330 (14 Mars 1914)* (Constantinople, 1919), and *Dahiliye Nezareti, Sicil-i Nüfus Idare-i Umumiyesi Muduriyeti, Memalik-i Osmaniye'nin 1330 Senesi Nüfus Istatistiği* (Istanbul, 1330/1914).

## APPENDIX 2

## Population Statistics of the Ottoman Empire, 1885-1914, by Province

Province	1885	1897	1906	1914
Edirne	836,045	986,446	1,154,344	631,094
Erzurum	559,155	687,322	675,855	815,432
Aydın	1,408,387	1,534,229	1,721,287	1,608,742
Adana	384,365	398,764	504,426	411,032
Işkodra	87,372	337,584	89,848	Occupied
Ankara	847,482	1,018,727	1,157,131	953,817
Izmit district	195,659	228,529	290,504	325,153
Bağdad	197,756	720,555	178,178 <sup>a</sup>	—
Basra	8,853 <sup>a</sup>	380,630	10,270 <sup>a</sup>	—
Beirut	568,014	623,505	561,619	824,873
Bitlis	276,998	488,642	301,915	437,479
Tripoli of Libya	—	—	444,650	Occupied by Italy
Cezire-i Bahr-i Sefid	264,374	387,318	364,222	Occupied by Italy
Çatalca	58,822	61,236	—	59,756
Aleppo	787,714	921,345	877,682	617,790
Hudavendigâr	1,336,492	1,458,079	1,691,277	616,327 <sup>b</sup>
Diyarbakir	368,970	564,671	394,123	619,825
Zor district	34,250	151,260	60,854	66,794
Suriya	400,748	701,134	478,775	918,409
Selanik	990,400	1,040,218	922,359	Occupied
Sivas	926,564	980,982	1,193,679	1,169,443
Şehir Emaneti	80,609	90,034	82,335	Included in Istanbul
Trabzon	1,056,293	1,164,827	1,342,778	1,122,947
Kastamonu	949,116	968,884	1,105,419	767,227
Konya	944,009	1,022,844	1,249,777	789,308
Kosova	721,342	954,634	708,163	Occupied
Küdüs (Jerusalem)	234,774	264,317	231,209	328,168
Mamuret ul-Aziz	381,346	566,656	474,370	538,227
Monastir	664,399	1,061,522	824,808	Occupied
Musul	18,611 <sup>a</sup>	448,288	161,148 <sup>a</sup>	—
Van	119,860	202,007	113,964	259,141
Yanya	516,467	517,274	516,461	Occupied
Istanbul	873,565	1,030,234	782,231	909,978

<sup>a</sup> Males.<sup>b</sup> Province broken up.

SOURCES: Same as Appendix 1.