

Several of us had already attended two Thanksgiving events earlier in the week prior to this get-together, one at the Fulbright office in İstanbul and the other at the U.S. Consul General's home in İstanbul, both events replete with turkey and gravy; however, we were delighted to continue our week of friendship and food for another evening. Of course the humor of celebrating "turkey day" aka Thanksgiving in Turkey itself, was to be expected. For me, being of Asian Indian origin and a Hindi speaker, I found levity in the fact that the Turkish word for the bird turkey is "hindi."

Of our 2016-2017 group of 13 Fulbrighters, eight of us were able to get together thanks to Parker's enthusiasm and

initiative – Jason Vivrette and his partner Leticia, Adam Calo and his partner Cha, Britt Van Paepeghem, Kenan Sharpe, Izzy Starr, Hamilton "Parker" Cook, and me, Shruti Poulsen and my partner Paul. In addition, my sister Jyoti, who is teaching in Mauritania, flew in to İstanbul with her colleague Courtney for their Thanksgiving break, and we also invited our local Turkish friends Nilüfer and Zeki to this gathering of friends old and new, and family. It was a celebration that seems befitting of what one should be doing on a holiday like Thanksgiving – sharing food, sharing friendship, meeting new people, connecting and renewing bonds. We were all grateful for this, and thankful for Fulbright and the opportunities and support we are so fortunate to have.

### Mr. Hamilton "Parker" Fairfield Cook

2016-2017 U.S. Student Researcher

Emory University, Georgia / Uludağ University, Bursa

#### A Text Brought to Life in Its Context

Superficially, my Fulbright project in Bursa seems entirely archival. At Bursa's İnebey Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi (library), I am looking at the Qur'an commentary *Ruh al-Bayan* written by a famous Ottoman Sufi, Ismail Hakki Bursevi, for my dissertation on his theories on human identity. Although the commentary has been published numerous times, all publications exclude Bursevi's margin notes, leaving readers with half of the text. Thus, to understand the text in its entirety, it is imperative to read the work's unedited marginalia, or its "con-text." Analogously, I have found that by living and working in Bursa through the Fulbright Program, I have been able to access a kind of physical "con-text" of Bursevi's work. For instance, Bursevi delivered his commentary in a series of lectures in Bursa's well-known Ulu Camii (mosque). After every session, Bursevi walked home which was located on the northeast of the mosque to transcribe his lessons. Away from the prying eyes of Bursa's religious authorities, Bursevi added supplementary notes, often radical in nature. I make this same walk from Ulu Camii to his grave when I finish my archival work. I notice how ideal the passage and his resting place might be for intimate meditations upon the Qur'an. Likewise, Bursevi often references Bursa landmarks in his commentary. He speaks of Bursa's many scholars and saints, its greenery, and even the southwestern gusts for which Bursa is famous (Tr. lodos). Working with the modern day scholars of Bursa at Uludağ Üniversitesi, touring the tombs of Bursa's many saints that Bursevi mentions, even being blown about by a famous Bursa lodos in the shade of Uludağ mountain, make certain comments come alive. Just like Bursevi who traveled in Anatolia frequently, I too travel to İstanbul



**“With a Fulbright grant, I have been given the unique opportunity to read Bursevi's masterpiece in its most complete form, text and marginalia, and to experience it the fullness of its proper “con-text.”**”

to meet with professors and colleagues, visiting places significant to the Sufi author on the side. If I were isolated in an archive or in an American library, I could not have the connection with this 300-year-old work or its author. With a Fulbright Student Research grant, I have been given the unique opportunity to read Bursevi's masterpiece in its most complete form, text and marginalia, and to experience it the fullness of its proper "con-text."