

Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and Beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar.
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A documentary video interview conducted by TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) in 1989 with Orhan Şaik Gökyay, one of the most prominent and prolific literary and cultural historians of Turkey in the twentieth century, featured among its many distinguished guests a young social and cultural historian. Cemal Kafadar, a recent PhD recipient by then in Islamic Studies from McGill University, devoted his brief remarks in the interview to highlighting the unmatched “elegance” of Orhan Şaik Gökyay. Now, 35 years later, it is quite apt to say the same about Cemal Kafadar that he once said about Gökyay. With his exemplary elegance and enviable eloquence, along with his inspiring scholarship and the impressive cadre of students he has trained since the late 1980s, first at Princeton and later at Harvard University, Cemal Kafadar stands as one of the cornerstones of modern historiography on Ottoman culture, society, and literature. *Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and Beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar*, edited by three of his former students and featuring thirty research articles by some of his advisees, colleagues, and friends who teach at prominent universities in North America, Turkey, and elsewhere, is a remarkable testimony and tribute to Cemal Kafadar’s invaluable contributions to the field of Ottoman history and its many connections with world history.

The volume opens with two introductory essays. The first, written by the three editors, touches upon how Cemal Kafadar has transformed Ottoman historiography over the past four decades. In addition to outlining the main trajectories in Cemal Kafadar’s scholarship, the essay provides a detailed and useful list of Kafadar’s published and unpublished works, the earliest being his MA Thesis on *Yeniçeri-Esnaf* relations, completed in 1981 at McGill University. The second introductory essay was penned by Ahmet Karamustafa, one of Cemal Kafadar’s lifelong intellectual companions and comrades, with whom he has been closely associated since the mid-1970s when both majored in Philosophy at Hamilton College. As a firsthand witness to Cemal Kafadar’s intellectual formation and scholarly development, Karamustafa provides precious insights into Kafadar’s early inspirations from contemporary Turkish culture and literature, the social and political circumstances that shaped their shared decision in the 1970s to pursue further degrees in Islamic Studies, and the major contours of Kafadar’s academic pursuits.

The ensuing thirty chapters are evenly distributed into four parts, which the editors believe represent “the main pillars of Kafadar’s scholarship” (8): *Texts*, *Lives*, *Places*, and *Processes*. In each part the articles are arranged in a chronological order. The range of topics covered in these articles, the sources perused, and the formats and frameworks within which these studies are conducted demonstrate an impressive variety, representing the breadth of training and the extent of inspiration Kafadar has provided to his students and colleagues over the past decades. From critical editions of Arabic historical sources (e.g., Himmet Taşkömür and Hüseyin Yılmaz’s co-authored contribution on Nişancı Mehmed Paşa’s *History of the Ottoman House*) to detailed explorations of Byzantine Greek (e.g., the collaborative article by Aslıhan Akışık-Karakullukçu and Dimitri Kastiris on fifteenth-century Greek materials regarding Ottoman politics) and Armeno-Turkish sources (e.g., Rachel Goshgarian’s essay on a seventeenth-century miscellany compiled by an Armenian deacon), as well as visual materials (e.g., the co-authored work by Serpil Bağcı and Zeynep Yürekli on the book culture of Syria during the time of Ottoman conquest, or the standalone piece by Emine Fetvacı on the image-text relationship in sixteenth-century Ottoman illustrated histories), the volume presents a wide array of ‘new’ research that students of Ottoman history with diverse sub-disciplinary interests and chronological orientations no doubt will cherish. The novel nature of research underlying individual chapters is important because, in edited volumes, it is not uncommon to encounter articles that are indeed recycled work from researchers’ previously published studies. The majority of contributions in *Crafting History*, however, originate from cutting-edge research, raise intriguing questions, and relay concrete arguments with the potential to open up new avenues of study. For instance, the two separate articles—the first by Ali Yaycıoğlu and the other by Molly Greene—that conceptualize “montology” (347) and “mountainology” (375) offer a new theoretical framework to approach Ottoman (environmental) history that new generations of scholars would follow.

Another detail worthy of note about these articles is the collaborative nature of the labor involved in the creation of these chapters. Nearly 50% of the collection (14 out of 30 articles, to be precise) is the product of two, sometimes three, authors (see, for example, the article on the book collections of the military class in Bursa from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, written by

Hülya Canbakal, Meredith Quinn, and Derin Terzioğlu). Considering the current status and structure of History as a discipline that seldom promotes and rewards collaborative work, it is all the more remarkable to have such an exceptional ratio of co-authored articles in the volume. This should also be attributed to the elegance and collegiality that Cemal Kafadar has fostered among his students.

It is indeed an arduous task to write a review of an edited volume that contains thirty separate articles, each focusing on a diverse set of topics, sources, and periods. Yet, I must note that certain themes, concepts, and characters revisited by several contributors reveal how Cemal Kafadar's long-standing favorites in his own scholarly journey have inspired different generations of his students and colleagues. These favorites include Evliya Çelebi (see Hakan Karateke's exploration of how Evliya Çelebi wrote his travel account), books and *mecmuas* (see, for instance, Aslihan Gürbüz and Ekin Tuşalp Atiyas' collaborative work on a seventeenth-century miscellany as a window into Istanbul's Persianate culture), Reşat Ekrem Koçu (see Shrine Hamedeh and Çiğdem Kafesçioğlu's co-written paper on *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*), first-person narratives (see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's co-authored piece on a seventeenth-century Mughal account), Janissaries (see Charles Wilkins and Eunjeong Yi's collaborative article on Janissaries in Istanbul and Aleppo), and Dimitrie Cantemir (see İsenbike Togan's contribution).

Readers and students whose interests align with Cemal Kafadar's scholarly tastes will certainly discover many other gems in this volume. The editors should be commended for assembling such an impressive list of contributors and compiling their contributions with as much coherence and scholarly vigor as one can expect from an edited volume of articles. The book not only pays admirable tribute to Cemal Kafadar as a historian, mentor, and *çelebi* but also aptly encompasses and reflects his intellectual interests, which will continue to inspire new generations to come.