

When Emmanuel Carasso Turned Italian: A Biography of Extraterritoriality and Questions of Nationality in the Ottoman Empire

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Emanuel Karasu'nun İtalyan Olmasının Öyküsü: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Egemenliğin Sınırları, Tabiiyet Meseleleri ve bir Biyografi

Öz ■ Sefarad Yahudisi bir aileye mensup olan Emmanuel Carasso (Türkçeleştirilmiş haliyle Emanuel Karasu) (1863-1934) Selanikli bir avukat iken, İtalyan Grande Oriente adlı büyük mason locasının Macedonia Risorta isimli yerel bir şubesinin Selanik'te kurulmasına ön ayak olmuştur. Selanik'teki bu yerel şube, kapitülasyonlardan ötürü üyelerine sağladığı gizlilik kılıfı sayesinde Jön Türklerin de üye olduğu bir yapıya dönüştü ve 1908 Jön Türk Devrimi'nin merkezlerinden biri haline geldi. Bu tarihsel süreçte önemli rol oynayan Karasu da devrim sonrası Osmanlı tabiiyetine geçerek ilk önce Selanik ve sonrasında ise İstanbul mebusu olarak Meclis-i Mebusan'da görev yapmaya başlayacaktır. 31 Mart Vakası sonrasında II. Abdülhamid'in hal' edilmesine karar verilince bu haberi devrik sultana bildiren dörtlü heyette Karasu'nun da yer alması, onun siyasi kariyerindeki en meşhur olaylardan birisi olmuştur. İlerleyen yıllarda İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti içindeki güçlü pozisyonunu kullanarak Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında oldukça zenginleşmesi, isminin harp ekonomisinin kötü taraflarıyla da anılmaya başlanmasına sebep olmuştur. Savaş sonrasında başkenti terk eden birçok üst düzey İttihatçı'nın aksine Karasu İstanbul'da kalmayı tercih etmiş ve savaş sırasındaki icraatlarıyla ilintili birçok davadan yargılanmaya başlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda

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Karasu İtalyan tabiiyetine geçiş başvurusu yapmıştır. Bu başvuru üzerine kurgulanan bu çalışma Karasu'nun biyografisini siyasi nüfuz, sermaye ilişkileri ve dış dokunulmazlık imtiyazları çerçevesinde inceleyecektir. Osmanlı arşiv kaynakları kullanılarak Karasu'nun savaş sonrası faaliyetleri araştırılırken, işgal altındaki İstanbul'da hukukun nasıl işlediği gibi konulara odaklanılarak, yüksek komiserliklerin Osmanlı makamlarıyla tabiiyet değişimi gibi meseleler bağlamında geliştirdikleri ilişkiler üzerinde durulacak ve bu gelişmelerin Osmanlı sonrası döneme geçiş hakkında bizlere neler söylediği irdelenecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Emanuel Karasu, Jön Türkler, tabiiyet kanunu, kapitülasyonlar, işgal altında İstanbul.

“Just like many other Salonican Jews who left Macedonia after it became part of Greece in 1919”, wrote Angelo Iacovella, “Emmanuel Carasso, too, decided to migrate and left for Naples together with his daughter.”¹ Carasso (Turkified as Emanuel Karasu) indeed came from Salonica's large Sephardic Jewish community, as he was born there back in 1863,² but his immigration to Italy was far from straightforward and in many ways very different than the trajectories of many Salonican Jews. This article tells this story and its complex historical entanglements. A graduate from the city's Alliance Israélite Universelle school,³ Karasu practiced law in Salonica, where he also got initiated into the Macedonia Risorta masonic lodge sometime in late 1902 and 1903. These were the years that marked the beginning of the long-awaited revolutionary upheaval in Ottoman Macedonia, which made the region the center of developments on the path to the Young Turk Revolution (1908). Karasu was central to this story, too. He was often credited to be the one who came up with the idea of letting the Young Turk use the masonic lodge and the extraterritorial protection it afforded to communicate in plain sight, but in secrecy, the requirement of any revolutionary society.⁴

Just as Karasu was present at the beginning of the Young Turk story, he was also there at its end. After the First World War, when Istanbul fell under Allied occupation, many years had passed since the revolution, and Karasu, a Young Turk,

1 Angelo Iacovella, *Gönye ve Hilal: İttihad-Terakki ve Masonluk* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), p. 41.

2 Edhem Eldem, “Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine bir Devam (?)”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 4/23 (1995), p. 43.

3 “Les elections”, *Stamboul: Journal quotidien, politique et littéraire*, 27 novembre 1908, 2.

4 Out of 188 individuals initiated into the lodge in Salonica between 1901 and 1908, 23 of them were Ottoman officers. Iacovella, *Gönye ve Hilal*, pp. 40-43.

found himself stranded in Istanbul, surrounded by notoriety. Being a Young Turk at the war's conclusion was no easy feat, and it was even more challenging when one had amassed a fortune through manipulations during the war economy.⁵ As a result, Karasu's migration to Italy became entangled with major post-WWI themes that characterized Istanbul under the Allied occupation. First, there was the pressing question of how to handle the Young Turks, many of whom faced accusations of war crimes and corruption—two interlinked aspects that are common in the political economy of any war. Second, the challenge was to regulate and administer the transition to a post-Ottoman regime of nationalities, particularly in the territories detached from the empire. Finally, there were the intricate matters of resolving commercial and property disputes and determining the types of courts responsible for handling such cases. Karasu's post-Ottoman odyssey intersected with these seemingly unrelated themes all at the same time, further complicating his personal trajectory.

This article reconstructs the life of Emanuel Karasu, examining his quest to denaturalize from Ottoman nationality and many challenges he faced in the process. While the focus will be on his lesser-known post-WWI years, we will see that extraterritorial privileges played a central role in Karasu's story from beginning to end. Karasu not only hailed from a family that enjoyed these privileges, but his emergence as a political actor in the late Ottoman context was also a result of the extraterritorial protection granted to Masonic lodges. So was his exit from Ottoman polity in 1921, which came about during the Allied occupation of Istanbul that re-introduced extraterritoriality to the Ottoman capital, where it had been absent only since the outbreak of the First World War. Karasu was therefore only able to denaturalize from Ottoman nationality at a time when the empire's capital was under enemy occupation and therefore the power asymmetry—long the engine of extraterritoriality—seemed to be at its worst, with the odds stacked against the Ottomans and the Kemalist resistance.

In reconstructing Karasu's biography, I hope to contribute to ongoing discussions on Ottoman legal history, capitulations and extraterritoriality, and transimperial brokers. First and foremost, this study joins the ranks of a growing number of works that have started to situate Ottoman nationality law within its due

5 Muhittin Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2017), p. 329, 336; Halil Nedim Aşuroğlu, *Mütareke Günlerinde İstanbul Polis Müdürlüğü'nün Hatıratı*, eds. Ali Birinci and Yücel Yiğit (Ankara: Polis Akademisi Yayınları, 2016), p. 9; Roni Margulies, "Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine bir Başlangıç", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 21 (1995), p. 26, 28.

context of interstate interactions—a literature that helped frame Ottoman legal development in more relational, interactive, and nonlinear terms.⁶ Second, by tracing the ways in which Karasu came to navigate legal paths available to him, the article seeks to expand existing discussions on forum shopping in the Ottoman context. While Avi Rubin has shown how litigants consciously made choices about which courts to take their cases to in order to secure more favorable legal outcomes,⁷ Karasu's success in changing his nationality twice whenever it suited his needs provides an example of a high-profile individual who sought to tap into the benefits of legal pluralism created by overlapping jurisdictions. Finally, Karasu's story builds well upon Jens Hanssen's reappropriation of the term Levantine as a way of capturing the analytic significance of transimperial brokerage in the Ottoman port-cities.⁸ As we will see, Karasu had emerged as one such broker who had made a professional career by operating with dexterity in a transimperial space of politics and finance across the Eastern Mediterranean.

Karasu as a Biography of Capitulations

The emergence of privileges enjoyed by Western nationals in the Ottoman Empire dates back to early modern times.⁹ In the nineteenth century, when sovereignty became increasingly territorialized, these earlier privileges gradually evolved into more complex directions. From the first few decades of the century onward,

6 Of particular note is Hanley's crucial intervention in distinguishing nationality from citizenship, which provided a much-needed correction in approaching questions of nationality from interstate contexts. See Will Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not", *Journal of the Ottoman Turkish Studies Association*, 3/2 (2016), pp. 277-98.

7 Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 61-81.

8 Jens Hanssen, "Malhamé-Malfamé: Levantine Elites and Transimperial Networks on the Eve of the Young Turk Revolution", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43/1 (2011) pp. 25-48, 30-32. The Levantines were in a sense "Ottoman creoles", i.e., individuals who were born in the port-cities of the Ottoman Levant but descended from merchant families of European origin, owing their emergence to extraterritorial protection. Oliver Jens Schmitt defines them as strictly Catholic and an ethnic group of its own. For a full discussion, see Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Levantiner: Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im osmanischen Reich im "langen 19. Jahrhundert"* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005).

9 Edhem Eldem, "Capitulations and Western Trade", *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 283-335.

the intensification of commercial exchange and the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the world economy, coupled with the growing asymmetry of power among empires, resulted in the transformation of early-modern ‘privileges’ into extraterritorial ‘rights’ accorded to foreign nationals present in the sultan’s domains. This regime of capitulations sustained extraterritorial jurisdictions, whereby foreign nationals were subject to the law of their own states, even when a dispute involved an Ottoman subject. Such extraterritorial privileges were extended to Ottoman subjects, too, when they worked for foreigners, creating a class of Ottoman non-Muslims (*beratlis*) who were both protected by European law and granted its myriad privileges of taxation and administration.¹⁰ Extraterritoriality was therefore the legal manifestation of the curious nexus of capitalism and imperialism,¹¹ informed by a taxonomy of civilization and religion that determined the degree of its global application through unequal treaties.¹²

With the Treaty of Paris (1856) that welcomed the Ottomans into the family of ‘civilized’ nations after the Crimean war, however, Western powers agreed to treat the empire on equal footing and respect its territoriality as long as the sultan’s Christian populations were treated equally as promised in the Reform Edict announced some weeks prior. As Genell noted, Ottomans understood that

10 For a standard account, see Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

11 Turan Kayaoğlu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

12 Umut Özsü, “The Ottoman Empire, the Origins of Extraterritoriality and International Legal Theory”, *The Oxford Handbook of the Theory of International Law*, eds. Anne Oxford and Florian Hoffmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 123-37. While religion was an important marker of civilization, questions of extraterritorial privileges became all the more complex when it involved foreign Muslims who possessed nationality of other states. See Bruce Masters, “The Treaties of Erzurum (1823 and 1848) and the Changing Status of Iranians in the Ottoman Empire”, *Iranian Studies*, 24, 1/4 (1991), pp. 3-15; Will Smiley, “The Burdens of Subjecthood: The Ottoman State, Russian Fugitives, and Interimperial Law, 1774-1869”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46/1 (2014), pp. 73-93; Lale Can, “The Protection Question: Central Asians and Extraterritoriality in the Late Ottoman Empire”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 48/4 (2016), pp. 679-99; Michael Christopher Low, “Unfurling the Flag of Extraterritoriality: Autonomy, Foreign Muslims, and the Capitulations in the Ottoman Hijaz”, *Journal of the Ottoman Turkish Studies Association*, 3/2 (2016), pp. 299-323. On how questions of extraterritoriality and nationality factored into interstate discussions on extradition, see Berna Kamay, “The Ottoman Empire, the United States, and the Legal Battle over Extradition: the ‘Kelly Affair’”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 65 (2021), pp. 78-99.

“civilization’ and ‘good governance’ were key to limiting foreign interference in internal affairs” and the treaty signed in 1856 strengthened their hands considerably.¹³ Few years later in 1863, citing the promise of equal treatment of imperial subjects, Ottoman reformists introduced a regulation that limited the granting of protégé status (*beratlı*) to the length of appointment.¹⁴ Yet, problems with extraterritoriality were many. Since the independence of Greece in 1830, many Ottoman Rums had begun to attain Greek nationality but continued to live in the empire, where they enjoyed extraterritoriality, creating a problem of dual allegiance. In the aftermath of the Cretan Rebellion (1866), the Ottomans passed the Nationality Law of 1869 that regulated the procedures for naturalization and denaturalization.¹⁵ These were the types of developments that put a premium on questions of change of nationality as it was intricately linked to extraterritoriality.

This was the world into which Emmanuel Carasso was born in 1863. His grandfather, David Carasso, a merchant hailing from Palermo, was 68 years of age when he secured his Sicilian passport in Naples on 16 May 1846 and came to Constantinople, via Messina, on 12 June.¹⁶ Having left the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies behind, which was on the cusp of revolution, the Karasu family settled in Ottoman Salonica, where Emmanuel was born. His father Israël Carasso and Emmanuel were registered in the city as Italian subjects up until 1880¹⁷ when, “due to a simple administrative measure”, they were taken off the records of the Italian consulate¹⁸ and then registered as the nationals of Spain.¹⁹ Some years after this

13 Aimee M. Genell, “Autonomous Provinces and the Problem of ‘Semi-Sovereignty’ in European International Law”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 18/6 (2016), p. 536.

14 Aviv Derri, “Imperial Creditors, ‘Doubtful’ Nationalities and Financial Obligations in Late Ottoman Syria: Rethinking Ottoman Subjecthood and Consular Protection”, *The International History Review*, 43/5 (2021) p. 1062.

15 Berke Torunoğlu, “The Neo-Hellenes in the Ottoman Empire”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 39/1 (2021), pp. 49-70, 60-64.

16 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hariciye Siyasi (HR. SYS.) 2695-1, lef 9, 27 Temmuz 336 (July 1920).

17 Asraël Carasso was David’s grandson: “Emanuel veled-i İzrael veled-i İsak veled-i David.” *Ibid.*

18 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 9, 14 juillet 1920.

19 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 8, 1 août 1920. The precise details of how the Karasu family attained Spanish nationality remains unclear. Quoting Zafer Tarık Tunaya, Orhan Koloğlu notes that the relevant papers were lost after Salonica was lost to the Greeks in 1912. Orhan Koloğlu, *İttihatçılar ve Masonlar* (İstanbul: Gür Yayınları, 1991), p. 57.

change of nationality, the Karasu family seems to have run into some bureaucratic troubles. The files on Yusuf and Samuel Karasu who must be Emmanuel's uncles tell us that there were irregularities in the way the family members registered for Ottoman residency, while maintaining their Spanish nationality. These were the legal questions that came up whenever an elder died in the family, deeply tied to issues of inheritance and property. Emanuel's uncles were *simsar*, i.e. commercial brokers, while his cousin worked as a dragoman in the German consulate in Salonica.²⁰ As such, the Karasu family was a typical bourgeois family that lived in a well-serviced Ottoman port city, with ready access to extra-territorial privileges.²¹

Emanuel Karasu's story takes a radical turn, for better or worse, with the turn of the century. Until then, he seemed to have kept it to himself, practicing law in ways that pleased Ottoman authorities who processed two requests for medals to acknowledge his perseverance and loyalty to the state.²² In April 1901, Karasu, by then famous for his specialty in criminal law, was appointed as the general counsel for the Directorate of Post and Telegraph in Salonica.²³ This was where he met Talat, a budding Young Turk revolutionary working there as a postal clerk since 1898. By 1903, a year after Karasu's initiation into the lodge in Salonica, we see that Young Turks also began to be matriculated into the closed circle.²⁴ Karasu, in turn, became the 171st member of the Young Turk revolutionary organization

20 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 4, 21 Nisan 321 (4 May 1905).

21 Indeed, the family was important but still peripheral when compared to other great Ottoman Jewish families resident in Salonica. For a comparative study, see Nurdan İpek, "Selanik ve İstanbul'da Seçkin Yahudi Bankerler (1850-1908)" (doctoral dissertation), Istanbul University, 2011.

22 BOA. Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemi (DH. MKT.), 279-46, 24 Ağustos 310 (5 September 1894); BOA. DH. MKT. 2085-72, 8 Teşrin-i Sani 313 (20 November 1897).

23 "Echos de la ville", *Journal de Salonique*, 25 avril 1901, p. 1.

24 For the exact dates of their initiation, see Iacovella, *Gönye ve Hilal*, p. 39. Scholarship on the links between the Freemasons and Young Turks is rather extensive. For relations before 1902, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "Notes of the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875-1908", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25/2 (1989), pp. 186-97. For the period after, including a discussion of links with the *dönmes*, see Marc David Baer, *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries and Secular Turks* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 83-110. For British views and an assessment, see Elie Kedourie, "Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 7/1 (1971), pp. 89-104. For how British association of Young Turks with freemasonry played into their interwar interpretations, see Alp Yenen, "Elusive Forces in Illusive Eyes: British Officialdom's Perception of the Anatolian Resistance Movement", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54/5 (2018), pp. 788-810.

and the guardian of its documents.²⁵ While providing extraterritorial protection to its activities as such,²⁶ his legal practice in Salonica was also frequented by the major figures of the Young Turks.²⁷

As the Hamidian regime intensified its efforts to track seditious activities in the city, Karasu and Talat, now the head-clerk in the post office and a fellow member in the lodge, decided to travel to Istanbul openly as a way of dispelling the regime's suspicions over their activities at *Macedonia Risorta*.²⁸ This was a gamble that resulted both in getting rounded up and interrogated in the capital only some months before the revolution—an episode where Karasu managed to use his Spanish nationality in his favor.²⁹ Similar concerns to reassure the palace must have also motivated Karasu to 'plant' two informer reports (*journals*) to the palace, informing the sultan of certain seditious undertakings in Salonica. Though some interpreted it as a sign of Karasu's deceitful nature, not writing *journals* was sometimes more dangerous than providing them.³⁰ After all, his tips were fairly generic, ranging from the circulation of libelous newspapers in literary coffee houses to the arrival of an obscure anarchist to Salonica.³¹ While engaged in such conspiratorial politics, with bets on multiple horses, from the mid-1907 on Karasu also became more active in civil society organizations run by Salonican Jews.³² His growing involvement in the public sphere certainly came to consolidate his credentials

25 Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2011), pp. 104-06.

26 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 260.

27 Halil Erdoğan Cengiz (ed.), *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları (1881-1908)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), p. 64.

28 Karabekir notes that they came to Istanbul to meet with the Istanbul branch of the organization. Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, p. 166.

29 For details of this episode, see Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit: Yıldız Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931), pp. 248-50; Necmettin Alkan, "Emanuel Karasu ve II. Abdülhamid", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 11/1 (2008), pp. 185-86. Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, p. 170.

30 Mehmet Tefik Biren, *II Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Hatıraları I*, ed. F. Rezan Hürmen (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1993), p. 31.

31 BOA. Yıldız Esas Evrakı (Y.EE.), 15-95; Y.EE. 15-96. Both signed off by Karasu, but without any date. Asaf Tugay identifies another *jurnal* from Carasso, too: Asaf Tugay, *İbret: Abdülhamid'e Verilen Jurnaller ve Jurnalciler* (İstanbul: Okat Yayınevi, 1961), p. 39.

32 See "Echos de la ville", *Journal de Salonique*, 18 avril 1907 and 14 octobre 1907, p. 1.

further, which became particularly useful after the Young Turk revolution in 1908 that restored the Ottoman constitution of 1876.

Indeed, Karasu was one of the candidates that the Young Turks decided to run on the ballot from Salonica—the stronghold of the revolution—in elections slated for the fall of 1908.³³ Hüseyin Cahit recalled how Abdurrahman Adil (Eren), another lawyer in the city, approached him, upon hearing the news, and questioned “how on earth it was possible that the Committee pushed Karasu as the candidate; how could Karasu become a deputy?!”³⁴ Abdurrahman Adil’s question was undoubtedly a personal attack, perhaps due to an earlier encounter in the courtroom, but indeed how could he, particularly when he was still registered as a Spanish national? Article 68 of the restored constitution counted Ottoman nationality as the first condition necessary to be elected as a deputy.³⁵ In contacting the governor’s office to clear the hurdle, Karasu noted that even though he was born in the Ottoman Empire, he was “erroneously” given Spanish nationality on account of his family, a nationality for which he never applied. He never claimed the status of a foreigner, either. Nor was he registered in the Spanish consulate per the official certificate.³⁶ According to the Nationality Law of 1869, even though Karasu could not get Ottoman nationality by birth rights—the applications had to be made within three years after the age of majority, Karasu qualified for it having resided in the empire for more than the minimum of five years.³⁷ The request was granted right when the election result for the city was about to be announced.

The Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter CUP)—the political party established by the Young Turks—marketed Karasu “as one of the bravest pioneers of liberty” who for long stood up against the repressive Hamidian regime.³⁸ His

33 For voting districts and the Young Turk candidates in the city, see Ayşe Eryaman, “Selanik Vilayeti’nde 1908 Genel Seçimleri”, *Journal of History Studies*, 9/3 (2017), p. 52.

34 Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2020), p. 71. For a brief biography, see Ali Turan, “Abdurrahman Adil Eren’in (1868-1942) Hayatı, Eserleri ve Mahkeme-i Temyiz Adlı Eserinin Tahlili”, *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 23 (2017), pp. 59-61.

35 See <<https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/oncelki-anayasalar/1876-kânûn-i-esâsî/>> (accessed on August 20, 2022).

36 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 7, 25 Teşrin-i evvel 324 (7 November 1908). Yet, it is evident that Karasu had developed close relations with Spanish consulate general in Salonica. See “Consulat royal d’Espagne”, *Journal de Salonique*, 30 mai 1901, p. 3.

37 See articles 2 and 3 of Ottoman Nationality Law (1869), BOA. Y.EE. 41-133.

38 “Le mouvement libéral à Salonique”, *Stamboul*, 31 août 1908, p. 1.

candidature excited the Jewish community in Salonica, where a Jewish youth organization that defended the progress of both the Ottoman Empire and its Jewish community supported Karasu due to his prestige among the Young Turks, while another group of the Salonican Jews threw their lot behind Menahem Halfon.³⁹ Karasu, together with Cavid and Rahmi, managed to get elected on the CUP ticket in the city and after a celebratory banquet, where he delivered an address in French, the new deputies left for Istanbul by train.⁴⁰ His election to the post opened up possibilities for Ottoman Jewry. Haim Nahum, who would get appointed as the grand rabbi of the empire a year later, for example, lobbied in Constantinople for the empire's Jews to be better represented and presented Karasu's name, together



Image 1: Karasu on the campaign trail⁴³

with that of Vitali Faradji, as possible nominations for the Ministry of Trade.⁴¹ Hoping to benefit from his direct links to the CUP's inner circles, the Zionist organizations also began to court him. Karasu suggested to them that, if made more palatable, some Zionist goals could indeed be achieved and proposed the establishment of an "Ottoman Immigration Company" that would help settle Jews in the empire's territories.⁴²

39 Rifat N. Bali, *Musa'nın Evlatları, Cumhuriyet'in Yurttaşları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2001), p. 57.

40 Semiha Kayaalp, "Jewish Deputies in the Ottoman Parliament" (M.A. Thesis), Boğaziçi University, 2011, p. 13.

41 "Haim Nahum's letter to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 2 December 1908", *Haim Nahum: A Sephardic Chief Rabbi in Politics, 1892-1923*, ed. Esther Benbassa, trans. Miriam Kochen (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), pp. 150-51.

42 Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism, 1897-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 142-44.

43 "Le mouvement libéral à Salonique", *Stamboul*, 31 août 1908, p. 1.

These hopes were dashed, however, with the Counterrevolution in April 1909. Karasu was in Salonica at the time, witnessing how the CUP re-grouped in the city and the army decided to march onto the capital, together with the volunteers that also featured a Jewish battalion.⁴⁴ After the suppression of the counterrevolution, the Young Turks took the opportunity to dethrone the sultan, Abdülhamid II, who was alleged to be the figure behind the scenes, and Karasu was one of the four members entrusted to deliver the news to the sultan personally.⁴⁵ In an interview given to *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Karasu described the meeting in vivid details, noting how the delegation was armed in case the sultan reached for his gun.⁴⁶ Two months later after the sultan's deposition, Karasu continued to be involved in the affair, publishing opinion pieces on the cases that were to be brought against the person of the sultan for damages done during his reign.⁴⁷ In the next two years, Karasu kept busy attending to the parliament sessions, where many important bills of domestic reform were discussed at length, allowing Karasu to make a name for himself.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, he continued to entertain very close ties with his electoral base in Salonica, not only through very frequent visits to the city, but also being very present in the local press, with Sam Lévy's *Journal de Salonique* providing the most extensive coverage of his activities.⁴⁹

In 1910, Karasu moved his legal practice to the recently constructed (1909) building of the Assicurazioni Generali Insurance Company on the Bankalar Street

44 Bali, *Musa'nın Evlatları*, pp. 59-61.

45 Ahmed Bedevi Kuran, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İnkılap Hareketleri ve Milli Mücadele* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), p. 519.

46 See Alkan, "Emanuel Karasu ve II. Abdülhamid", pp. 185-89; Zeynep Uçak, "Emanuel Karasu ve Faaliyetleri" (M.A. Thesis), Marmara University, 2015, pp. 34-36.

47 Emmanuel Carasso, "Abdul-Hamid: ses procès", *La Turquie*, 7 juillet 1909, p. 2.

48 For discussions of his activities in the Ottoman parliament, see Kayaalp, "Jewish Deputies in the Ottoman Parliament", pp. 63-67, 76-80, 89-94; Uçak, "Emanuel Karasu ve Faaliyetleri", pp. 38-68.

49 This was a bi-weekly newspaper that an important medium for Salonica's Jewish community that not only re-printed Karasu's speeches in the parliament and elsewhere, but also regularly featured his interviews and opinion pieces. For example, see Emmanuel Carasso, "La question des églises", *Journal de Salonique*, 5 octobre 1909, p. 1; Is. Jessua, "Chez Me Emmanuel Carasso, député de Salonique", *Journal de Salonique*, 3 août 1909, p. 1. On the journal, see Hélène Guillon, "Le Journal de Salonique (1895-1910), un journal de langue et de culture française dans une communauté juive orientale", *Hypothèses*, 8/1 (2005), pp. 169-77. Karasu regularly contributed columns to the journal, sharing his views on important topics.

in Karaköy, Istanbul, whose entry level was occupied by the Bank of Salonica.⁵⁰ This move put him—both literally and figuratively—at the center of extraterritorial jurisdictions, concessionary agreements, and foreign loans, right on time before the international political climate became particularly heated after the Italian invasion of Ottoman Tripolitania in early October 1911.⁵¹ Karasu was one of the deputies who came to the podium in the parliament and addressed the crisis at hand. For him, the invasion of Tripolitania was a development that trampled on the Law of Nations, putting the entire humanity at risk. In his assessment, there was no proper *casus belli*. Just like earlier cases of wars, he noted, the Italians could have said that there was a rebellion in Tripolitania that threatened the public peace, which put the balance of power in Europe in danger. Instead, Karasu decried, the Italians attacked “our territories as if we were a nation—just like those between Congo and Africa—that signed no treaties with anyone”, and by defending the Tripolitania, the Ottomans were not only poised “to protect the honor and rights of our nation, but we also become the protector and fighter of the laws of the civilized world.”⁵² In arguing so, Karasu, much like his predecessors, sought to tackle commonplace views in international law that situated the empire within a civilizational hierarchy and reduced it to an inferior position.

Despite the fiery rhetoric that presumed continued Ottoman membership in the Concert of Europe, the Young Turks were long active in trying to contain the war, with Karasu as the go-between. Alberto Teodoli, the Italian delegate in the council of Ottoman Public Debt, reminisced how Karasu visited him in early October, together with Italian architect Edoardo de Nari, and passed orally an offer that was ultimately not taken, which would have created an Italian protectorate over Libya in exchange for 10 million lira and a treaty of friendship between

50 Edhem Eldem, *Bankalar Caddesi: Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Voyvoda Caddesi* (İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Bankacılık ve Finans Tarihi Araştırma ve Belge Merkezi, 2000), pp. 86-91.

51 Karasu had already developed interest in steamship companies early on, as one sees his name in the board of directors for the Ottoman National Society for Steam Navigation. See “Société Nationale Ottomane de Navigation à Vapeur”, *Le Journal de la chambre de commerce de Constantinople*, n. 1304: 1 janvier 1910, p. 5. This was ultimately a failed initiative after the revolution to establish a company what would operate for the Ottoman Maritime Administration. See Ali Akyıldız, “Osmanlı İstanbul’unda Deniz Ulaşımı (Modern Dönem)”, *Antik Çağ’dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, vol. 6 (İstanbul: İBB Kültür A.Ş. Yayınları, 2015), p. 441.

52 Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi, 6 Teşrin-i Evvel 1327 (19 October 1911), pp. 32-33.

the two countries.⁵³ The Young Turks also tried to use their links to the Grand Lodge of Italy, again via Karasu, to pressure Italy out of the war, but to no avail. After all, the developments of the past year had created a wedge not only between Italy and Ottoman Empire, but also among the masonic organizations between the two counties. Starting with the rebellion in Ottoman Albania in 1911, which was a reaction to the violent introduction of centralizing policies by the Young Turks, Ettore Ferrari, the grand master of the Grand Orient of Italy, joined the pro-Albanian committees in Italy, while the invasion of Tripolitania only made things worse⁵⁴ and facilitated the disillusionment among the Young Turks with the freemasonry.⁵⁵ Such developments, coupled with the re-establishment of the Grand Lodge of Turkey in 1909 and its evolution into an independent direction, damaged what were otherwise sturdy transnational ties between these organizations, leading to their increasing territorialization.⁵⁶

Yet, Karasu was not just a transimperial broker whose only function was to facilitate informal rapprochements between the two governments behind the scenes. As a matter of fact, the conflict with Italy had quickly embedded him at the heart of the shifting political economy of the Eastern Mediterranean, where Italian commercial interests and political ambitions suddenly diverged, at least for those influential Italians entrepreneurs whose investments in the Orient became threatened by the prospects of a conflict that could linger for years to come. Right after the outbreak of the war, for example, Karasu appeared on the pages of the influential *La Liberté*, where he urged the Italian public to be conscious of their own interests and accordingly demand an end to the senseless war that had transformed the entire Mediterranean into a vast battlefield. In the first part of the article, Karasu also described what he noted to be his long-held views on the necessity of instituting a Balkan confederation with the participation of all Balkan states—an initiative that could first take the shape of economic cooperation and better yet a customs union, before it turns into a political one.⁵⁷

53 Qtd. in Koloğlu, *İttihatçılar ve Masonlar*, pp. 279-81.

54 Iacovella, *Gönye ve Hilal*, pp. 47-50.

55 Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene*, p. 87.

56 For a historical summary of these developments, see Fr. Is. Jessua, *Grand Orient de Turquie: exposé historique sommaire de la maçonnerie en Turquie* (Istanbul: Imp. Française L. Mourkidés, 1922).

57 “La confédération balkanique: déclarations de Carasso effendi”, *La Liberté*, 9 novembre 1911, p. 2.

While Karasu's remarks on the peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict sat well with his position as a deputy in Istanbul, his opinions also spoke to the desires of Italian businesses which had been on the lookout in the Balkans and Asia Minor for various investments. It was not a coincidence that Karasu was involved in the first round of peace negotiations with the Italians, via Bernardino Nogara, then the director of the Oriental branch of the Italian Banca Commerciale.⁵⁸ Karasu's relationship with him dated back to Salonica, where Nogara was the head of the Oriental Mining Company. This was a business established in 1901 by the Venetian capitalist Giuseppe Volpi to pursue mining opportunities in the Ottoman Empire,⁵⁹ which, within few years, managed to run modest operations in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Ottoman Macedonia.⁶⁰ Even though Karasu was eventually dropped out of the peace negotiations as the Young Turks were sidelined from power in July 1912, Italian commercial interests continued to mesh well with those of Italian politicians on the course of diplomacy in the Orient. It was only telling that the Italian delegation posed for photos in Lausanne next to Volpi and Nogara after the signing of the Treaty of Ouchy in October. These very same businessmen continued to play important roles in the upcoming years in articulating the outlines of Italian zone of economic influence across Western Anatolia and the infrastructural projects that would underpin it.⁶¹

The peace with Italy came only after the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, however. The war which lasted briefly was a disastrously costly affair for the Ottomans, as the empire lost its Balkan territories, including Salonica—home both to Karasu and to the Young Turk revolution—which was occupied by Greece. This quickly started a debate on the possible status of the city,⁶² and a Muslim-Jewish-Vlach

58 Many Young Turks, including Talat himself, seemed to have doubted that the negotiations would be conclusive, seeing Karasu's involvement as counterproductive. İsmail Kurtcephe, *Türk-İtalyan İlişkileri (1911-1916)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), pp. 197-98.

59 For a biography of Nogara and his career in the Ottoman Empire, see Maurizio Pegrari, "Nogara, Bernardino", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 78 (2013): <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardino-nogara_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardino-nogara_(Dizionario-Biografico))> (accessed August 20, 2022).

60 BOA. Yıldız Perakende Umumi (Y.PRK.UM.), 77-35, 21 Eylül 1321 (4 October 1905).

61 Sergio Romano, *Giuseppe Volpi et l'Italie moderne: finance, industrie et État de l'ère giolittienne à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1982), pp. 52-63.

62 Devin E. Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), pp. 1-4.



Image 2: Negotiations for the peace Treaty of Ouchy (aka Treaty of Lausanne, 1912): standing from left to right Giuseppe Volpi, Pietro Bertolini, Bernardino Nogara⁶³

Committee was established in Istanbul, defending Salonica's internationalization, an autonomy guaranteed by Great Powers.⁶⁴ Similarly, Emanuel Karasu would continue to believe that the granting of autonomy to the city was possible in the upcoming years.⁶⁵ Yet, such territorial losses immediately raised the stakes on the future of the empire, which led the Young Turks—briefly sidelined in the capital since the summer—to stage their comeback through a coup d'état in January 1913.

Right after the takeover of power, the CUP began to consolidate its position; so did Karasu, who would benefit considerably from the start of the one-party rule and accordingly resumed to benefit from the particular nexus of politics, Western finance, and war. In early February 1913, Karasu and Nogara visited Cavid Bey, the Minister of Finance and a fellow deputy from Salonica, discussing the terms

63 Intesa Sanpaolo Historical Archive, NOG/INT/1/3, Lausanne, 1912.

64 "A Muslim-Jewish-Vlach Committee for Internationalizing Salonica, 1913", *Sephardi Lives: A Documentary History, 1700-1950*, eds. Julia Philips Cohen and Sarah A. Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 150-53.

65 Kayaalp, "Jewish Deputies in the Ottoman Parliament", p. 117.

of a loan deal that Constantinople could really use in the context of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913)⁶⁶—an offer that was reflective of larger political ambitions of Italy in southern Anatolia.⁶⁷ In the following months, Italian ambassador was busy trying to court the empire into the camp of Central Powers, with Karasu acting as the go-between. Even though this proposal was ultimately not taken up, the empire ended up accepting the loan agreement from Italy via Banco di Roma.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Karasu's name was among those Young Turks who were allegedly targets in an assassination plot, illustrative of his growing political significance also in the eyes of anti-Unionists.⁶⁹ By the end of the year, Karasu had secured the imperial decree that recognized the establishment of his company centered in Istanbul and called "Manifatura Ticareti Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi" (Ottoman Incorporated Company of Textile Trade).⁷⁰ Within a month, he was elected to the Ottoman parliament as the deputy of Istanbul. Around the same time, Karasu had also been seeking to be an intermediary in Ottoman naval orders from the British Armstrong company.⁷¹ By the time the First World War broke out then, Emanuel Karasu had already emerged as an important political intermediary who

66 Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, vol. 1, eds. Hasan Babacan and Servet Avşar (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), pp. 549-55. The Italian loan offer was part of a larger Ottoman effort to secure money for a cash-stripped imperial treasury. For the broader context of loan negotiations with various parties, see Ayşe Köse Badur, "A Civil Unionist: The Biography of Mehmed Cavid Bey, 1876-1926" (doctoral dissertation), Boğaziçi University, 2021, chapter 4.

67 The loan offer was related to Nogara's attempts to secure concessions in southern Italy. For a discussion, see Giampaolo Conte, "The Italian Bank Società Commerciale d'Oriente and its Business in Ottoman Istanbul (1907-1915)", *Osmanlı İstanbulu IV*, eds. Feridun M. Emecen, Ali Akyıldız and Emrah Safa Gürkan (İstanbul: İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), pp. 31-45, 39.

68 Mahmud Şevket Paşa, *Mahmut Şevket Paşa'nın Sadaret Günlüğü*, ed. Murat Bardakçı (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014), pp. 144-45; p. 155. In later years, Karasu family was personally connected to this bank. Karasu's daughter Nelly married the general director of the bank, Sami Hayırel. Margulies, "Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine bir Başlangıç", p. 26.

69 BOA. Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO.), 4188-314072, 10 Haziran 1329 (23 Haziran 1913).

70 BOA. İrade Meclis-i Mahsusa (İ.MMS.), 174-6, lef 5, 14 Kanun-u evvel 329 (14 December 1913).

71 Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, vol. 2, p. 493. One should note that the entry also highlights Karasu's involvement in the construction and operation of the dry docks of İstinye, which is corroborated by later oral history accounts. See Margulies, "Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine bir Başlangıç", p. 26.

not only consolidated his standing among the Young Turks and turned politician-cum-businessman, but also built up the type of access to Italian banks, experts, and diplomats in Istanbul that would prove crucial for him at the end of the war.

A Young Turk with Wealth in Occupied Istanbul

Two weeks after the signing of the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918) that marked the Ottoman defeat in WWI, the Allies began to occupy Istanbul. For the Young Turks, the First World War had been an opportunity that one could not miss—a certain way in which the empire could re-assert its position among ‘civilized’ nations. In early September 1914, well before the entry into the war, the Ottomans abolished the capitulations unilaterally, having long seen them, not as bilateral treaty obligations, but one-sided privileges granted by the sultan.⁷² Following the Ottoman defeat in the war, however, the most prominent Young Turks were forced to flee the capital, fearing charges that could be brought upon them for war crimes, while the capitulations they abolished at the war’s start were restored by the forces of Allied occupation. Though a prominent Young Turk himself, Karasu stayed in Istanbul. The extent of the wealth that he had accumulated during the course of the war meant that he could not simply liquidate and leave.⁷³ Karasu must have trusted in his pre-war connections, too, to protect him and his wealth. So did other Young Turks. When Talat left the capital, for example, he was said to have transferred the government bonds on his name to Karasu and cashed much of the rest to finance his exit.⁷⁴

72 Feroz Ahmad, “Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations, 1800-1914”, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11/1 (2000), pp. 17-19; Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal, “Resurrecting Legal Extraterritoriality in Occupied Istanbul, 1918-1923”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54/5 (2018), pp. 769-87. The abrogation of the capitulations was part of a larger Ottoman quest of securing full sovereignty during the war. See Kate Dannies and Stefan Hock, “A Prolonged Abrogation? The Capitulations, the 1917 Law of Family Rights, and the Ottoman Quest for Sovereignty during World War I”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 52/2 (2020), pp. 245-60.

73 As such, Karasu’s case was one among many other disputes over wealth that emerged with the partitioning of the Ottoman lands. For a discussion, see Orçun Can Okan, “Coping with Transitions: The Connected Construction of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, 1918-1928” (doctoral dissertation), Columbia University, 2020, pp. 214-67.

74 Hasan Babacan, *Mehmed Talat Paşa, 1874-1921* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2005), p. 193.

As such, Karasu was one of the hundreds implicated with the war-time government who stayed behind in Istanbul, where in the upcoming months his wealth would partially finance some of the Unionist undertakings. The post-war political climate had resulted in the fragmentation of the Young Turk movement into various factions,⁷⁵ while the anti-CUP press only became stronger as the days passed. Former Unionists quickly re-organized themselves into new political parties, with Mustafa Kemal and Ali Fethi representing one important faction. *Minber*, their mouthpiece, was initially funded by Karasu's contributions.⁷⁶ Most of the Young Turks, now dispersed and often destitute, needed funding, too. Karasu's name in the post-war memoirs often pop up in relation to multiple requests by his friends and acquaintances alike of personal loans, many of which Karasu must have failed to honor. This led many to frame him in negative terms, resulting in a flurry of hearsays,⁷⁷ while some anecdotes were mixed with a dose of burgeoning postwar anti-Semitism.⁷⁸ Hüseyin Cahid was on the other side of the spectrum, noting that Karasu was a generous man and a committed revolutionary who shared his wealth with the fellow Unionists. In the post-war era, as he noted, "everyone wanted our heads perhaps, but all eyes were certainly on Karasu's money."⁷⁹

By the end of the year, there were rumors circulating in Istanbul that mass arrests of the Unionists were about to take place. According to Karasu's son-in-law, Sami Hayirel, Karasu at the time lived in fear as he was staying in his summer residence at Büyükkada, John Paşa mansion.⁸⁰ The expected mass arrests did come in late January, 1919, at a time when Karasu was at Rosenthal Apartments, his winter residence in Nişantaşı. Right before the arrival of the police, Karasu sought refuge in the apartment of a Jewish neighbor with French nationality that invoked extraterritorial immunity. This led Halil Nedim, the general director of the Ottoman police, to secure the service of three French gendarme to get him out of the apartment and into the police station, while flatly declining his offers of

75 For a discussion, see Erol Ülker, "Sultanists, Republicans, Communists: The Turkish National Movement in Istanbul, 1918-1923" (doctoral dissertation), The University of Chicago, 2013, pp. 65-102.

76 Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, vol. 3, pp. 626-27.

77 Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene*, p. 329.

78 See Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1967), pp. 275-76.

79 Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, p. 73.

80 Margulies, "Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine bir Başlangıç", p. 26.

bribes throughout the episode.⁸¹ Karasu's arrests sparked immediate reaction from the city's Jewish community in Balat and Hasköy which protested and demanded his release, sending delegations to the Prime Ministry and noting that "Karasu Efendi had nothing to do with the question of massacres."⁸² Those arrested Young Turks, including Karasu, were transferred to Bekirağa Bölüğü and their property was seized and accounts frozen.⁸³ Karasu's influential friends in the press, government, and Jewish community continued their overtures for his release. One was Refi Cevat Bey, the owner and publisher of *Alemdar*, who campaigned on Karasu's behalf, with the support of Ahmet İzzet Paşa (later Furgaç), the Minister of Interior at the time.⁸⁴ The minister did publicly defend his release on account of ill health.⁸⁵ Karasu was indeed hospitalized in April.⁸⁶

When the British decided to send the most important Unionists as prisoners to Malta, Emanuel Karasu was not one of them. He had been bailed out for half a million lira, after which he left for Switzerland and then moved to Italy. In early 1920, he filed a request for a change of nationality to Italian authorities.⁸⁷ During the spring, Karasu looked for a way of setting up an appointment with Carlo Sforza, the former Italian High Commissioner in Istanbul, presumably to facilitate the procedure for his application.⁸⁸ By June, he was in Rhodes, then under the Italian control, where he seemed to have re-fashioned himself as a go-between, becoming a member of the Italian committee to expedite economic exchange between Turkey and Italy.⁸⁹ While Karasu was a high-profile applicant for Italian nationality, there were hundreds of others who sought Italian papers after the war. Italian policy vis-à-vis these requests was very much linked to the intra-Allied competition, as the expansion of political and economic influence was commensurate with

81 Aşuroğlu, *Mütareke Günlerinde*, pp. 10-11.

82 Bünyamin Kocaoğlu, *Mütarekede İttihatçılık: İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası'nın Dağılması* (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2006), pp. 218-19.

83 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 9, lef 36, 9 janvier 1922.

84 Aşuroğlu, *Mütareke Günlerinde*, pp. 13-14.

85 Ferudun Ata, *İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2005), p. 96.

86 BOA. Dahiliye Kalem-i Mahsus (DH. KMS.), 51-15, 9 Nisan 335 (1919).

87 Emanuela Locci, "İtalya ve Türkiye Arasındaki İlişkilerde Emanuele Carasso", *Mimar Sinan*, 160 (2013), pp. 43-44.

88 Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, vol. 4, p. 83.

89 Locci, "İtalya ve Türkiye", p. 44.

the number of newly created nationals on the ground, which also helped justify Italian presence in the region.⁹⁰ As such, Karasu's quest for a new nationality was part of the broader attempts by individuals who once belonged to a supranational polity of adapting to the emerging regimes of mobility that characterized the post-Ottoman configurations of territoriality.⁹¹

Only when did Carlo Sforza, whom Karasu had reached out earlier, become the Italian Foreign Minister in mid-June 1920, his request for change of nationality got approved by Italian consulate in Salonica, where Karasu had originally been registered.⁹² The request of the Italian High Commissioner to Ottoman authorities to recognize Karasu and his family as Italian from now on was duly rejected, however. As the Ottoman Foreign Ministry reasoned, he held Ottoman nationality without any doubt, having served in the Ottoman parliament many times, and that the government could not rule any differently, given the nationality law in place.⁹³ Indeed, article 5 of the Nationality Law of 1869 necessitated the sultanic decree for a change of nationality to take place and if carried out unilaterally, no such change would be recognized and the person in question would continue to be regarded as Ottoman national.⁹⁴ This article certainly enabled the Porte to curtail the pressures of capitulatory powers for further extraterritorial reach, which was particularly emblematic in the case involving Emanuel Karasu. In 1893, the Porte made a further step declaring that this rarely-issued imperial decree would only be given to those who would announce they would never step back into the

90 Marie Bossaert, "La politica italiana di cittadinanza e di protezione nell'Impero ottomano durante l'occupazione di Istanbul (1919-1920)", in *Citizenship under Pressure: Naturalisation Policies from the Late XIX Century until the Aftermath of the World War I*, ed. Marcella Agrietti (Rome: Edizioni Di Storia e Letteratura, 2021), p. 52. Such competitive policies of imperial influence were not limited to Italy, but rather was central to the broader imperial enterprise in the post-Ottoman Middle East. See Orçun Can Okan, "Competing to Protect: Repatriation and Legal Protection of Syrians in Istanbul under Allied Occupation (1918-1923)", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 55/1 (2023) pp. 67-83.

91 See Jordi Tejel and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (eds.), *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022). Also see Burak Sayım, "The Communist International, Forged Passports and the Interwar Border Regimes in the Middle East", a paper presented in *Pierre du Bois Doctoral Workshop: Mobile Actors in Global History*, Geneva Graduate Institute, 2023.

92 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 9, 14 juillet 1920.

93 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 8, 1 août 1920.

94 For article 5 of the law, see BOA. Y.EE. 41-133.

imperial domains.⁹⁵ Therefore, by the time Karasu's request was filed in, it had become particularly difficult to receive permission for denaturalization from the sultan, which happened only if the person in question had strong connections, but no unresolved administrative and legal problems.⁹⁶

It is certainly the case that Karasu fulfilled the first criteria, which would have helped him secure the permission, particularly in the peculiar context of occupied Istanbul. Yet, as the Ottoman Foreign Ministry also highlighted, Karasu could simply not be exempt from prosecution because, as Damad Ferid Paşa, the notorious anti-Unionist Prime Minister put it, Karasu could very well "be liable for having participated in monopolization that caused an incalculable number of victims in the country."⁹⁷ As such, Karasu's request for change of nationality was intimately tied up as much with the post-WWI destiny of the Young Turks as it was with his legal troubles. In a follow-up, the Italians requested that six ongoing court cases brought against Karasu, an Italian national, should be postponed until Karasu could receive consular assistance and Ottoman courts could once again adjudicate cases involving the nationals of the Allies and Ottoman subjects. Yet, the trials at various Ottoman commercial courts continued without interruption,⁹⁸ as different Ottoman ministries agreed on the impossibility of accepting Karasu as an Italian subject.⁹⁹

The court cases that were underway despite the Italian intervention all related to Karasu's business activities during the WWI. He had been a war profiteer who stood at the heart of German/Austrian and Ottoman trade, whereby the import of Western goods and export of Ottoman raw material helped him collect very handsome commissions.¹⁰⁰ One particular case—involving Mehmet Hikmet Paşa (later Salahor), the founding director of Naval Museum and Library—is illustrative of both Karasu's commercial transactions and the later problems created by his unresolved nationality question. Mehmet Hikmet Paşa was tasked for the purchase of military goods needed by the Ottoman navy and army during the war and did so

95 Cihan Osmanağaoğlu, *Tanzimat Dönemi İtibarıyla Osmanlı Tabiiyyetinin (Vatandaşlığının) Gelişimi* (İstanbul: Legal Yayıncılık, 2004), p. 218.

96 Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not", p. 295.

97 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 8, 1 août 1920.

98 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 11, 24 août 1920 and lef 12, 24 septembre 1920.

99 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 14, 6 Şubat 337 (1921).

100 Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene*, p. 329, 336; Aşuroğlu, *Mütareke Günlerinde*, p. 9.

by travelling to Germany and Austria.¹⁰¹ In his statement to the court, Mehmet Hikmet Paşa noted that he worked for Karasu and traveled to Vienna multiple times on his orders in 1917, and purchased two steamboats called 'Arimatea' and 'Bithinia' that cost 10 million and 6.5 million krone respectively. According to the lawsuit filed in October 1919, Karasu never paid him his commission from the sale which was around half a million krone. Ottoman commercial court that handled the case found Karasu guilty and ordered him to pay him the amount and the court fees on 12 June 1920,¹⁰² a fine that would go unpaid for the time being.

A year later, this court decision got tangled up with the pending question of Karasu's nationality. In addition to the Italian High Commissioner's pressures on Ottoman authorities to recognize him as an Italian subject, similar claims began to be made over the ownership of the ships and which flags the steamboats should fly. To facilitate the process, Karasu ended up selling the ships to Guglielmo Rossi,¹⁰³ the owner of Società Italiana di Navigazione, who had earlier been contracted by Karasu for a major overhaul of both of his ships.¹⁰⁴ It did not take long for the Ottoman port authorities to realize that Karasu's claimed Italian citizenship was not recognized by the Ottoman state. As such, they found the sale of these two ships to G. Rossi in violation of the existing regulations, refusing to change the ships' country of registration on July 16, 1921.¹⁰⁵ It has been a year since the Italian High Commissioner sent in the initial request for the recognition of Karasu's Italian nationality and later started to invoke the article 126 of the Treaty of Sèvres. Yet, Ottoman government in Istanbul under occupation remained adamant, dismissing all these repeated formal and oral appeals.¹⁰⁶

While these sets of correspondences went back and forth between governments and agencies on Karasu's nationality and its associated problems, there was

101 Mehmet Korkmaz, "Bahriye Müze ve Kütüphane İdaresi'nin Kurucu Müdürü Mehmet Hikmet (Salahor) Paşa (1863-1934): Hayatı, Askeri Faaliyetleri ve Eserleri", *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 43 (2020), pp. 140-41.

102 BOA. Hariciye İstişare Odası (HR. HMŞ. İŞO.), 217-64, lef 2, 30 Temmuz 1336 (July 1920).

103 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 20, 1 Haziran 1337 (June 1921).

104 Locci, "İtalya ve Türkiye", p. 45.

105 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 34, 16 Temmuz 37 (July 1921).

106 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 24, 9 Temmuz 338 (July 1921). The relevant article of the treaty in fact regulated denaturalization of those former Ottoman nationals resident in territories detached from the empire, which made it inapplicable to the case of Karasu.

a fierce fighting going on in Central Anatolia. In fact, by the third week of July, the course of the war turned in favor of Greek armies. Between July 8 and 20, they captured Afyon, Kütahya and Eskişehir, namely the last hurdles on the path to Ankara, the center of nationalist resistance, which heightened anxieties and led Istanbul to restart lobbying Allied powers for peace and intervention into the conflict.¹⁰⁷ This was the context in which the Sublime Porte notified the Italians on July 31, 1921, noting that it recognized Karasu's Italian nationality "on a purely exceptional basis and without this measure being able to constitute a precedent."¹⁰⁸ In contacting the Ministry of Navy for necessary action on Karasu's steamboats, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the decision was taken as a polite gesture to the Italian government whose goodwill could be of use in the particularly delicate context at hand.¹⁰⁹ In other words, the imminent prospect of the collapse of the nationalist resistance provided a political environment, where intermediaries, such as Karasu, could once again be useful in informal diplomatic maneuvers. Also, just like many other examples in earlier decades, accepting Karasu's change of nationality meant that Istanbul partially relinquished its claims of sovereignty as a way of prolonging its own existence.

As for Karasu, having secured his passport, he immediately embarked upon a tour in Europe, where he continued to pursue his business ventures.¹¹⁰ Yet, the court cases brought against him continued to create considerable headache. There were originally six lawsuits filed, respectively, by Ottoman İtibar-ı Milli Bank, Ministry of Finance, Orient Bank (two separate ones), Istanbul Society for Quays, Docks and Warehouses, and finally the aforementioned Hikmet Paşa.¹¹¹ After his Italian nationality got recognized by Ottoman authorities, however, only two of them seemed to have continued to cause trouble. First was the lawsuit borne out of Karasu's failed delivery of tobacco to the General Directorate of Military and Hedjaz Railway, for which he received payments in advance as well as his purchase

107 The British Archives (hereafter TNA), Foreign Office (FO), 424/538, "Turkey: Annual Report, 1921", p. 15.

108 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 30, 31 juillet 1921.

109 "...tabiiyet-i Osmaniyesi her türlü şekk ve tereddüden azade olan mümaileyhin İtalya hükümetine karşı bir muamele-yi mücamelekari ibrazı ve hükümet-i müşaileyhin şu sırada idame olunacak meveddetten devletçe fevaid temini için..." BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 33, 1 Ağustos 1921.

110 Margulies, "Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine bir Başlangıç", p. 26, 28.

111 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 11, 24 août 1920.

of nails, matches, and sugar from an Ottoman company, a transaction for which he had still outstanding debt.¹¹² Even though the order to seize Karasu's property to pay for what he owed was lifted more than a year ago, the Cadastral Office continued to decline Karasu's requests to use his property as collateral for loans from Italian banks.¹¹³ In June 1922, in caving in to the Italians who increased their pressure and reminded the Porte that Karasu was an Italian subject, Ottoman authorities ended up removing the order for freeze on his properties, with the only exception being Karasu's John Paşa mansion in Büyükkada.¹¹⁴

Disputes such as that of Karasu that pitted foreign nationals against Ottoman subjects were naturally common in the aftermath of a long-lasting war economy during the Great War. The growing number of those acquiring foreign nationalities during Istanbul's occupation only helped multiply these commercial lawsuits. This led the Allied forces in Istanbul to secure the imperial decree on December 8, 1921 to establish the Provisional Mixed Tribunals that were tasked to rule civil and commercial cases,¹¹⁵ which came only few months after Ottoman recognition of Karasu's Italian nationality. When Hikmet Paşa demanded in the summer 1922 to get the earlier fine of 15.246 liras to be collected, Ottoman authorities put Karasu mansion in Büyükkada on auction in order to pay back the plaintiff. Only did the intervention of the Interallied Police in Istanbul pause the sale. In contacting his Ottoman counterpart, the Italian High Commissioner noted that the decision of confiscation was taken by an Ottoman court that cannot rule over a dispute involving an Italian subject, asking the transference of the case to the newly established mixed tribunals,¹¹⁶ which was duly communicated to Hikmet Paşa¹¹⁷ who could only wonder how come one could change his nationality status in the midst of a judicial process and what this suggests on the course of dispensing justice.¹¹⁸

We do not know what happened after Hikmet Paşa v. Karasu case was transferred to the mixed tribunals. Yet, by the time this happened in mid-September, the resistance forces in Ankara had been at the end of a successful counter-offensive

112 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 40, 11 Haziran 338 (1921).

113 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 36, 9 janvier 1922.

114 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 40, 11 Haziran 338 (1921).

115 See Ali Arslan, "Muvakkat Muhtelif Encümen-i Adli: Bir İşgal Dönemi Mahkemesi (1921-1922)", *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 15 (1995-1997), pp. 585-95.

116 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 48, 29 août 1922.

117 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 47, 14 Eylül (September) 1922.

118 BOA. HR. SYS. 2695-1, lef 44, 21 Haziran 338 (June 1922).

that managed to push Greek forces entirely off Asia Minor. Now victorious on the battlefield, Ankara quickly informed those serving in the mixed courts on November 6 not to rule any other case, declaring that “the mixed judicial commission was *ipso facto suspended*.”¹¹⁹ Did Karasu use his existing contacts and wealth to slip through the cracks by using the short window of extraterritoriality that was available to him? The Kemalists in Ankara had long declared any law or regulations passed in Istanbul after 23 April 1920 to be null and void, while also calling the mixed judicial commission illegal a month after its inception.¹²⁰ That being said, however, when the Treaty of Lausanne was signed, Ankara agreed to comply with the decisions taken by the mixed commission during the period of occupation.¹²¹ Even if Karasu had managed to circumvent the system to his benefit, he continued to have difficult relations with Ankara in the upcoming years. In August 1923, Italian authorities had to step in on his behalf to ward off any trouble that could have befallen on him when he visited Istanbul—a journey Mussolini advised him not to undertake.¹²² He still did, though, benefiting from the protection of his Italian papers. Even though Karasu spent his later years in Italy, his political and business connections continued to bound him to his past and certainly to Istanbul. This was also where he was interred after his death in June 1934.

Conclusion

Prominent Young Turks such as Hüseyin Cahid found Karasu to be naïve and others like Cavid Bey saw his various initiatives to be delusional.¹²³ While his contemporaries played him down, if not ridiculed him, Karasu in fact managed to outlive many of his revolutionary peers. Since the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, many of his colleagues either lost their relevance over time due to inner-party conflicts or could not re-purpose their trajectory in a world of constantly shifting political conditions that characterized the period after the revolution. Viewed from this angle, Karasu’s story illustrates his skills in betting the right horse one crisis after another. He entered Ottoman political arena at the right time, not only riding the revolutionary wave, but also helping to consolidate it. His ability to do so made him both politically significant and personally wealthy. He had carefully

119 TNA, FO 424/538, “Turkey: Annual Report, 1922”, p. 46.

120 TNA, FO 424/538, “Turkey: Annual Report, 1922”, p. 46.

121 MacArthur-Seal, “Resurrecting Legal Extraterritoriality”, p. 781.

122 Locci, “İtalya ve Türkiye”, p. 44.

123 Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, p. 109; Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, vol. 1, p. 549.

cultivated connections before and during the First World War with Italian banks, businesses, and diplomats, which truly made Karasu the embodiment of the curious nexus of politics and capital in the late Ottoman Empire.¹²⁴ Capitulations, the extraterritorial privileges they offered, concessions, and foreign loans were key to this process, one that enabled individuals like him to thrive across the Levant. It was on this type of empire—typical of the age of capital—that Karasu had always placed his bet. When Salonica was lost or the Italy invaded Tripolitania, his discourse was more business oriented than political, or political to the extent it concerned business. One might be inclined to see Karasu as an odd ball among the Young Turks. Yet, transimperial brokers like him were necessary components of even a revolutionary movement that sought to rely on informal diplomacy in navigating a world of fierce capitalist and imperialist encroachments in order to secure the empire's survival.

Karasu's departure from the Ottoman polity occurred during the occupation of Istanbul when the Allied forces reinstated the capitulations that the Young Turks had unilaterally revoked at the outset of the First World War. This provided an excellent opportunity for Karasu to seek extraterritorial protection as a way out of his mounting legal troubles in post-war Istanbul. His year-long odyssey to get his Italian nationality recognized by Ottoman authorities, however, became part of a larger symbolic field of uneven interstate interactions, where Istanbul dragged its feet in a bid to partially save its sovereign face. This should alert us to the possibility of studying the limits to Allied occupation—that is, the legal arguments put forth by Ottoman jurists and practical daily problems created by Ottoman bureaucrats in processing the Allied demands as well as the particular circumstances when they ultimately caved in. While we now have a deeper understanding of how Istanbul under the Allied occupation became the very arena in which the Great Powers competed among themselves,¹²⁵ Ottoman responses to this scramble could offer us further insights. The prospects of the success or failure of the resistance in Ankara in particular, I suggest, seemed to have determined the way Ottoman bureaucracy handled the Allied requests. At least, it certainly did in the case of Karasu, since his denaturalization was approved by Istanbul only at

124 As such, Karasu's story aligns well with those of Malhamé brothers and Ismail Kemal Bey—i.e., individuals who made a career by acting as an intermediary between foreign capital and local politics. Hanssen, "Malhamé-Malfamé"; Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878-1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 33.

125 Bossaert, "La politica italiana di cittadinanza"; Okan, "Competing to Protect".

Ankara's weakest moment. After all, the authorities in both Istanbul and Ankara were well aware that full sovereignty was not something granted, but had to be won at the battlefield. They were soon proven right when the fortunes of the battle shifted in favor of the resistance. It was ultimately Ankara's decisive military victory that had altered the existing asymmetry of power, which then allowed the nationalists to reach bilateral agreements and abolish the unequal treaties for good.

When Emmanuel Carasso Turned Italian: A Biography of Extraterritoriality and Questions of Nationality in the Ottoman Empire

Abstract ■ Emmanuel Carasso (Turkified as Emanuel Karasu) (1863-1934) was a lawyer who hailed from a Sephardic Jewish family in Salonica, where he became instrumental after the turn of the century in the establishment of *Macedonia Risorta*, the local branch of the Italian masonic lodge *Grande Oriente*. The Salonica lodge quickly became an important center of Young Turk revolutionary activity in the following years, as privileges offered by capitulations enabled secrecy for lodge members. After the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, Karasu applied for Ottoman nationality and then became a member of the parliament representing Salonica and later Istanbul. During the course of his political career, he is best known for being a member of a delegation of four who went to Abdulhamid II to relay to him the news of his dethronement in the aftermath of the Counterrevolution (April 1909). Using his strong positions within the Committee of Union and Progress, Karasu managed to amass considerable wealth during the First World War, when his name also got popularly involved with corruption. Unlike other Unionists who left the imperial capital as the war came to an end, Karasu remained in Istanbul, where a number of court cases were brought against him. This is when he applied for Italian nationality, a request that started a lengthy bureaucratic paper trail that sheds light on an interesting nexus of political influence, capital, and extraterritorial privileges. This paper seeks to trace available Ottoman records in a bid to reconstruct the post-WWI odyssey of Karasu and trace the ways in which litigations were worked out in occupied Istanbul, how Allied Powers interacted with Ottoman authorities when it came to questions of nationality, and what these episodes imply in the transition to a post-Ottoman Middle East. Keywords: Emmanuel Carasso, Young Turks, nationality, law, capitulations, occupied Istanbul.

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