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A Day of Tribute to Gilles Veinstein

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A Day of Tribute to Gilles Veinstein

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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- 1 **At the initiative of the Collège de France and the Centre d'études turques, ottomanes, balkaniques et centre-asiatiques (CNRS/EHESS – Collège de France), and thanks to the generosity of the Fondation Hugot, a day was dedicated to Gilles Veinstein (1945-2013) on Friday 7 February 2014, almost exactly one year after his untimely death.**



Gilles Veinstein during his Inaugural lecture in 1999

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- 2 After Prof. Henry Laurens had presented the biography and career of Gilles Veinstein (Turkish and Ottoman History, 1999 to 2012), eight colleagues and friends from France as well as from Austria, Greece, the United Kingdom and Turkey discussed his contribution to Ottoman studies and to historical studies as a whole. They looked back at his teaching at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and at the Collège de France, and then at his research and publications according to the major areas he covered and the themes he addressed.
- 3 While discussing the teacher and the researcher from different angles, the speakers highlighted a number of common threads both in the evolution of Gilles Veinstein's interests and in his practice as a historian. Early economic, commercial and social history work on the Ottomans' relations with the Black Sea and the Pontic Steppes gradually led him to broaden his geographical area of interest to the Greek and insular territories. He focused in particular on land issues and the ways in which the Ottomans' settled in conquered territories, as well as on the functioning of the State (particularly during wartime) and the judicial system, and on diplomacy.
- 4 He also studied religious questions, as a historian of the State and as a comparatist. In parallel, he grew increasingly interested in discourse analysis and self-representation, a concern that was inseparable from the extreme importance he gave to the diplomatic study of first-hand documents, his favourite source. He would go and find his documentation not only in the Turkish archive collections but also others across Europe. He was keenly aware of the weight of words, and his use of widely diverse types of documents enabled him to avoid the pitfall of mis- and over-interpretation.
- 5 Both in his books and his lectures at the Collège de France, Gilles Veinstein demonstrated his exceptional gift of synthesis and clarity. He was able to situate the subjects he discussed in relation to the main trends of historical reflection in general, and then to the state of Ottomanist research, before returning to them open-mindedly.

He based his work on documentary facts, even if they contradicted an appealing theory that showed a desire to demonstrate rather than to know and understand. Several speakers recalled how Gilles Veinstein put an end to the debate on the Ottoman *çiftlik* by returning to the facts, which he analyzed with subtlety and meticulously.

- 6 Gilles Veinstein's many articles demonstrate the same qualities and methods, never asserted but systematically applied. Based on a tangible case, the historian's gaze explored much broader horizons, embedding the study of an institution or of an event in a context or an evolution. The conclusion then offered a fine and original analysis of the nature of the Ottoman State and society, through which the core subject of the article revealed phenomena and trends of prime importance.
- 7 As a result, Gilles Veinstein was renowned as a historian whose horizons exceeded the field of Ottoman studies – a field which he contributed significantly to opening up.

Programme

Introduction

Henry Laurens, Collège de France and Nathalie Clayer, CÉTOBAC

Morning session chaired by François Hartog, EHESS

Listening to the Sources. Gilles Veinstein's Teaching at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales

Nicolas Vatin, CÉTOBAC, EPHE

Gilles Veinstein's Lectures at the Collège de France

Olivier Bouquet, Université Paris VII

Gilles Veinstein's Work on South East Europe

Oliver Schmitt, University of Vienna

Gilles Veinstein in Greek and Insular territory

Elizabeth Zachariadou, Honorary member of the Institute of Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno

Afternoon session chaired by Alexandre Popovic, CÉTOBAC

With an Attention to Detail: Gilles Veinstein's Contribution to the Study of the Ottoman State

Colin Imber, Emeritus Professor at the University of Manchester

Ottoman Society in Gilles Veinstein's Work

Suraiya Faroqhi, Bilgi Üniversitesi, Istanbul

Gilles Veinstein's Contribution to the Study of the Ottoman Economy and Trade

Edhem Eldem, Bosphorus University, Istanbul

Within and Beyond Ottoman Studies: Religious Questions

Nathalie Clayer, CÉTOBAC-EHESS

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