

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR SURAIYA FAROQHI

Suraiya Faroqhi is a retired professor of Ottoman Studies at the Ludwig Maximilians University and currently Professor of History at Istanbul Bilgi University. She is regarded as one of the most important economic and social historians of the Ottoman Empire working today. Professor Faroqhi has written substantially on Ottoman urban history, arts and crafts, and on the hitherto underrepresented world of the ordinary people in the empire. She is well known for her distinctive approach to Ottoman everyday life and public culture. She has published numerous books and articles in the field of pre-modern Ottoman history. Her books include *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts, and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520-1650* (1984); *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (2000); *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (2004); *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (2005); *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople Under the Ottomans* (2009). She is also the editor of *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3 (2006) and, most recently, of *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire* (2010). In 2008, her colleagues published the festschrift *Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Community: Essays in Honour of Suraiya Faroqhi*.

Professor Suraiya Faroqhi was interviewed for *Tarih* by **Saadet Özen**.¹

As your students we know you not only through your studies on Ottoman social and economic life but also through your interest in the art of painting, European history, literature and more. We know that you began your undergraduate education in European history. Being born in Berlin, and raised both in India and Indonesia, what attracted you to Ottoman history? And what was your motivation for coming to Turkey in 1962 when you were still an undergraduate student?

PROF. FAROQHI

You see, some of my reasons had very little to do with academic problems. Probably people of today's generation do not have that experience, but people of our generation who grew up in the post-war period often had very serious disputes with their parents, especially with their fathers. The personal was political, and the political was personal, and the result of this

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conflict was that I wanted to get as far away from Hamburg and Germany as I could. At that time, people came of age at age 21, so the period between 18 and 21 was a trial for the parents and the children in many families. I had also decided that I was going to study in the U.S., which I did eventually, and that furthermore I was going to go somewhere as far away as I could get. I imagine that if there had been an opportunity to study in China at that time, I might have taken it, and I would be a Chinese historian today! I certainly didn't want anything to do with India because my father was Indian, and because I didn't want to have to justify my existence to every person that I happened to meet.

Well, some of this sort of thing did occur in Turkey as well, but I presumed it would happen much more rarely. However in the 60s there were still these elderly gentlemen who used to embarrass me very much by saying: "Oh yes, you are from Germany, our fathers and grandfathers fought WW1 together," and I never knew what to say. I was just embarrassed. And then I met a young German engineer who was maybe a few years older than I and a little quicker on the uptake, and he had had the same experience. He told me that in such cases he used to answer: "Yes, certainly, and together they lost it!" and as he told me with relish: "Well, that ended the conversation right there!" After that I tried it out too, and yes, it had the same effect. But it was this sort of questioning, you know, of my existence that I really didn't like, and I thought that to go to a place where I had absolutely no roots, where I could start afresh, was very attractive. I wanted to start something, some project or other and whatever happened was to be my doing; my parents, my ancestry, nothing of the kind was to be at issue, just me. I'm sure that was part of the story.

Also, I had begun to study medieval social history. I thought that was very interesting, but I knew of course you needed an archive if you wanted to do original work. I also knew that the Ottoman Empire had important archives, situated in Turkey and that if one was willing to learn the relevant languages, in other words Modern and Ottoman Turkish, there was a lot of unused material. Well, that was one of the reasons why I went to Ömer Lütfi Barkan at the Faculty of Economics at Istanbul University, and I had read him way before I ever went to Turkey. In a sense, you know, part of my choices had to do with being a teenager eager to make her own life, because I made these decisions when I was nineteen.

I thought for a while of going to Algiers because I spoke French at a reasonable level, and I thought: "Well, until I learn Arabic I'll be able to get by with French," which, incidentally, was also what I did in Istanbul because at that time most of the older people, if they spoke a European language, spoke French. But as you perhaps know the war in Algeria just would not end. I mean we all expected it to end in '61, and it didn't; it took until the spring of '62. In the end, by the time the Evian Treaty was signed, and

because I was so eager to get out when I turned 21 in October 1962, I had already decided on Istanbul because I needed to make arrangements well ahead of time. Algiers was out, it was still at war, and, you know, my knowledge was very limited. I knew Cairo was a good place, but I didn't know that to learn Arabic Beirut would have been a good alternative. I found that out much later. So I basically thought that the two options for a woman alone would be Istanbul and Cairo, and it so happened that there was a fellowship and exchange agreement between Istanbul and Hamburg, and there was nothing of the sort with Cairo. So that was a practical reason why, you know, after three other places that I seriously considered, in the end, it turned out to be Istanbul.

And then you met Ömer Lütfi Barkan?

PROF. FAROQHI

Yes, the way that happened was also funny. When I was studying in Hamburg we were a group of ten people who all ultimately became professors here, there and everywhere. There was of course competition, but there was also a certain amount of instruction given by the older people to the younger ones. And that was important because as you know – I mean it was true in Turkey too – in the 1960s the distance between professors and students was enormous. So the older students had a certain role, at least in smaller departments, instructing the younger ones informally – over tea usually. So some of the people made a kind of list saying “you should go and see so and so and such and such a person.” I remember that Süheyl Ünver was on that list, and so was Hellmut Ritter. I was warned in advance that he was an elderly gentleman, not always in a good mood, that he didn't think much of women and that therefore, if he was nasty, I shouldn't be bothered. But he wasn't, he was perfectly pleasant. I got to meet him on a good day. Ömer Barkan was also on this list, and he was kind of a priority for me because I had read quite a few things of his, and I thought they were great. So I showed up there and said that I'd read this and that – and it was true, I had – and that I liked it very much – which was also true – and that now I wanted to be his student. Well, Barkan thought this was funny. He said something like “*nereden çıktın da geldin?*” [“Where did you come from?”] and then, I remember it was a beautiful autumn day in November (but even then, long before global warming, you got beautiful days in November), and he took me to the window and said, “Look, all these people in the garden, most of them have been in my class but all they ever seem to want is a *devam imzası* ...” [note certifying attendance] because he taught *İnkılap Tarihi* [republican/reform history], and I don't think he liked it much. “But, you

know” he continued “since you have come from so far away, I’ll try to teach you something.” And he took me to the room where his assistants were, and of course I wasn’t of an age or of a competence to be an assistant, but he said, “You can sit there at that big table and the assistants will help you when you need help. Come once a week.” If I’m not totally mistaken it was Mondays, and at the first conversation he basically did what in England is called a tutoring session. He’d give me assignments, and then I was expected to talk about them. And of course I was somewhat intimidated. Ömer Lütfi Barkan was in his early sixties – the age of my father – and I was in my early twenties, for God’ sake. I remember sometimes he’d give me assignments that were way too difficult, but I found various tricks to get by. One of them was that *İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* produced long summaries in French, English or German, depending on the language skill of the author, and they were really abridged translations. I’d read these first, and then figure out which sections were not covered by the translation. I could usually reduce my assignment by half because I already knew what the basics were. And once I had done this it was of course much easier to deal with Ömer Barkan’s Turkish, which by the way is difficult. Later on when I tried to make my students in Ankara read Barkan, and they protested very loudly because they found it so hard.

Do you think the difficulty of his language is one of the reasons why students of Ottoman history today do not read much of Ömer Lütfi Barkan’s work?

PROF. FAROQHI

Yes, because first of all he had a background in legal history, and legal history terminology is intimidating to a non specialist, and secondly he had these long sentences full of legalese that are difficult to follow. I remember that I had exchanges with my students in Ankara when I gave them assignments and they came back and hadn’t done them saying the text was too difficult. I told them that if I was able to learn to deal with these texts as a non-native speaker, then they should be able to learn because they were native speakers. But they didn’t see it that way. So, yes, I do think the language has got something to do with it.

Barkan also made me read the *Annales* (at that time: *Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations*). He was on the board of editors by that time. One day he put a whole batch of volumes on the table where I was sitting and then said, “Look at this and tell me what you have understood.” I was fascinated because up to that point I basically only knew what I didn’t want, and I knew that I absolutely hated the political history of the kind that

was practiced by people like Gerhard Ritter in the *Historische Zeitschrift*. I really detested this stuff, but I could not have explained why I detested it, I think. So for the first time I saw something that really appealed to me (or maybe not for the first time, but up to that time I hadn't really found what I was looking for). One reason the journal appealed to me was that France was far less affected by the Cold War than either Turkey or the two Germanies. There were a whole lot of taboos that we had to live with in Istanbul and also in Hamburg which just didn't exist in Paris. This probably doesn't make sense to people who live almost fifty years later, but many of us who were young at that time, we thought the Cold War was incredibly debilitating intellectually; it kind of locked people's thinking up in straitjackets. I think that some people here in *Edebiyat Fakültesi* [the Literature Faculty] were aware of that too. I remember speaking to Macit Gökberk at the time, he was very helpful and very supportive because I think he understood what made me so uncomfortable at one point. I also remember a really strange story with a person in Turkish Literature who was known to be a fairly right-wing person, but when we sat down over tea in his office with closed doors, he started to talk about Nazım Hikmet, whose works, as we all know, were forbidden at that time. This was really the last topic I thought he would bring up. But this man was visibly no fool, and he was also, I think, annoyed by being hedged in by all kinds of taboos, and here was this young foreign student, so he could let loose what was on his mind. Well, *Annales* simply ignored a lot of these preoccupations, and of course I was delighted.

Also I was delighted about the connection to art history because although I have no training as an art historian, I have always been fascinated by the subject, and I have done a bit of reading. To connect history and art history as some of these articles did... well, I thought that was just great. Then I remember that Barkan told me to read Braudel's *La Méditerranée*. I didn't do that in Istanbul, but as soon as I got back in the autumn of 1963 I remember curling up in my parents' living room with that fat book and kind of reading it like a novel. So yes, I mean essentially I had a vague notion of what I was going to do when I arrived, and a year later, when I returned, I think I had a reasonably clear notion of what I wanted to do. That year with Barkan was kind of a transition, on the one hand, in my biography between adolescence and adulthood, and it was also, you might say, the transition from undergrad to graduate student, when after all, you are supposed to know what you want to do.

So you were introduced to the Annales School of thought by Ömer Lütfi Barkan. Can we talk about a parallelism between your work and the Annales School?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, I read Marc Bloch, but I think he went a little over my head. I remember buying *Apologie pour l'histoire* and reading it when I was maybe twenty-three, and I annotated it. I still have that copy, and when I started to teach a course on history and methodology at Middle East Technical University (Ankara) in the mid-1980s, I remember looking at my annotations again and being ready to tear my hair because they so obviously showed that as a student, I really did not possess a great deal of sophistication! On the other hand, Braudel's *Mediterranean* appealed to me enormously. That was the sort of thing that I just lapped up.

When I was younger, I used to read the typical political history stuff that we all read; and I used to think how strange it was that if you'd asked me what had determined my life so far – let's say up to age 19 or 20 – it was essentially familial conflict, and yet familial conflict never occurred or almost never occurred in political histories. There were a few exceptions, like the conflict between Frederick Wilhelm of Prussia and his son the later Frederick II, yes, that was a massive case of familial conflict, and I did not know about Peter the Great and his son, so there were such cases which of course were being discussed. But in the books that I had read, there was very little reference to problems of this kind. In *Annales*, on the contrary, there were references to the sorts of problems that real people in the second half of the twentieth century also encountered.

I wasn't aware of the fact really, but, when you come right down to it, I was part of what you might call the third generation of women who had reasonably broad access to a university education. If you take my mother's generation, there were not many women university graduates, but such careers were no longer inconceivable. My mother was born in 1910, and among the generation of her mother there were a few people, let's say, in the upper bourgeoisie of Vienna or Berlin, who were able to send their daughters to college and who did so, but that was it, basically. People like my grandmother who lived in a small provincial town in today's Poland, certainly couldn't even dream of a university education.

With some exceptions, like the medical school in Zurich and certain American colleges, higher education opened up to women largely in the early 1900s. So the women born around 1880 would have been the first to have at least a fighting chance of getting into a university for the latter now had begun to accept women – albeit maybe with a bad grace. Frankly, I was not aware of this background at all. I had been raised with my father's assumption that I would be a medical doctor, so in my teenage years I took a university education as more or less for granted. I didn't think that going to university was a great privilege. It was only later, when I became aware of women's and university history, that I realized we were enjoying something

that very few of our grandmothers had been able to enjoy. In the 1970s, when the second women's movement gathered steam, I was never directly a part of it, but I was certainly interested. Once I began to identify as a woman scholar, I soon realized that sources on women were not abundant so that working on their history was a challenge. In a broader perspective 'ordinary people' both female and male were not well documented at all; and I began to feel that working on people on whose activities we don't have that much material was fun, and worth doing.

When you began working with Barkan, what were the main paradigms in Ottoman history, and what was the specific contribution of Ömer Lütfi Barkan in this field?

PROF. FAROQHI

Born in 1902 and thus half a generation older than our *üstad* Halil İnalcık, Barkan really invented Ottoman social and economic history almost on his own. After all in the 1930s the only other person who was interested, namely Fuat Köprülü, was a literary historian who never used archival materials. There were at the time some very good people working on social history at *Edebiyat Fakültesi* – one person for whom I have the deepest respect is Cengiz Orhonlu – but these people were working in isolation, and they had very little contact – almost none, in the case of Orhonlu, I think – to what was happening outside of Turkey. On the other hand, Barkan, and then later on İnalcık, were very much attuned to what was going on outside Turkey. Barkan had been a graduate student in Strasbourg when Bloch and Febvre were there; I don't think Febvre impressed him very much but Bloch certainly did. İnalcık went to England at a relatively young age.

I think Barkan's contribution was that, first of all, he realized there was something going on beyond political history, that there was such a thing as the history of settlement, that legal history in itself was a worthwhile discipline, and that it was too important to be left to lawyers. He also responded to questions that people in the *Annales* group put to him; he wrote a long review article on the first edition of *Méditerranée* and tried to answer some questions that Braudel had left unanswered. Braudel, in the second edition of the *Méditerranée*, which is virtually a different book, tried to respond to some of the things that Barkan and also later on Robert Mantran had told him. So there was an ongoing dialogue. I think the capacity to initiate such a dialogue and continue it over the years was one of the things that Barkan did before anyone else. Maybe apart from Köprülü, but he was from such a different discipline. Anyway, by the 1960s when I was a student Köprülü had long since stopped producing, and had unfortunately gone into

politics, which he should never have done because as a politician he seems to have been a disaster!

On the other hand, Barkan was the first person who was able to initiate and maintain, in the long term, a scholarly dialogue. It was about population figures at one point, in the late 40s and 50s; at this time it was also about settlement history including the formation of villages; and, it was at a later stage, when the *Annales* asked about food, that he got interested in the accounts of *imarets*. Barkan's work on price history should also be viewed as part of an ongoing dialogue beyond national borders. He published a long Turkish article in the early 70s in *Belleten*, and then there was an abridged version in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* a year or two later. This would have been unthinkable without the work of N. W. Posthumus, or the work of Earl Hamilton, and obviously Barkan knew this work, had read it and responded to it. Therefore, the realization that the Ottoman archives have a lot to contribute on the social and economic history of the Ottoman lands – and in some cases even on developments beyond the Ottoman borders – well, that was something that Barkan basically put on the map.

Why did he encourage you to work on Koca Sinan Paşa's Telhis? Is it somehow connected?

PROF. FAROQHI

No, it's not. Let me tell you, something really ridiculous happened! In Hamburg, I had a background in medieval history, and there was a gentleman by the name of Professor Berthold Spuler, who was also a medievalist, and who worked on Iran and on the Mongols. His knowledge of Ottoman history was close to zero, but that did not prevent him from lecturing on it. The problem was that this was an old-fashioned *ordinarius* professor... Well, German has an expression for those types of people: you say if God gives you an office, He gives you the understanding that it requires. Obviously this is not true, so this saying pokes fun at people that think that way, and I'm afraid that it applied to Spuler pretty well. When I said that I was interested in Ottoman peasants, he said: "You should look through the various chronicles and see what they have to say about peasants." Well, between you and me and the four walls, they say nothing at all, and anybody who knows anything about Ottoman chronicles knows that pretty well. But I certainly didn't, and I came with this story to Ömer Lütfi Barkan. I am eternally grateful because he pretended to not have heard. A couple of weeks later, I realized "*nasıl faka basmışız*" ["how we'd been taken for a ride"] and I was very glad to just forget about the matter.

Then, when I left, Barkan suggested the *Telhis* of Koca Sinan Paşa, and I went back to Hamburg saying that this was what my dissertation would be. I didn't say anything about the peasants or the chronicles because I was so embarrassed. Mainly, I felt silly because I hadn't known ahead of time, and also of course because Spuler, who after all was my doctoral adviser, obviously didn't have the foggiest notion either. So that was the story, you see now what I mean when I say that people may think that when they have an office they have the understanding to go with it. But "It ain't necessarily so!"

Bearing in mind the lack of interest from publishers in reprinting the books of a key scholar like Barkan today, why do you think that some key Ottoman scholars suffer from a lack of general recognition?

PROF. FAROQHI

You know, I have always thought Mübahat Küçüköğlü has done very important work, but she has gotten very little public recognition. I mean, yes, she got a festschrift, and people who know her and respect her have contributed to it, but she didn't get the kind of public recognition that male historians of her caliber got. So, you know I often think that gender has something to do with it.

And still? Today?

PROF. FAROQHI

To a certain extent, yes! I remember a couple of years ago, maybe 2005, or thereabouts, there was a program to honor elderly scholars who had made their mark in Ottoman history and there was Mehmet Genç, and there was Halil İnalçık, of course, then there were Halil Sahillioğlu and İlber Ortaylı. And, well, Mübahat Küçüköğlü at that time was around seventy. She should have been on that list, but she wasn't. I said that publicly, because we were a couple of people who were asked to pronounce a kind of *laudatio* of these people; I spoke on Sahillioğlu, Ariel Salzman on Mehmet Genç and there were people who discussed the work of İnalçık and Sahillioğlu as well; later on all these speeches were published. But, as I say, I still think that Mübahat Küçüköğlü should have gotten much more recognition than she actually did, in view of the enormous service that she has given to the field.

Did you personally encounter any obstacles as a woman scholar?

 PROF. FAROQHI

No, not really. I know that today it is fashionable to put down the early Republic, and you get all these people who are nostalgic about the Ottoman Empire. Well, I think, that shows only how male-dominated the field still is because the chances of being a woman scholar in the late Ottoman Empire were virtually zero. If you were very energetic like Fatma Aliye and very well connected like she was, then you could be a novelist and a journalist. But a scholar – not really! That is something that the Republic brought us.

I remember that in the early 1960s, I traveled on my own through Anatolia. I went to Kayseri; I went to Konya; I went to Ankara – you know, just traveling on buses – and I had no trouble whatsoever. And so, if you look at it from the point of a woman, then I think the Republic has brought us something very important in addition to education, namely the possibility of doing things alone. Before that, it just wasn't possible for women in Europe or here to do things without their families in many fields. I remember once I went to an exhibition of photography in Berlin, and one picture showed a bunch of women the age of my mother in the late 1920s that were swimming and sun-bathing somewhere in the vicinity of Berlin. The caption said, "In the late 1920s, it became possible for young women to go out in groups without the presence of their families." Well, that's the generation of my mother, for God's sake! So the fact that I was able to go out on my own – and I have done a lot of things alone, and it was okay, and I was never challenged – well, that's an enormous gain.

Not as a female scholar, but as a scholar who decided to work on social history, did you experience any practical obstacles, for example in archives or in methodology?

PROF. FAROQHI

Not that much really because I was in a kind of sheltered niche. Things would have been much more difficult in one of the traditional universities, but I was at Middle Eastern Technical University, and I had come there as an English teacher (I have an MA in teaching English as a second language). At one point, in 1971, they had fired a whole bunch of their English teachers, and then all at once it was decided the university should reopen. They needed to institute extra courses because there were people who had not been able to complete the previous year. So there was a huge need, and they hired a couple of us sight unseen. Ayşegül Yüksel, who later became the Professor of Theatre Studies at Ankara University, was also hired at the same time as I was. I arrived in the late summer of 1971, and was

fortunate enough that after a couple of months Hüseyin Batuhan the head of the Department of Humanities said “Look, you have a doctoral degree you have a couple of publications out. Teaching English is probably not the best job for you,” and I agreed. So he told me that if I wished I could reapply for a position in the Humanities Section, which provided general culture courses for the entire student body. And so I did that. Inalcık was on my jury, and rather to my surprise I got the job. Then I was really in a protected position. Theoretically, I had a one year contract, but especially after a couple of years, I knew that renewal was more or less automatic – let’s say after 1977.

Thus I could really prepare for my habilitation; and there was really nobody who said “do this” or “do that” because what they wanted of me as a teacher was that I taught these general Ottoman History courses and a little bit of European history, mainly for engineering students. If I decided to go on for the *doçentlik*, that was my affair; and that is what I did. Later on I realized that this was really a very privileged position because I was not, in terms of research, accountable to anybody. I was of course accountable in terms of teaching, but otherwise whatever I did, it was my choice, but I wasn't forced to do it.

And what about your sources, when you started out?

PROF. FAROQHI

Again, all of these things need a bit of luck. When I was an undergraduate at Istanbul University, the person who was then the director of the archives, Mithat Sertoğlu, gave a course called “Introduction to the Archives”. It was not a required course, so there were only seven or eight people; although it wasn't declared as a graduate course that is what we would call it today. I remember Mahmud Şakıroğlu was one of the people who were in the same class. At one point, Mithat Bey apparently asked the group who had read Atatürk's *Nutuk*, and it turned out that I was the only one. The reason was really quite simple; when I had made my decision to go to Istanbul, my Turkish wasn't so hot, so I decided to read everything that was accessible in English, German and French. It soon turned that the *Nutuk* was easily accessible; there was a German translation sitting right on the shelves. So yes, I did read it; it was not maybe that I was particularly interested in the *Nutuk*, but there was so little else to read. But Mithat Bey thought that this story was very funny. I forgot about it, but ten years later, I think it was in 1973, I showed up in his office – he was still the director of the archives – and told him that I now wanted to do research. Did he remember me and could he help me with that? His answer was something like: “Oh God, yes. You are the foreign kid who had read *Nutuk*!” He sent me

to one of his friends in the ministry in Ankara, who gave me quite an elaborate oral exam, perhaps comparable to being tested in a PhD minor – and after that I got a permanent permit for the archives which I used until I left Turkey at the end of 1987. That was an enormous privilege because most other foreign scholars had to renew every year, and it was a great bother. I remember that once when Nejat Göyünç was the director, I asked him what I should do about this situation, and he said, “Nothing at all – you just continue the way you are going on now!”

How were the archives at that time?

PROF. FAROQHI

In the 1960s and 1970s they were very badly organized. They didn't have many archivists; and there were also but very few people using them. Mithat Bey could use one of the archive rooms for his class, and there was no problem because he wasn't chasing anybody out of the rooms. Not that this situation was limited to the archives; at the *Süleymaniye*, there were two tables in the manuscript reading room which could accommodate about eight people, but there never were eight people to my knowledge. In the archives it was the same way. The files were terrible! For example, *Maliyeden Müdevver* – which is of course an important section for everybody who works on pre-Tanzimat history – was on these fiches that were made by some gentleman, I think in the 1930s. It was shortly after the *Harf Devrimi*, so the cataloguers were allowed to write in *rika*; and to top it all, it wasn't very legible *rika*. They made three copies and, as photocopying had not been invented, they made two carbon copies. The first fiche was already difficult to read; the second one, in other words the first carbon copy, was, for me, almost impossible to decipher, but sometimes I could make sense of it. After a while I decided if I could only get a second carbon copy, in other words the third of the fiches produced, I had better forget about the document. After all those second carbon copies were an illegible, gray mass, and there was a limit to the amount of time I could put in.

Later on *Maliyeden Müdevver* was typed; first, the first section and later the later volumes, then now, of course, you all use it on the internet. But I mean in the 1970s, at first nothing was available in typescript, and then later on it was only the catalogue section covering the sixteenth century. It was the same way with the chancery register, the *Mühimme Defterleri*; they just had not been published. The publications in use today for the most part only appeared in the 1990s. Certainly the catalogues contained summaries; but since the documents were very roughly in chronological sequence but without indexes of any kind, you had to go through these documents one by

one. As a result, you spent enormous amount of time just hunting for things that might be relevant.

Another of the really troublesome sections were those known by the name of *Cevdet*. I used the *Cevdet Evkaf* for the punishment of my sins because that was maybe even worse than *Maliyeden Müdevver*. At least *Maliyeden Müdevver* had the unifying criterion that these documents had once been turned over to the Ministry of Finance and then returned as not needed; that's why they're in the main archives and go under the name *Maliyeden Müdevver*. But in the *Cevdet* sections, or in the Kamil Kepeci sections for that matter, I think that people were simply given a storeroom full of documents and told: "Well, you know something about Ottoman bureaucratic practice, now catalogue this." In consequence there was no rhyme, no reason at all to the sequence, and of course no index either. When I worked on the Bektashi dervishes I remember spending hours and hours going through many volumes of these printed summaries to find maybe in the end something like 200 documents relevant to the subject.

An additional problem came from the fact that I was working in Ankara, and we only had permission to be absent from campus one day in the week. For me that was Friday, so on Thursday I took the night bus and arrived in Istanbul at about six in the morning. The *Meserret Pastanesi* opened at about seven, so I would go there with a book and order a breakfast and wait for the archives to open at nine in the morning. For a while the archives were open on Saturday mornings, and then, when they closed on Saturday afternoon, I used to go shopping because I liked to shop – I still do – and Ankara was not a great place for that purpose. So I used to do that in Beyoğlu and especially, later on in Osmanbey, and Nişantaşı, which were at that time becoming fashionable. And then on Sunday I would return. I usually went to Istanbul once every three weeks. And then I discovered the *Tapu-Kadastro* archives in Ankara. Well, the advantage for me was that while we need to be on campus for four days in the week, but we didn't need to stay until 5:00. If we left sometime between 2:30 and 3:00, that was perfectly fine. So the *Tapu-Kadastro* being not very far from the METU campus, if I got on the bus and hurried I could be there around 3:00 and then work until 5:00. If I managed to do that once or twice a week, well in the end I got to collect quite a few documents. There were very few people using that archive – Cengiz Orhonlu came in a couple of times; Huri İslamoğlu was there for a while – and usually whoever was there, was there alone. I remember once that they forgot me. I knew perfectly that it was happening but I wanted at that moment to continue working on my sources, and I thought, "Ok, I will simply tell the night guard what happened when I want to leave, and nobody is going to talk about it because they will have to admit that they didn't check." And that was exactly what happened. At about seven o'clock, I called

the night guard, and I told him they had forgotten me in the reading room. And he said “Oh, sorry about that” and let me out.

You asked about difficulties before, but most of the time people were very helpful. I mean in the archives there was Rauf Bey. There was also a lady, whose name I can’t remember, who was very good at Ottoman, and she was very helpful and very nice. She was also very curious; when I got married in 1979, of course I told people in the archives. Once or twice my husband came to pick me up, and she engaged him in conversation and said “Oh, it’s so difficult to find a parking space here. Where did you park your car?” And then, of course, my husband had to admit that he didn’t have a car. She wanted to know whether I had made a good marriage, and it whether my husband had a car or not was a decisive criterion! She was very sweet and very helpful, but also the original gossip.

Gossip is indispensable: in the academic world too?

PROF. FAROQHI

Gossip is also – somebody once wrote about this – it’s the sanction for misbehavior that is not within any law. I mean, when people do things like copy without acknowledgment, well, in a small community like ours, I remember once a professor plagiarized Mehmet Genç, and everybody in the Ottomanist community found out about that. So, the point was that gossip spread like wildfire and this plagiarism...

It's social history!

PROF. FAROQHI

Yes. Exactly!

And also a source for social history?

PROF. FAROQHI

Yes. We had a student who was first at Boğaziçi, and then did an MA here [at Istanbul Bilgi University], and writing about gossip; court gossip in the sixteenth century and what a vizier tried to do about it.

And what were her sources?

 PROF. FAROQHI

The published submissions of the grand vizier Sinan Paşa to Sultan Murad III (*telhis*), where there is plenty of gossip, insinuations, all sorts of fascinating information – the Sultan believing it or not believing it, the intrigues of viziers, lots and lots of stuff. She used this material well and wrote a very good thesis.

So, turning to the sources, the list of materials historians use not only includes archival sources but also many other substantial cultural documents. In your experience, what are the specific sources for social historians? Archival documents or chronicles?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, of course, the chronicles are useful depending on what you are doing, but, in terms of archives, I'll talk about the pre-Tanzimat history; first of all because I know much more about it, and secondly, because so much has emerged that's new in the post-Tanzimat period and I'm not really a good person to talk about it. Well, for instance, *Maliyeden Müdevver*; I think these collection still contains very important sources. Then, for the seventeenth century, we have the *Ecnebi Defterleri*, which contain the official Ottoman responses to the requests of foreign ambassadors, organized by country. Unfortunately, either people did not make them earlier on, or they haven't survived, because they are great stuff. You know, I have worked on *Ecnebi Defterleri* concerning Venice, and there are others as well; Edhem Eldem has worked on comparable sources from the eighteenth century concerning the French, and it's often fascinating stuff. And then, for the mid-eighteenth century, you have the *Ahkâm Defterleri*, which are a kind of enormously expanded *Mühimme*. The *Mühimme* maybe don't contain that much information on this later period, but the reason for that relative atrophy is this exponential growth of correspondence, so that the Ottoman chanceries started to divide it up by provinces. While there was no *vilayet* of Istanbul at that time, they treated Istanbul as if it were a *vilayet*. So you know, Ahmet Kal'a and his team, they have published ten volumes of selections from these *İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri* and while it is a selection, even just the published stuff is a great source.

Furthermore, of course, there are the *kadı* registers; something that people, for some strange reason, use much less than they should. In the late-eighteenth century, Sultan Abdülhamid I (r. 1774-89) decreed that all water related court cases were now the province of the *kadı* of Eyüp – it took people about forty years to bring the cases from other courts to Eyüp, but

ultimately they did – and for this purpose, they started a series called the *Ma-i leziz Defterleri*, and those have been published in their entirety. Certainly there must be a few theses on the basis of this material, but otherwise precious little work has been done on this very instructive source. I've started to work with that, and I'm fascinated by the amount of information that is available just in this published stuff. So *İSKİ* [Istanbul Water and Sewage Authority] has sponsored forty-two volumes of published material – eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – and it is all there: There's a scanned version of the original – maybe because they've reduced it, it's not that easy to read, but there is a transcription right next to it – and there are very good indexes, as well as very informative introductions by Ahmet Kal'a and his team. It is all there! But as I've said, people use these sources much less than they should.

Of course by now we have a significant number of published *kadı* registers concerning Üsküdar and Istanbul. Where Üsküdar is concerned ISAM [İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi] publishes them at the rate of one per decade, and the earliest surviving register is from the early 1520s. We now have a sample from the 1520s, 1530s, 1540s, and so on all the way to the 1590s. These *kadı* registers are a great resource, and now that people like Boğaç Ergene and Najwa al-Kattan have studied the manner in which these things were put together, we know what their limitations are. As a result it's easier to put these documents into perspective. However whatever their problems, for the social historian the *kadı* registers are probably *the* major source.

This applies especially to those of us that are interested in women because women occur only in fairly local sources. Some inheritance cases or some serious crimes may wind up in Istanbul, and therefore occur in, let's say, the *ahkâm defterleri*, but that's not so common. On the other hand, in the *kadı* registers, women are frequent. This is not a new discovery; Ronald Jennings made that point already in the mid-1970s – his dissertation on Kayseri was finished in 1972, I think. Probably the first substantive article on non-elite females was his study of Kayseri and other Anatolian women published, if I am not totally mistaken, in 1975, roughly thirty-five years ago. But yes, those are the principal documentary sources for the social historian.

In terms of chronicles, now we are in a better position than our predecessors because the literary turn, which began in the 1980s, has induced many people to publish chronicles, sometimes in an *édition critique*, or sometimes from a single manuscript like the *Evliya Çelebi* edition of Yapı Kredi Yayınları. The authors have made a serious effort to find the best manuscripts, and some volumes are based on what may well be Evliya's autograph. While the editors don't claim that their work is an *édition critique*, it's a very reliable edition of the best manuscripts. I mean, as I'm not a philologist such an edition is sufficient for my purposes. Now that many

Ottoman chronicles are available, you can figure out who has copied from whom, and that's very important when you try to evaluate these sources.

I think that our lack of information on the genesis of these texts was one reason why for a long time Ottoman historians did not like chronicles so much; we knew that these texts were put together on the basis of predecessors and furthermore might be manipulated at a later stage. While we knew that such things happened, often we don't know how, when, or on whose initiative. So I'm not saying that our present information is perfect, but it is much better than it used to be.

Can we also add any visual documents to this list?

PROF. FAROQHI

Not that many. For the post-Tanzimat period of course there's much more; you get caricatures, people have worked on those, and you get photography, there's a huge literature on that by now. But for earlier on, well, we basically have some miniatures, and people like Tülay Artan, Esin Atıl, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu and many others have done a lot of very substantive work with this material, but once you come right down to it, there isn't that much of it. You also have engravings, but then again the critical work you need to do before using it is also quite daunting; in the sixteenth century, people were still perfectly capable of adding engravings that didn't belong to the book that they were publishing, just to make it look better, and of course engravers copied from other engravers. Some people have worked on costume books. Leslie Schick started to do a dissertation with Gülru Necipoğlu on this topic, but, unfortunately, she never finished it – she wrote a couple of articles and that was that – what a great pity! For we still need a major critical study of costume books. I hope somebody takes up this topic quite soon. So visual sources are important, but the number is relatively limited, and you also have to be very careful about conventions, copying, and the use of other people's works, and also the body of critical thought on these issues is not that well-developed yet.

To sum it up, one of the attractions of archival documents is that, yes, there are some fakes, but the number is not that huge. People have written some interesting articles on fakes: there were scribes who stole papers which already had the *tuğra* on them and then wrote something that was of advantage to them. As such things did not happen all that often, when you get to a text in a *mühimme* or an *ahkâm defteri* or a *kadı* register, you can assume that, with all its limitations, it's a real document, which of course makes life a lot easier!

What was the motivation for your guide book on Ottoman history studies? [Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources] Do you think there is still a need for that sort of resource?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, of course, somebody should write with an emphasis on the post-Tanzimat period because that's what most people are working on these days. I didn't do that because it's not really my area of competence. The reason why I wrote this book was because, very often, graduate students would come to me – sometimes from provincial universities, sometimes from Istanbul and other places as well – and usually they were perfectly capable of reading the documents, and/or had found some good documents. But they didn't know what to do next. Now, I got a wee bit bored explaining the same things over and over and over again, and I thought, well, if I write such a book, then some of the questions will be answered in print, and we can go into the specifics with the student, but I won't have to talk about the basics again and again. And secondly, of course, it came from teaching in Munich, because there we had these introductory courses about the use of sources, and, well, some of the things I wrote came from some of the mistakes I saw in student papers.

What do you think about the historiographic debates since Barkan's time? Who are the major figures in Ottoman history in these debates?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, of course first of all, Inalcık. He started to publish in the 1940s – my God, I think he wrote his dissertation the year I was born! In the course of time he has done an enormous amount of work that is still being cited and is well worth citing down to the present day. I would say he is the major figure who kind of dominated the field, certainly between the 1950s and let's say the 1990s. Now he is very, very old, but until the 1990s he was certainly an active presence. And then, a lot of interesting things have come from people who are often of Turkish background but who have studied abroad, and who have therefore become attuned to things that are going on in the outside world. While in Barkan's generation, or even later, linking up with what was going on outside of Turkey was a personal achievement, this is no longer true.

For instance the interest in women's history, I think, came to Turkey from abroad. I think it's not by chance that the first person to work on this was Ronald C. Jennings, and that one of the major figures in the field is

Leslie Pierce. I mean, we have a women's movement here, but we don't get many people who have a foot in the women's movement and are also interested in history. If they are in a scholarly discipline, then it tends to be sociology, or anthropology, or demography, but it's definitely present-day oriented, or at least that's been my impression. All the people in women's studies that I know work on the twentieth century (and beyond).

On the other hand, there is the interest in how documents were made, and how the process of manufacture impacted the contents. I think that this aspect was, not totally perhaps but very largely, imported by people who had studied abroad. I think that it is not by chance that you often find this concern in younger scholars who have certainly studied abroad and perhaps even made their careers in the US and elsewhere; Boğaç Ergene is a good example and I greatly respect his work. One of the weaknesses I can see in many otherwise good studies that are done by people without this kind of international contact is that they will adopt the perspective of the documents – practically without questioning.

I think that here we are confronted with a real trap. People in the eighteenth or sixteenth century certainly were different from people today but they were still humans and thus had some things in common with us. In consequence I believe that quite often they had their own reasons for manipulating the evidence, just like our contemporaries. That's why I thought the Master's thesis on gossip that I mentioned before was so good, because the author was perfectly aware of the fact that court gossip was a manipulation of facts, as by the way, Sinan Paşa well knew. Unfortunately a lot of people forget all the things they know as citizens of the world in which we live today when they begin to work and write on the Ottomans. I think this partly has to do with nostalgia; they want to believe that there was a time when everything was straightforward. Now I don't think such an age ever existed, it is a pure myth.

A golden age...

PROF. FAROQHI

There never was such a thing. In the sixteenth century, let's say, in the golden age of Ottoman miniatures, we have a Sultan, Murat III (r. 1574-95), who was notorious for trusting very dubious sheiks. Well, Mustafa Ali wrote about that. A little earlier on, we have *Kanuni* Sultan Suleiman (r. 1520-66), who is sometimes made into almost some kind of divinity. He had several of his sons executed on very dubious grounds, and, what's more, he played a significant role in placing one of the less capable of his sons upon the throne. This sort of thing is normal; in every age, when you look closely,

courts and dynasties are mainly concerned with power, but people don't want to believe that.

In addition to the myth of the Golden Age, we have a tendency to transfer our own concerns to bygone ages. I remember once reading an otherwise very factual study of the Ottoman-Iranian conflict in the sixteenth century. Iranian Shi'ism was treated more or less like communism because this was during the Cold War and also because Ottoman documents of the 1500s tend to adopt a perspective reminiscent of that typical of 'Cold Warriors'. But, well, we should maybe maintain a certain amount of detachment.

Isn't what we are discussing now a paradigm? It's a paradigm of a golden age, a classical age, and then a decline period, and so on.

PROF. FAROQHI

Sure. And well, frankly, I hope that paradigm is finally going down the drain; at least, in scholarly discourse. I haven't yet read it, but I know that Baki Tezcan has come up with a book called *The Second Ottoman Empire* and, from what I hear, he simply says that, OK, in the seventeenth century a different variety of empire came into being, which lasted until the early 1900s. 'Constitutionally', in other words in terms of power, the Second Ottoman Empire was different from what had been there before. I think this is an excellent way of getting away from this decline stuff. You can have empires decline, and people have had the Roman Empire decline for four centuries before it finally fell, and it does not explain very much. As for the Ottomans, they were supposedly declining for four centuries before they finally fell, and I just think that by now that sort of thinking is more or less useless. It doesn't explain anything; it's a kind of tautology. Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj took the first step in that direction when he pointed out that *nasihatname* writers were not necessarily conveying objective truths but had a vested interest of some sort to defend. They normally belonged to one faction or another, and they wanted to promote somebody's career, and maybe denigrate somebody else. Therefore we should look at *nasihatnames* in their historical contexts, as Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj began saying that in the 1980s.

His book finally came out in 1991. It's recently been reprinted and with justification. I think that Abou-El-Haj's approach was already an important step towards getting away from the 'decline' paradigm. The author has pointed out first of all the importance of situating sources in their historical context, and in the same breath reminded us of the dangers of anachronism. He once wrote a very amusing review article on writings

published in Libya about the Ottoman period, and some of the cases he took up were really hilarious. There was a fellow who took a standard Hanefi legal text of the middle ages, and said that this work must reflect the Ottoman land system because, after all, the Ottomans were Hanefi Muslims. Abou-El-Haj took that claim apart by pointing out that people use legal sources and reuse them: they will take up certain parts and forget others; in so doing they are children of their times and the historian has the job of making these choices clear. Generally speaking we read all kinds of accounts written in the past, and our reading is different from the reading of our predecessors.

I think another interesting point is that, in some areas of endeavour, a chronology emerges which is not necessarily the same as the political chronology, so that maybe you can get very worthwhile literary texts in an era which is not so great politically. It seems that literary historians think that Ottoman Divan literature kind of broke free of the Iranian Timurid prototypes somewhere in the late sixteenth century, and that these poets found their own voices largely in the 1700s. Well, that was perhaps not such a great period politically, but some very creative people were active at this time. So I think the willingness to dissociate cultural activities from political history is also part of this paradigm change; once you take seriously the fact that a lot of important literary figures lived in the eighteenth century, well then your political categories are just no longer that helpful.

So which period, do you think, deserves a closer look in Ottoman history?

PROF. FAROQHI

The eighteenth century! Because on the one hand, we have a huge amount of literary sources, of which we are just scratching the surface. In the eighteenth century, I think as a reaction to the decentralization that was going on in many provinces, the Ottoman administration really tried to establish closer links to the provinces, and they started to gather information on a scale unheard of before. So, for instance, if you look at the work that Cengiz Kırılı and Betül Başaran have done on the registers of the period of Selim III (r.1789-1807), you will see what I mean: there had never been an attempt to gather that sort of information in earlier times. Or if you look at Mübahat Küçüköğlü's *Yirminci Asra Erişen İstanbul Medreseleri*, she has used a *tahrir* which was an attempt to check up on *medrese* students – whether they were really there or if they were not there, what they were doing, whether they legitimately were on leave and if their rooms were occupied, who was there in their places. Well, this is the sort of information that you don't get for earlier times. Or again, take the material about water, published by Ahmet

Kal'a and his team; there is no information of the same magnitude for earlier periods. People like to talk about the state that tries to see and seize everything, and associate that with the *Tanzimat*, but it seems that there was a kind of indigenous – not imported – tradition of trying to look at the population much more closely than had been the case so far, and this begins in the middle of the eighteenth century. I think this is all extremely interesting stuff; on the one hand if you're a political historian you want to know what these developments say about the politics of the period, or on the other hand if you're basically a social historian, well then you get a coverage of the Istanbul population, for instance, that you just don't get earlier on.

In your recent work Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire you mention that Ottomans depended on the animals they raised, and the animals sharing their home environments had a profound impact on their lives. What was the place of animals in, say, the average Ottoman household? How do you think this shared environment affected Ottoman identity?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, first of all, Ottoman authors didn't write very much about animals. That's one reason why the topic has remained in the background. The one exception may be the saints' legends, where, occasionally, they do show up. There's a woman by the name of Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen who has worked on an Egyptian saint and his sanctuary from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. There you have this Ahmad Badawi, who is very close to camels and camel drivers, to the point that once or twice he even appeared as a camel. But otherwise, if you look at Ottoman chroniclers, there's nothing, and if you look at Ottoman archival documents, there's not a great deal. That's why, for a long time, animals were absent from the historiography.

I always have greatly appreciated Lütfi Güçer because he recognized that Ottoman military campaigns put a fantastic load on the backs of peasants because their animals were used for this purpose, and they couldn't know whether they'd get them back, or if they got them back in what condition, and then if the animals were gone how were they going to bring in the next harvest? Most Ottoman historians never thought of it that way. I remember that when I read this, I thought, yes, it makes sense. But to go back to your question, I don't think that animals had that much to do with Ottoman identity because if they had had something to do with it, there would have been more evidence.

On the other hand, animals must have been all over the place because if you look at the *tereke*s of peasants – there are a few from Konya from the late sixteenth century – you find that every family owns a donkey.

These peasants may not own very much else, but a donkey is extremely common. In fact, donkeys were still widespread in Istanbul even when I was an undergrad. I remember that in Beyoğlu, when I kept my window open, I heard the braying of donkeys all over the place. They disappeared very quickly and very radically in the 1960s, but they were still common enough at the beginning of the decade. When you look, for instance, at the *kadı* registers of Üsküdar, then you see that at first it's the *katırcıs*, the mule-drivers, who are often involved in disputes, and later on it's the *beygircıs* (horse-drivers). For some reason that we don't really understand, apparently transportation enterprises gave up on mules and started to use low quality horses. So official documents contain a certain amount of material about animals either belonging to people involved in a dispute, or, of course, there is evidence when these creatures somehow concerned the central administration. You do get material on feeding the camels called *miri develer* that transported goods belonging to the army or to the Sultan. The Ottomans were of course great bureaucrats; they filled reams and reams of paper whenever they had to spend money. There also survives a certain amount of evidence on the Sultan's court because falcons used in the hunt came from all over the empire. When local falconers brought them to the Palace, they had to be given a certain amount of money so they could get back to their home provinces and start all over again. Then you have some evidence on gifts – they show up in images more often than any place else. My friend Hedda Reindl-Kiel has written on that. But it really takes a certain amount of effort to find documentation. There are no files that indicate immediately: pay attention, here's something on animals.

Nomads were poorly covered by the *tahrirs* simply because they went from one place to the next, and their animals, if mentioned at all, were grossly under-enumerated. After all, they could be driven into the mountains; people didn't have to wait for the *tahrir emini* to come and do the counting. I'm sure that the Ottoman authorities knew this home truth even better than we do, so they didn't pay that much attention. Therefore, when you want to write on animals, it's really tricky. I remember that before we put together this volume on animals and people which came out a few months ago, we had organized two conferences on the topic at Bogaziçi University. Many people who I tried to invite said they had never seen any evidence on animals, and this was not because of neglect, but because really there isn't that much in existence.

But in the post-Tanzimat period?

 PROF. FAROQHI

Well that's different. Once you get to 1844 and you get to the *temettuât defterleri*, then it's different because the animals were a source of wealth and therefore of taxes. As a result they appear in the registers; or we may at least hope that they did so. Again, I wouldn't overestimate the accuracy because animals have four feet and they can be driven away. People like Alp Yücel Kaya who have worked on the *temettuât defterleri* have shown that, well, the resources recorded were subject to negotiation; that is, when the bureaucrats at the center realized that they couldn't get a local *eşraf* to cooperate, they tended to reduce the tax load placed upon the latter.

Alp Yücel Kaya has written a very nice article on this kind of bargaining and how it happened in the Ödemiş area. In fact he wrote a good dissertation showing that things were not really very different in early nineteenth-century France; there too the material collected was less than reliable and officials in Paris were perfectly aware of the fact. Therefore all this evidence is there, it's available, but you have to use it with caution, like all source materials.

And what about those little men and women in the Ottoman towns? Was there a big difference between a household in Istanbul and a household in the countryside? Or between an Armenian family and a Muslim family?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, I wish we knew. You see, the problem is that we have so little evidence on non-Muslim families for the entire early period. Matters only seem to really change in the nineteenth century. I don't know Armenian or Greek, but there seems to be more evidence on Greek Orthodox people. Since I don't know the relevant language, I can only say that I gain that impression from the secondary literature. Probably, the availability of evidence varies from one place to the next.

Sometimes you get non-Muslims who preferred to use the *kadi's* court because, presumably, it gave them an advantage. Under certain circumstances, a widow may inherit a larger share of her husband's estate under the Sharia than she does according to Orthodox custom, so if that expectation existed there was a motivation to register an inheritance with the *kadi*. If the widow had a strong input, she might want to have it that way. You also get something rather amusing in Venice, where the Orthodox people who arrived in Venice were subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Philadelphia – this was not Philadelphia in the US, it was Alaşehir. Well, of course, there was no bishop active in Alaşehir in the 1600s or 1700s. but this

dignitary bore the title, and he was in charge of all the ecclesiastical issues of visiting Orthodox people, many of them traders and seamen. There's a volume of studies on the basis of this material, and one of these articles shows that divorces were pronounced fairly easily, and sometimes against the rules of the Orthodox Church. Clergymen argued that if they didn't allow the petitioners to divorce, they would become Muslims, and simply repudiate their wives. In order to prevent this from happening, the churchmen decided to grant the petitioners divorces, even though, strictly speaking, what they did wasn't legal.

As a result the *kadı* registers have a certain amount of evidence on Orthodox people. I remember seeing once a case of an engagement being broken off between two Karamanlis, that is, turcophone Christians. The mothers appeared in court saying that the engagement was off and that they mutually returned the gifts and that was the end of the story. Presumably the two women wanted to be sure that the arrangement couldn't be challenged later on, which is why they went to the Muslim court, although both of these women were Christians and so were their children. But it seems to me that there is much more evidence on the Orthodox than on the Armenians. I don't know why that is so. Maybe if one were to work more on the registers of Kayseri, Sivas – I don't know how much survives for Sivas – and Tokat, certainly, where there were more Armenians, then maybe more would come to light. But at this point, Armenians tend to fall into a black hole, even when there is evidence available. In Turkey people don't like them because they are not Muslim Turks, and in Armenia people don't like them because they are often turcophone and operating within the Ottoman framework, as a result very often nobody studies them. Armenians like to write about Armenians in eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, but the much more historically important communities are often forgotten. Therefore, I wouldn't dare to say anything about what we know about Armenian family life.

By contrast we get a lot of evidence on Jews because they had something which was basically very similar to fatwas; the Rabbi answered questions as to whether something was legal or not according to Jewish law. Many people – for instance Mina Rozen – extensively have written on questions related to these documents; and it seems that, yes, these people were an integral part of the Ottoman environment and they reacted to it. For instance, a collection of published *responsa* translated into English that contains a fatwa about a young man who wanted to break off his engagement. Apparently, among the Jews, that was a very serious matter because the fiancés were allowed time alone together, so, basically, once you got engaged, you had to get married. The Rabbi asked this man whether he knew anything bad about his fiancée, and the young man answered: “No.” “Well, then why do you want to break the engagement?” As for the young man, his answer was remarkable: “Well, I only found out after the engagement that the

family is a *sürgün* (exiled) family, and I don't want to marry into such a family." And the Rabbi to answer: "Well, under those circumstances, you can break off the engagement." So this text tells us something that the Ottoman sources don't tell us; namely, that people who were recognizably *sürgün* were of a lower social status. So some people have worked on the condition of non-Muslims, but a lot remains to be done. People who don't know the relevant languages really depend on the secondary literature; and unfortunately I am in that position.

How has your intellectual project of writing about the little women and men developed in opposition to, or in dialogue with, other academic projects, both in Ottoman studies and in other cultural history writings?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, very simply, I think I got interested in thinking about what my own life is about, and that presumably these people were people like me and like my friends, and so what was going on in their lives? That was certainly one aspect. I think also reading in Nazım Hikmet's *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (*Human Landscapes from My Country*) about the people who are as numerous as the fish in the sea – that certainly had an impact. So I can't say it was so much the historiography, but it was more I think literature and films including – among many others – Theo Angelopoulos *The Regard of Ulysses* and my own life experiences that got me interested in what the life chances of ordinary townspeople may have been. But I'm maybe exaggerating: there is a beautiful book by a woman called Olwen Hufton who is a women's historian of Europe, and she wrote a book called *The Prospect Before Her*. She was at that time a grandmother, her children had grown up, and she said, "OK, I have a granddaughter who has just been born; if I imagine myself as a woman of the sixteenth century, what would be the life chances of a girl that was somebody's grandchild in that period?" And she did a beautiful book based on this presupposition. I liked this book enormously, so maybe some of my project was in response to this work of Olwen Hufton. But, as I said, I think that literature and film were more of a motivation than actual historiography in this project.

Your 2006 book, The Ottoman Empire and the World around It, discusses the relationship of the Ottoman elites with the world outside the Empire. You emphasize the fact that there was no 'iron curtain' between the nascent 'modern' European states and the Ottoman Empire, but there were rather long-established cultural, economical, religious and diplomatic

connections within what you understand as a unitary, 'one world' culture. Did your own personal experience have an impact on your standpoint?

PROF. FAROQHI

Sure, because I was an adolescent and a student at the time of the Cold War, and I lived in West Germany – Hamburg is only a few kilometers away from what was then the border. So this 'iron curtain' was very real, and at the same time it was also something that many of us thought was simply despicable. I mean, it was just dumb. One of our jokes used to be that if you took some of those cold warriors that we got there in Bonn (at that time the capital of West Germany) and you put them in a parcel, and you sent them over to East Berlin, within a couple of weeks they'd be doing exactly the same thing as they had done before, and the same thing of course would be true in the reverse. Throughout, those types had created a world for themselves which, I think, many of us just simply rejected.

Certainly, the unwillingness to accept iron curtains as an adolescent, an undergraduate and a graduate student had something to do with the way in which I framed my question many years later. I knew of course that even in West Berlin, where as of 1961 there was a real and very visible wall, it was possible to pass through. I mean, it was a nuisance, but at least if you were not a resident of West-Berlin – for, for a while, the latter could not go –you could go to the theater in East Berlin, and I did it a couple of times. You had to put up with a bit of flak at the border, but you could buy a ticket and go to the performance and come back again. So when you do these kinds of things on a practical level, then you know it's possible. As a result when you read about people in the Ottoman world who also crossed boundaries, well then you sympathize while taking note that it must have been possible for them as well.

Of course the publisher İbrahim Müteferrika was a nice example. But I also found a remarkable figure in a catalogue put out by the Sursock Museum of Book Art in Beirut; in the 1980s, when the Lebanese Civil War was still going on, the administrators of this museum organized an exhibition in Paris. The catalogue contained a very interesting article about an Ottoman Muslim who lived in the late 1500s and was greatly interested in languages. This man associated with the French ambassador Savary de Brèves, and accompanied the latter to Italy. We only know about him – his name was Ahmet Bey or Mehmet Bey or something like that – because Savary de Brèves mentioned him. Incidentally the French diplomat wrote to his various associates, "You must never suggest conversion to Christianity; he won't hear of it, but he is very committed to languages," and when this Ottoman went to Italy, the first thing he did was learn Latin. Unfortunately as I said, this man's

existence was only reflected in Savary de Brèves' letters, so when the association ended, we don't know what happened to him.

But this man was committed to the study of languages, he knew several of them and wanted to learn more, and he was willing to cross borders to indulge in his passion. So obviously, Ottomans did this like we did it when we were students, and I think, again, life experiences have something to do with that.

So to what extent is it still essential to counter national histories? Can we talk about the Ottomans without mentioning the Renaissance, for instance?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, national histories are really a problem because, in actual fact, there was a great deal of interaction between the Ottomans and their neighbors. I think, on an academic level, most people know this. But when you get to the high school and junior high school level, then, of course, people are trained in national histories, and the teachers who are supposed to teach these courses are also trained in national history, which means that there is often a fantastic divergence between what scholars consider as worthwhile knowledge, and what is taught in schools. I think that's a real problem. It's a problem in Turkey, certainly – I think we all know that – but it's not only a problem in Turkey; you can encounter it in many European countries as well, to say nothing of the U.S., where I think it's probably even worse. So I would assume that this is a problem for which we need to have more of an input; scholarly work must make more of an impact upon textbooks. Of course, such an undertaking is not so much a problem of scholarship as of cultural politics. But I think it's essential because we spend much of our time at the college level trying to un-teach what the students have learned in high school, which is really I think a waste of time and effort: in Turkey and everywhere else.

So my last question will be, out of interest, how many languages do you speak?

PROF. FAROQHI

Well, that depends on how you define 'speaking'! I grew up with German and English, and to me they are more or less on the same level. I'm not strictly bilingual because I learned English when I was five, but I did learn it before I went to school. In French I'm fluent enough – I can teach

without any trouble. But writing is a different matter: I have only once or twice written a book review. I remember that Nicolas Vatin was kind enough to edit it – I don't know what it was like unedited; probably no great shakes – but, you know, for correspondence my command of French is sufficient. I have a limited knowledge of Dutch because while I went to Dutch primary schools in Indonesia, and while I remember much of what I've learned, I have not progressed beyond that level and I still have the vocabulary of an eleven- or twelve-year old schoolchild. This means that things that didn't occur in the books I read in the early 1950s, I have trouble saying, but everyday communication is no trouble at all because what you learn as a grade school kid is not so easily forgotten! I can read Italian; when I speak it's god-awful, but I can manage to not get lost, I can shop, I can chat about fashions – you know, everyday kind of stuff – nothing more sophisticated than that, but reading is fine. I once knew Spanish reasonably well in Mexico – when I was a graduate student in the U.S. I went there a couple of times – but I haven't used it in ages and by now my level is 'reading knowledge only'. And now, of course, I am quite comfortable with Turkish, but, well, you know better than I do what my Turkish is like because you have suffered through my courses!

It's ... amazing! Professor Faroqhi, we thank you for your time, but especially for your enthusiasm, your work and guidance.

PROF. FAROQHI

And I congratulate our students who do such significant work and issue such a valuable publication.

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