**EMRE EROL 1**

***[Intro]***

**00:06:00**

My name is Emre Erol I was born in 1984 in Izmit, close to Istanbul, but because of my father’s job I’ve constantly changed places every four or five years or so but Eski Foça is kind of a constant for me because I’ve spent all my summers, esp. all my childhood summers here and ever since I have always visited Foça in the summer and sometimes in the winter and other times (00:35) My mother’s family is from Eski Foça and my father’s family is from Tekirdağ **(00:40)**

**00:53**

I am working at Sabanci University as a faculty member at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, I also recently am […], I am a social scientist and historian by training (01:10)

**01:21**

I did my PhD in Leiden University in the Netherlands and I’ve completed it in 2014 and my dissertation was about Eski Foça, 100 years of its history and it was published as a book in 2016 from IB Tauris.

**Before university, what did you know about the Greeks of Foça?**

**00:02:06**

Before going to uni I didn’t know much besides the existence of Greeks in the long, long ago, because I didn’t have a historical consciousness, because I grew up in a town where there were Greek houses from the late Ottoman period and also, for instance, archaeological sites that had Hellenic heritage or Ionic heritage. For that reason I knew there were Greeks once upon a time. **(02:34)**

And the other consciousness that I had was that Greece was very close by because when I was a kid long wave radio broadcasts of Mytilene would reach this coast and whenever you turned on your radio and reached for channels you would always hear a lot of Greek music as well. That’s the cultural encounter I had before university. But I didn’t have the consciousness why that was the case, why it is no longer the case and so on and so forth before the university, besides the simply story that we all know: once upon a time this was an Empire and it no longer is, it’s a nation state, so some people are gone, kind of thing. **(03:09)**

**When you were little did people talk about the Exchange of Populations here?**

**00:04:43**

Yes, in the form of mübadele, the Turkish word, because everybody’s family history somehow relates to that. For instance people who came from Limnos, Kavala, Mytilini, so on and so forth, they would talk about their family history and that would always go into the Greco-Turkish war and 1922, the population exchange and so on and so forth. **(05:06)**

**In your research, what have you found about the Turkish Foçalis who were here before the Exchange of Populations? The “original” ones?**

**00:08:01**

What did I find about Turkish Foçalis that lived here before 1914, before the beginning of the 20th century? A couple of things. First of all when I went to the archives in Athens, at the Centre for Asian Minor Studies, there there were these documents that were produced out of interviews with people inside Greek residents of Eski Foça, or Palia Fokaia, who were forced to leave or asked about their everyday life, and in those documents you encounter how people used to play games with their old Muslim neighbours in Eksi Foça and so on**..(08:42)**

**00:08:52** The other source was something that was built around the model of CAMS, a group of scholars in Turkey around a scholar called Engin Berber, tried to collect oral historical documents from *then* residents of Eski Foça (09:10) and by then I mean the beginning of the C20 **(09:13) …**

**00:09:29** In those cassettes was able to have access to interviews with people who were 5 or 6 years old at the beginning of the 20th century. So they have some vivid memories about the 1920s, not so vivid about 1910s. **(09:47)**

**00:09:51** We have the Ottoman state archives telling us numbers, but numbers don’t mean much, but still about the existence and how that stays stable throughout years of population census, the Muslim population here stays more or less the same, but there are these big jumps in two different places and they are happening because of emigration of Muslims from lost imperial territories of the Ottoman Empire. **(10:17)**

**How did you come across the 1914 forced displacement during your research?**

**00:20:22**

I got accepted for a PhD at Leiden University in the Netherlands, it’s my first year, I arrive in the country, very enthusiastic, I have literally a bag full of sources from the Ottoman Archives, and I am searching for workers’ stories. Remember I told you I was collecting the documents with a couple of key words, one was “migration” and so I accidentally collected a lot of sources about 1914. **(20:51)**

**00:21:06** I’m reading the sources, I’m translating them I’m like, wait a second this is not about workers, this is about something else and I am putting it aside and I am going back to my focus and I’m producing a chapter and I’m telling Erik, “by the way I am finding a lot of stuff about a chapter of migration in 1914; I know it’s not my primary focus because my thesis statement, my original intent was workers’ strike, but what am I going to do with these things? It looks very interesting, I didn’t know about this thing, because this is not *mübadele*, this is something else”. (21:35) And he’s like “go for it, because there is something in the literature, we know there must have been some forced migrations before WWI but that’s not a topic many people study because nobody found a lot of documents about that.” **(21:48)**

**00:22:33**

But when I first found the Ottoman Archives I said ‘there must be more’; I had to look at other archives as well so that’s why I had to consult the archives in Athens, I had to consult the archives in France, Britain (22:46) In the meanwhile what I’m doing is I hear about a book coming out with photographs and so on and so forth, that’s the book by Haris Yakoumis, the collection of Felix Sartiaux’s photographs **(22:56)**

**00:23:21**

This was baby steps, I had a lot of gaps in my story in terms of sources and then he reacted to it in a very nice way and he made me aware about his work too and I went back, I checked the book and I thought ‘oh my god I am going to use that as well’ **(23:34)**

**00: 23:47** and the whole narrative became this narrative from a boomtown, the growing economy, the workers’ movements, the port, the salt, etc., to ghost town, the transition that abruptly comes with the Balkan Wars basically and then the transformation to a ghost town thing. **(24:03)**

**00:24:11**

I never encountered anything about 1914 before my own research

**00:25:00** But I must be honest when I discovered it I also felt very curious because in my own experience – coming back to your earlier questions– when people were asked about their family history here in Foça, esp. people who are coming from migrant backgrounds, they would always think that their grandparents came here after 1922. But after doing my research I realised there were a lot of contradictions in their memories because they think they came after 1922 –their grandparents– but their grandparents had memories with Greeks, which would be impossible after 1922 in the case of Eski Foça, so they must have been here earlier on.  **– 25:42**

**So what *did* you find in the Ottoman documents?**

**00:26:21**

Short reports written in coded telegrams from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for instance, or telegrams that were written about bandit activity in the region, certain reports that are talking about the population change and the arrival of Muslim refugees, the *muhacirs*, from Izmir to this region but initially it didn’t make any sense to me “there’s this document here, what is this about, what is that about?” so it took me some time to put it down all together. **(26:58)**

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***[Talat Pasha/ Krypto]***

**00:28:14**

Talat Pasha, then Minister of Internal Affairs, very well-known Unionist, tries to travel around Anatolia in such a fashion in order to give foreign media and foreign representative a message of “we’re in control, as it should be” kind of thing **(28:34)>**

**>00:29:15** because, to put it in a nutshell, for Ottomans in 1914, when this things was happening, this is right before the Great War, the most important thing was kind of a diplomatic balance in which they are not isolated and blamed for something which is a pretext for interventionism **(29:37)** So if they wanted to do something, and in this case they did, they wanted to homogenise the demography of Western Anatolia, they thought they should do it in such a fashion that it looks spontaneous, chaotic, that they didn’t do it, or that they looked the other way and they didn’t stop it, so that they are no diplomatic costs for it. Because diplomatic costs would mean disaster for any non-European state, by the way, around the turn of the 20th century basically; I think that’s why they had this double-reality rhetoric: they’re trying to do what they want to do in their own worldview but pretend that they are not doing it, to dodge the diplomatic consequences. **(30:24)>>>(30:36)** It’s a ruse basically becauseTalat Pasha when you read the way he talks in the Parliament it’s as if he did his best, he didn’t know about this, this happened because of the Balkan Wars and the resentment that the war created. But if you follow his footsteps, zoom into the story of Foça, you know at least that they knew about this and they had created the conflicts in which this kind of chaos might happen; when it was happening they didn’t really stop it, and if you zoom a little bit more, the story gets more complex because the Mayor that was appointed here for instance was a particular type of mayor that you could never expect him to stop, on the contrary you would expect him to initiate it and stuff like that. **(31:17)>>>**

**00:32:11**  
His name is **Ferit bey**, he was the governor general here during the ousting of the Ottoman Greeks here **(32:21)>>>**

**>>00:32:59** Why is he appointed a little bit before the events and then Talat Pasha removes him from the service and to the foreign press, internal press, and in his private correspondence he says “I removed him because he failed to stop the persecution of Ottoman Greeks here, forced migration of Ottoman Greeks”, because if you know what happens to him after he is removed from the post or before, that might give us more clues as to the role of the Unionists in this. **(33:33)**

**00:34:24**

So I was able to chase Ferit Bey ~~(you might be wondering why chasing was so hard- because the surname law was not there so there’s a gazillion Ferits and so on)~~ **34:33** and I was always suspicious that he might have motives not to stop or even promote the forced migration here. Why I was suspicious? Because in historical literature – I am going to simplify and carricaturize this – there is a general argument: those who are displaced, tend to displace or tend to like radical ideologies more. **(34:56)** >>

**(35:20)** And my research shows that is the case actually. He was born in Crete and then he served in western Anatolia and then he served in the Balkans and up until the point he goes to the Balkans he’s like this guy who gets medals, promotions very quickly, he’s very respected, the document goes very monotones document [sic], and then he goes to the Balkans and immediately he starts chasing Bulgarian chettes, IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation) in the mountains together with the general army. This guy is not a soldier, he is a civil servant. And then he spends a couple of years like that and then one of his posts --can’t remember the exact location but we can check it in my article-- is a post which had enormous bandit activity during the Illinden uprising. (36:09) ~~So he’s there in the Illinden uprising and halfway it’s supressed and so on~~ **(36:09)** so he has first-hand experience of violence. (36:17) And then he serves in Tikvesh, during the later stage at his Rumelia tenure if you will and when he is in Tikvesh the Balkan Wars break out, the Serbian army enters Tikvesh and he is governor-general of Tikvesh and he is in his govt building and the army comes and they get into the building and they torture him and they also kill a couple of civilians on the street when the invasion was happening. **(36:47)**

And the next thing happens, he is appointed to Western Anatolia.

The first one must be Milas, the second one is automatically Eski Foça, Palaia Fokaia. And then the ousting happens. And then I was able to chase the rest of the story. He then is removed from power, that’s correct it’s not wrong, but very soon, I think less than 6 months, he’s appointed again in another place in NW of Anatolia, Karamürsel, which is known to have again, like Eski Foça, a lot of non-Muslim population, this time a mixture of Armenian Christians and Greek Christians, but very little of the Greeks, a larger group of Armenians, and as soon as he’s appointed somehow Armenians are deported, in 1915 of course. **(37:38)**

So and then after Karamürsel I lose his tracks in the official documents, to this day I haven’t found much about that – but the reason why I was interested in that is to see whether this vicious cycle of nationalist competition in and around the Ottoman Empire creates the framework which we see in Rwandan Genocide or which we see in the Holocaust and stuff like that: displaced people being radicalised and then thinking that the world is run like this, they are brutalized and this is the norm, “we have to be tough guys, we have to do the same thing” and then do it and so on and so forth. **–(38:13)**

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*Side note*

***44:47*** *Nothing was given [to Greece] Italians objected it, it was just a peace-keeping operation but because violence ensued on Day 1, Venizelos said: “you see? I can’t do it without a real militar occupation”*

***45:57*** *If that was an occupation this cannot happen: in my book I use a document which is about a simlpy repair of the house down in Mikros Yialos. The document is sealed by Stergiadis administration and the Sultan. So it recognises the Sultan as the real sovereign because it’s a temporary peacekeeping operation [you got it right?]* ***46:26*** *Because if, this is a historian getting excited,*

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**THE ENGIN BERBER ARCHIVE**

**00:47:48**

A group of scholars led by Engin Berber of Ege University at the time conducted these interviews with people, they had these cassettes, and they recorder these people’s impressions about the past and certain important historical milestones in Western Anatolia. (48:07)

Engin Berber in particular did the interviews here in the county of Focateyn, not only in Eski Foca but also in Kozbeyli, Gerenkoy, and other parts of this county. (48:20)

48:25 – He allowed me to have access to these cassettes, I listened to them, from the beginning until the end and I felt there must be a lot of good stuff in this. (48:34)

48:35 – My general impression is this: The aim of the interviews at that point in time, stated also by the interviewers themselves, was to ask about people about their experiences during the Greek occupation, which would be the Greco-Turkish war, 1919-1922 **(48:52)**

**~~00:49:08~~** ~~And then the question will be like: Do you remember the years 1919-1922? Did you experience any events of violence and how was it and stuff like that.~~

**00:49:18**

And interestingly, with very little exception, almost all interviews, when they are asked about 1919-1922, one I think immediately goes back to 1914, the other say something about 1919-1922 and then they talk about 1914 and the chapter of displacement that basically comes before 1919-1922.

**00:49:56**

And the tapes were extremely emotional. People were crying when they were talking about 1914, I myself cried when I first listened to them because one of them was describing a very violent scene of a family’s kids that were left over after 1914, I think in Yeni Foça. (50:15) One of them was describing again a very violent scene of one of the *chette* members -who claimed to come from the Balkans and suffered at the hands of Christians- doing violent things to some Greek member of Gerenkoy if I’m not mistaken it’s in my notes, when they were running away in 1914. **(50:35)**

**00:51:02**… as a scholar I said this is a goldmine, this is great, but as a person, when I was listening to them it was very emotional and very dark and it made me feel strange because to me, the 1914 stories in the tapes were the big deal **(51:19)**

***[The micro in the larger picture]***

I can now see that this little event in Foça is not an isolated case but it actually sits into this larger narrative about transition from Empire to nation state. That was a surprise. Because **(54:03)** this link is not just like “hey, a forced migration happened here and like a year later, during the Great War, the Armenian deportations happened in 1915, more Greek deportations happened in the Black Sea, it’s not like that; (54:17) These events are connected in the minds of victims and perpetrators as well

When you look at, for instance, different communities around the Ottoman Empire, the way these events of violence happened effected their feelings that they had against an Ottoman identity, against their homeland, so on and so forth and when they are forced to leave and go to a different place, that experience and history goes with them there and gets a new form and shape and gives them a new identity in the country that they go (55:23)

**00:55:23**

So in my mind, and maybe this is a researcher thinking that his research is very important but, this micro thing was related to a lot of things on a very real, factual level, not like similarity-wise, these are the same people. I mean somebody who’ll be displaced here will be a minister in Greece and he will do things based on his experience of displacement. Or somebody displaced in the Balkans will do something in Western Anatolia based on his experience of displacement and he will say it so in his own memoirs, etc. etc. **– 00:55:56**