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Introduction

Rachel Goshgarian, Ilham
Khuri-Makdisi, and Ali Yaycıoğlu

It would not be an overstatement to say that Cemal Kafadar has transformed the field of Ottoman history. As a result of his pathbreaking books and articles, the field is experiencing a turn within itself as well as recasting its relationship with world history. He has trained a plethora of students and shared ideas with many colleagues through collective projects over the last thirty years at Princeton, Harvard, and beyond. This volume is a tribute to Cemal Kafadar from us—his students, colleagues, and friends—as we hope to participate in this turn and showcase some of the works he has formally supervised, casually discussed over tea, and generally inspired over the years.

What is the nature of the turn initiated by Cemal Kafadar? As the editors of this volume, we would like to begin by underlining the remarkable intellectual pluralism that Kafadar has cultivated. His scholarship invites historians of the Ottoman world, medieval Anatolia, and the modern Middle East to cross disciplinary boundaries between political, social, economic, environmental, and material history. He fosters a holistic vision of the past; one where economy and culture, spirituality and materiality, warfare and business, life and dreams, built and natural environments, space and place, order and disorder, individual and society, self and others are to be understood and examined as components of a complex reality. Prose and poetry, documents and codices, hagiographies and chronicles, archives and architecture, texts, and paintings—together, they

constitute the wide-ranging spectrum of sources for historians, devoid of hierarchy. His approach to the past signifies an intimate and engaged endeavor to appreciate the lived experience in its entirety, as complicated, multidimensional, and plural. It is this holistic, non- or anti-hierarchical framework that sets Cemal Kafadar apart from other historians and that lies at the heart of the turn that he has inspired.

It is our hope that the pluralism our mentor has nurtured manifests itself clearly in this volume, to which many of his students and colleagues have contributed. In this compilation, readers will find a number of articles engaging with a wide range of questions, approaches, perspectives, and sources. His students and friends, individually or in pairs, researched and crafted contributions to this volume with a variety of conceptual premises, theoretical approaches, and interpretive tools. They all share a common inspiration: conversations and seminars with, or writings and lectures by, Kafadar. If truth be told, we do not think that Cemal Kafadar has created an *école* in Ottoman history, whereby his students are meant to follow a particular approach through a specific source-driven or theoretically inspired path. Quite the contrary, we know that Kafadar has constructed a vibrant, stimulating, and capacious intellectual space, where we, his students and friends, cherish the vast possibilities he has generated for the writing of history, regardless of our different theoretical groundings, temporal and spatial *foci*, our interests in specific sources or genres, and our approaches to reading them. This volume is the product of the pluralistic intellectual context that Kafadar has created with generations of students and friends, approaching and engaging with him from a wide range of intellectual and personal backgrounds and orientations.

As Kafadar has explained, “History is not to be concerned with what is *gone* but rather with what *existed* once” [emphasis added]. One of the crucial features of the transformation he has initiated in the field of Ottoman history—and beyond—is an appreciation of the lived experience, or perhaps better put, the experiences of our fellow human beings who lived in the past. “Understating how people added meaning and joy, depth and amusement, how they carved autonomous spaces for living lives and expressing themselves and how they presented their productivity and creativity, as well as their mischievousness and roguery are part of doing history . . . and in fact [this is] my preference as a historian, of course without forgetting the walls that they crashed into or built, or the hardships they suffered and caused.”¹

1 Cemal Kafadar, *Kim var imiş biz burada yoğ iken: Dört Osmanlı: Yeniçeri, Tüccar, Derviş ve Hatun* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2010), 14–15. Quote translated by Ali Yayıcıoğlu.

In “doing” history with him, we have learned from him how to consider the lived experience seriously, and with humility. This approach often times requires a deep re-evaluation of accepted categories, models and theories. In fact, Kafadar’s way of studying and crafting history is an invitation to *all* scholars to participate in a genuine and humble conversation with previous people, a dialogue that encourages a distancing from our honest wonder (*hayret*) about their ways.² Ultimately, Kafadar’s intellectual example presents us all with a genuine opportunity to attempt to understand the lived experiences of the past, one that must coincide with a sincere recognition of our own ontological and epistemological limits. We must humbly acknowledge that we can never fully grasp the variegated meanings of existence or the experiences of the past and must strive to recognize that our own distance simply prohibits us from inhabiting other times and places, as we shoulder our contemporary terms and priorities. Kafadar not only enjoins us to engage, rigorously and hermeneutically, with past modes of living, thinking and feeling; he also beckons us towards an unapologetic humanism. We hope that the essays in this volume, inspired by Kafadar’s appreciation and excitement for the unexpected found in the experiences of individuals and communities of earlier times, are a worthy contribution to the conversations he has so brilliantly and enthusiastically started over the course of many years, and which continue to nourish us.

Cemal Kafadar’s way of appreciating the lived experience is also an inherent recognition of “the walls that they crashed into or built, the hardships they suffered and caused.” He warns all of us “not to allow historical experience to be understood as natural (big fish eats little fish; this is natural!).”³ While, on the one hand, Kafadar refuses to “normalize history,” he also suggests that history offers possibilities for emancipation: “If history writing is not emancipating, it means that it serves for domination.”⁴ Indeed, Kafadar’s own scholarship has strived to unearth the lives of seemingly ordinary people, whose stories have traditionally been viewed as mere entryways into more “serious” discussions about institutions, or as fragments of grand narratives related to political and economic transformations. Although he never negates the notion that writings by—or about—modest people can shed light on institutions, or political and economic developments, Kafadar invites us to go further, to appreciate each individual in their own right, to see them as a human being living a unique life,

2 Ibid., 26.

3 Ibid., 25. Quote translated by Ali Yaycıoğlu.

4 Cemal Kafadar, *Kendine Ait bir Roma: Diyar-ı Rum’da Kültürel Coğrafya ve Kimlik Üzerine* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2017), 15. Quote translated by Ali Yaycıoğlu.

during a particular moment, in a specific place, within distinct cultural and social contexts, dealing with the physical and metaphysical concerns of their own daily life.

If Kafadar has been concerned with the ongoing dialectic between domination and emancipation, he also candidly admits that one of his priorities has been to understand how people experienced and expressed joy in the past. It should come as no surprise, then, that joy is an emotion that we also very much associate with Kafadar's thinking, writing, teaching, and friendship. In many ways, joy is the essential element that sparks from the intellectual atmospheres he creates. Kafadar emits joy. And his joy—for people, in the past and the present—inspires our interactions with other human beings, living in the past, as well as in the present. It moves through our research, in our individual—and collective—readings, and our analyses and discussions of sources and documents. It inspires us to share findings and build new frameworks. It accompanies us as we write articles and books, and produce documentaries. This kind of joy is reminiscent of the joy of craftspeople shaping things, with care and attention. We engage in lively conversation, mutual support, and friendly competition, all the while trying to live up to the high standards of the craft, knowing that the best work is full of joy for the process, attention to detail, and the knowledge that each craftsperson is part of a changing tradition and a collaborative cohort.

Echoing Marc Bloch's *The Historian's Craft*,⁵ Kafadar has recently associated history with carpentry.⁶ As a carpenter, the historian should know the material well, whether it is a narrative text, a document, or a visual representation. And, when crafting it, they should do justice to details, implicit and explicit meanings, as well as to the material's inconsistencies, deviations, and paradoxes. Kafadar's emphasis on history as craft calls for rigor and meticulousness towards the material, combined with joy. Where does Kafadar situate himself within different intellectual or historiographical traditions, then? Reading Cemal Kafadar, one moves from Lucien Febvre to E. P. Thompson, from Natalie Zemon Davis to Carlo Ginzburg and Umberto Eco, from Niyazi Berkes to Halil İnalcık. In fact, many intellectual and historiographical traditions intersect within Kafadar's scholarship, as Ahmet Karamustafa's essay in this volume illustrates. As editors

5 Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Knopf, 1953).

6 "Tarihçinin marangozdan hiçbir farkı da, üstünlüğü de yoktur." Interview with Cemal Kafadar by Emre Can Dağlıoğlu, Emrah Göker, and Ümit Kurt Kırmızılar, September 19, 2016, <https://www.kirmizilar.com/tr/index.php/tartisma/item/222-cemal-kafadar-tarhcinin-marangozdan-hicbir-farki-da-ustunlugu-de-yoktur?fbclid=IwAR1XAy9Sg8AZhJ64f2Hv2n3vKzcrnRQZRELRL70JZURXPXY9-9tYq8h-0>.

of this volume, we intend to underline the fact that Kafadar realizes the craft-like rigor of historical traditions dear to him, with a sense of inclusivism—or perhaps democratic participation—against what might be perceived of as an intellectual or social rigidity, embedded in these traditions.

Kafadar's colleagues know well his love for Istanbul, Turkey, and the Turkish language. This love for a city, a country and a language provide a gateway to love for other cities, countries and languages. History, for Kafadar, is not a guide that tells us to how to love a place or language, but rather a companion that allows us to try and see, experience, and love many places, peoples, languages, literatures, arts, and architectures. History can teach us about people and their environments; in studying history and literature, we can understand how those before us developed different forms of attachments to places, peoples, and literatures. As these attachments often compete (and sometimes clash), one of the historian's priorities is to uncover the historical contexts within which different claims evolved into plurality and interaction, rather than endorsing one claim over others, in a linear or teleological fashion. In a recent book where he examines how people, particularly Turkish-speaking people in the Medieval and Early Modern era, gave meanings to Anatolia, Kafadar asks: "What was the association of the Turkish-speaking people, who would come under the rule of the Ottomans and the Ottoman state, to Turkishness? To being Turkmen, Oghuz, Mongol, Tajik? What was their preoccupation (*dert*) with the lands they claimed?"⁷ In his seminal article, "A Rome of one's Own," Kafadar gives us a brilliant lesson on how to historicize a cultural geography, and invites us to understand how and why historical actors could feel attachment and belonging to a place and/or a people in different ways and to different degrees.⁸

One could imagine that Kafadar's writings on historical and cultural geography are also a testimony of his own *dert* with his city, country, and language, driving his mission as a historian-activist. Kafadar has been actively fighting against urban and environmental erasure in Istanbul. In this struggle, he walks arm-in-arm with the gazes and words of fellow Istanbulites, living in different periods, experiencing different trials and tribulations. In this walk, Kafadar challenges not only the powerholders who have developed megalomaniac urban projects in accordance with their political fantasies

7 Cemal Kafadar, *Kendine ait bir Roma*, 22. Quote translated by Ali Yaycıoğlu.

8 Idem, "A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 7–25 (expanded and updated Turkish translation in, *Kendine Ait bir Roma*, 59–139).

and economic interests, but also those who yearn for the past with different notions of what has been “lost,” and seem to have specific kinds of nostalgias and frustrations. Kafadar’s activism has never been embedded within a conservationist agenda. His is a struggle for the plurality of rights to the city, which includes the entitlement of enjoying it, without—or beyond—social, cultural, ethnic, historical, or religious hierarchies, without privileging either rural or urban topographies, the sea, the hills, the architecture, the landscape, the past (any or all of its pasts), or the present. While Kafadar opposes the gentrification of space and the commodification of history, he reminds us of a simple, yet significant principle, which prevailed in many premodern societies including the Ottoman world: the notion that the esthetics of everyday life are a public good, and maintaining them is a public duty.⁹ This volume, which contains several chapters on Istanbul, is also a salute to Kafadar’s fight for the rights of the people of Istanbul to their city.

Finally, we would like to note that this volume was curated and compiled in the midst of a global pandemic and a series of political crises. The authors included in this volume have managed to contribute their pieces while living through massive political turmoil and authoritarianism in Turkey, the United States, and elsewhere. Since March 2020, Covid-19 has killed millions of people, locked down hundreds of millions in their homes, resulting in an unprecedented public health and economic crisis that has hit blue-collar workers, undocumented immigrants, people of color, and the poor particularly hard. This crisis has triggered new debates about the fate of our current social and economic institutions, as various optimistic and pessimistic analysts compete to predict the drastic uncertainties of the future. As the Covid crisis persists, millions have poured out into the streets of the US and in many other countries in order to engage in massive demonstrations protesting the brutal murder of an African-American man, George Floyd, by a white policeman in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. His murder was captured on video and its spread, via the internet, alerted people all over the world to the kind of inhumanity routinely experienced by African Americans in the United States, and beyond. The ensuing protests are part of a much longer story of resistance in the US, and in other regions of the world, rejecting white supremacy and advocating for the equal treatment of Black people, and all people of color. At the same time, the city of Beirut, once a part of the Ottoman Empire, a city that has inspired countless writers, poets and musicians in the twentieth

9 Idem, “İstanbul’u Savunmak bir İsyân Ahlakı’dır,” interview by Samet Altıntaş, *Dergâh* 257 (November 2019), 16–18.

and twenty-first centuries, home to so many of our colleagues and friends (including contributors to this volume), has once again suffered tremendous, unimaginable damage. While the causes behind the protests for Black Lives Matter, the mismanagement and lack of planning that have led to countless deaths due to Covid-19 in the US, and the recent events in Beirut might seem unlinked, they seem to be connected by a callous disregard for the lives of the human beings that governing structures are meant to care for and protect. In early January 2021, the US Capitol was invaded by Donald Trump supporters in protest of the results of the presidential elections. This event highlighted an unprecedented moment in US history, illustrating that democratic institutions, developed over two centuries, are much more fragile than we might assume. The pandemic-timed outbreak of war over the long disputed region of Artsakh (or Nagorno-Karabagh) and the ensuing aggressions against people, history, cultural heritage, and the environment in the South Caucasus has been remarkably under-discussed in intellectual circles, in spite of the rhetoric of violence coupled with problematic and threatening historical justifications used by regional leaders and the devastation it caused. The unfortunate—and sadly, successful—labeling of this war as ethno-religious in intent seems to have drawn attention away from the real and continuing threat of authoritarian political consolidation in the region.

In this moment of crisis, we are all sad, apprehensive, and angry. And, yet, like everyone, we are searching for joy of the kind that might sustain us. For us, compiling this volume in recognition of Cemal Kafadar, alongside our peers, has inspired hope for the future and reminded us to find happiness and meaning in living. In this particular moment of crisis, Cemal's way of doing history encourages us to imagine life beyond the anxieties of decline and the comforts of mechanistic progress. He continuously urges us to carry on, in engaging past lived experiences with both rigor and respect. He asks us to appreciate individuals, and the complexities of their own meanings and feelings. He asks us to sit with people in the past, drink tea or *ayran* with them, such that after engaging with them as human beings we might try to know, we can actually try to craft sentences that could help others to better approach them. We hope that our collective work will contribute to a general appreciation of life and of lives, both past and present.

This volume includes thirty-one articles written by forty-seven authors. Some authors have written their pieces individually, others have collaborated with one or two colleagues. We have divided the volume into four sections: Texts, Lives, Places, and Processes, and organized the chapters according to these sections, chronologically ordered. Of course, this structure could never reflect a perfect grouping of these contributions, since many of them address more than one of

these orientations. Still, we hope that this order of things will make this large volume easier to read. We also think that text, lives, places, and processes do reflect the main pillars of Kafadar's scholarship. In this regard, we hope that this structure is in conversation with Kafadar's ongoing intellectual project. We regret that we were not able to include Kafadar's most recently graduated and current students, and hope that they will continue to celebrate Cemal Kafadar, by producing another edited volume, or by opting to honor him in a completely different way. The future is unknown and exciting!

Ultimately, this volume is not really a *festschrift* for Cemal Kafadar, but, simply, a celebration of a milestone in his career. He has completed thirty years of teaching, research, and mentorship at Harvard University. We wish him many more productive, healthy, and happy years, surrounded by students, friends and colleagues, who, we are sure, will always recognize and cherish the overwhelming generosity of his intellectual and personal engagement.

Cemal Kafadar's Teaching and Scholarship, 1981–2022

Teaching

Harvard University (Cambridge, MA)

Vehbi Koç professor of Turkish Studies, 1990–present.

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi (Istanbul)

Visiting professor, spring 2005 and spring 2009.

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris)

Visiting professor, December 1998–January 1999.

Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı (Fındıkzade, Istanbul)

Seminar series, fall 1998.

Koç University (Istanbul)

Visiting professor, January 1994.

Princeton University (Princeton, NJ)

Assistant professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1987–89.

Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 1985–87.

Monographs and Edited Volumes

Edited with Gülru Necipoğlu and Cornell Fleischer. *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*. 2 vols. Supplements 14. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Kendine Ait Bir Roma: Diyar-i Rum'da Kültürel Coğrafya ve Kimlik Üzerine. İstanbul: Metis, 2017.

Edited with Nevra Necipoğlu. *Angeliki E. Laiou Hatıra Sayısı (In Memoriam Angeliki E. Laiou)*. Special issue, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 36 (2011). Harvard: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

Kim Var İmiş Biz Burada Yoğ İken Dört Osmanlı: Yeniçeri, Tüccar, Derviş ve Hatun. İstanbul: Metis, 2009.

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Edited and Translated. *Rüya Mektupları, Asiye Hatun (1641–1643)*. İstanbul: Oğlak, 1994.

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“Yeşil Okuma: Bir Hoş Usul.” In *Prof. Dr. Zeren Tanındı’ya Armağan Kitabı: İslam Dünyasında Kitap Kültürü ve Sanatı / Festschrift for Prof. Dr. Zeren Tanındı: Art and Culture of Books in the Islamic World*, edited by Aslıhan Erkmen and Şebnam Tamcan, 309–323. İstanbul: Lale, 2021.

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With Ahmet Karamustafa. “Books on Sufism, Lives of Saints, Ethics, and Sermons.” In *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, vol. 1, edited by Cornell Fleischer, Cemal Kafadar, Gülrü Necipoğlu, 439–507. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

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