00:01- Ok Let’s go.

00:03- OK

00:05- Hello, could you please tell us your name, surname, date of birth, when did you first come to Foça, how long have you been living in Foça, where about do you live in Foça.

00:17- My name is Sabahattin […], I was born in Ankara in 1949. I first came to Foça in 1971, I saw it and fell in love and have been here in Foça ever since. I work in Tourism, I manage a hotel that I opened up in 1981. Besides that, I am very interested in Foça’s history from the Antiquity to today and I write little stories. 00:52

00:53- Great, thank you.

01:22- When did you start to take an interest in Foça’s history, how long have been looking into it, which are the main subject that are of interest to you? 01:31

01:32-Actually, my interest in history come from when I was in middle school, I’ve always been curious about the history of the cities that I live in. After coming here and reading about it I discovered that there is a very deep history.

01:51-When I found the time, I decided to discover Foça’s history through the material that I gathered, information, sources which I dug like a well. I have been doing research on Foça’s antiquity period for a while now, not so much as a historian but it’s a hobby for me, so more like a hobby historian.

02:22- Very nice. Which are the subjects that interest you the most and also which period, can you tell us about that. 02:27

02:27-In regards to Foça, what interested me the most were the traces that the Ionians left here when due to the eastern pressure they had to move to the Aegean shores. But before that I also studied the Aolians who came from central Greece and who created the Aolian region; their way of life, agriculture, farming

03:05- After that in the 6th century B.C. the Ionians that settle in Foça, left for Samsun in the Black Sea, Amisos, Lapsike, then Marseille, Nice in France, Ampolya in Spain, they created many colony cities like that and their culture and art expanded to the Mediterrean coast cities. So… every book has different sources and it’s difficult to translate them to Turkish, so it was a very rewarding study and is still is, the more I more deeper the more I enjoy. 04:03

07:29-You said you were interested in the Antiquity period, are there other periods that interest you? Do you have other researches? That’s the first question and second, you said you came to Foça later on, your family history, your relationship with this building , your relationship with this part of the city, anything you want to tell us about your personal history. 07:45

07:51-Besides the Antiquity, Foça has a very rooted history. The most developed city in the Antiquity, especially in terms of culture and art is without a doubt Phokaia. No doubt, there is no other city in that time. How do I know? Their fast long boats, their trade business, culture, art, the colonies they created, all of that was unknown to the rest of the world.

08:29-There is also the New Fall era in Foça which is very important; the Genoese rent this place from the Byzantium King, the family that rents the place are Benedetto and Manuele Zaccaria brothers from Genoa. Especially Benedetto is young, ambitious, a dynamic businessman and trader but also the most feared pirate in the Aegean Sea. After he marries the king’s sister in 1265, an agreement is placed, according to that agreement, Chios Island, (Mastic Island) Izmir and Phocaia are rented to these 2 brothers. The mastic trees that are there now, are planted by Manuele and Benedetto Zaccaria, because in the Middle Age, industry starts in Europe, in Bruge, in Englan, London, in Belgium, Bruge, raw material starts to come.

09:37-In the Middle Age, Mastic is a very important raw material, it is used everywhere. There is also alum in Foça and it’s the best alum in the world, in New Foça, New Foça now. So what do Manuele and Benedetto Zaccaria; after they rent from the king, I repeat, Foça, Phokaia, Sinirdağ, and Chios Island, the older brother Manuele Zaccaia settles in Foça and starts to manufacture alum in New Foça, 22 km away from here from the source mine that extracted from the alum mountain.

10:31-He starts with 50 Greek workers to manufacture alum and in 1307 there are 3000 people here working and they found New Foça. Now these 2 brothers have Mastic on one hand and alum on the other, creating a monopoly. It’s such a monopoly that doing trade with these materials is a heavy crime punishable even by death.

11:06-Thanks to this monopoly they earned money from all the riches of Europe. Richness is not always good though, because being rich in the Middle Age is a magnet for pirates. It means that the city titans go to war with each other for those 2 mines.

11:32-This war takes place between mostly, the Venetians, the Genovese, the Byzantines and the Ottomans. The Chios Island and Foça are the ones that suffer the most from that. In the Middle Age, in Chios Island, Foça, here, New Foça, people lived within city walls, very tight streets, they even lived spread out instead of living in communities to protect themselves from pirates.

12:13-Foça and Chios have both such a beautiful history.

The other day I went to Chios Island to see the evolution of the trees that Benedetto Zaccaria planted back in the day. I also went to Mesta, Piliye where they established a Chios museum that they call Xiu, we, Turks call it Kios.

12:47-They established the Chios museum with the support of the European Union, what I mean is that they protected and let live the amazing mastic and the mastic trees up to today, they established a mastic museum. What I would wish is that we had the alum mine still in place today, the factory and production area so that we could have established a museum that would tell the story of the universal process that the alum went through in Foça. 13:22

13:25-Thank you. Have your tea. I had a second question that I will go back to. Have your tea. 13:31

14:07-Sebahattin [...]: Did you know about these studies?

14:10 Emre: I knew about the alum of course, I am supposed to sit here without saying anything. If we were alone we would have a very interesting conversation.

14:20- Sebahattin [...]: I imagine that you know.

14:23- Emre: I do, I do. Actually it is used to protect the colour purple. Since colour is a symbol of status, especially purple, without alum you can’t have purple. Since it’s a sacred colour for the Catholics, alum has a special place in Europe and alum mines are very precious. After they pass on to the ottoman government the mines’ worth and taxes increase so much that alternative alum manufacturing centre are created in Europe, one of them being in Dolfa. 14:57

14:58-Sebahattin [...]: And Piyus, I think the Pope Piyus, paid a lot of money to find alum mines in the Vatican but the quality is never as good as in Foça. 15:09

15:10- I talk about it in my book.

15:12- Now we are on a break-Yeah small break.

15:16- Emre: Alum enhances a city, trade enhances a city and the second time around salt will enhance the city in the 19th century. We’ll talk later. 15:25

15:26-16:47-English conversation

16:48- This is important, about the colours, like you said, from the alum mine in Foça the best purple is created and it doesn’t faint in the sun or go away when washed. 17:04

17:06-During all these studies and observations and when I saw the particularities of the purple colour, in 2014 I wrote an article “Foça purple in the Middle Age” 17:23

17:24: The purple is from there.

17:26: And I added “The purple of Foça coming from history. So…17:32

17:36-there is no need to use blue, red, yellow, green or pink. There is the purple from Foça from ancient times. We, as employers, employees, house wives, contractors are using purple in all the doors, windows. All the Greek houses started to be decorated with purple. Almost 4 in 10 houses have purple in them, shades of purple. The city also got involved and painted the sidewalks and the umbrellas in purple. That’s where the story comes from, also from the article in 2014, obviously it coincided with my article but I am not the founder of the alum. 18:25

18:59- I asked a question previously, let’s go back to that, we don’t have much time. You came to Foça, you moved here, you got interested in the history, this hotel we are in, your family history ect. Did you get an interest in that or any other family gift or personal history, did you find anything from yourself? 19:22

19:24- Yes I did. It’s a very good question, thank you.

19:39-It’s a very good question, thank you. After I moved here, I had to do something and in 1981 I opened up one of the first hotel in Foça, I’ve been in the business ever since. During the winter when I had the time I started to look into the history of this hotel.

20:13-I found out very interesting lives in here. My investigations of who built the hotel, for who it was built, how it was built, why is it a hotel now, what was it before, led me to the Antiquity, that’s how I got interested in the history of Foça. You also asked me if I knew anything about the history of the area through people now.

20:51-The history of this building more or less, depicts everything about Foça’s history. Now, here, as it is known, Foça was into salt manufacturing in the Ottoman time. Salt export was made and other products like mandarin or other would be transported from the Foça port to the rest of the world. The Izmir port is not as developed as Foça’s port in the last period of the Ottoman empire.

21:33-There was a Greek merchant, he had huge storages across, we called them salt storages, now they have changed, they are Dedesan now. While he was into trading , he made a beautiful mansion, what I heard is that the teacher house there was his own house and he made this building for the Italian hotel manager he had hired.

22:08-Later I learned that the Greek merchant had left here under the forced migration, that he jump on a sandal and went to Mytilene Island and that his grandkids are running a supermarket now there. One of his grandkids came here and I heard him say that this was their house.

22:35-When I show them the teachers’ house, he said that his father used to have a salt business there. I found out that his grandfather had made this building for the Italian manager later, if I had known then I would have asked him so many questions. When the Greek merchant left, the Italian manager who was immune and when all the properties were being transferred to the Turkish deed system, since the Italian was living here, they thought it was his property. Later when they found out that it belonged to the Greek, they raided the house and found it completely empty. The Italian took everything from the Greek guy. We don’t know when he left.

23:35-The minister of finance takes over and turns the building into a Turkish Hearth, very famous back then. Then it turns into the Prefecture’s housing and in 1936 it is sold after the financial crisis. The person that purchases it, is Kadir Kurt who supplies tobacco to Hitler’s soldiers during the WWII. Because Kadir Kurt became so rich thanks to the tobacco, the people in Foça wouldn’t accept it and so in 1950 he sells it to Cemil Midilli and moves to Izmir.

24:21-Cemil Midilli is also a rich man, from Mytilene Island, while his father was an imam in Vazilika town in Mytilene was killed there and the mother took his 3 sons and 1 daughter and came to Foça first and then to Izmir and then came back here again. Somehow Midilli becomes very rich and he even had 3 schools constructed and then his son had many more schools and hospitals constructed.

24:59-I bought this building from Cemil Midilli in 1977. He liked me somehow, he prepared me for life. We were related due to my marriage to his grand daughter. But we really bought the place and he taught me about trade, he used to do ethical business, he was very decent and hardworking. We have been running this building which many years ago was the housing of and Italian manager, as a hotel for 40 years now. 25:35

25:37-Thank you.

25:40-25:55 English

25:57-The teachers’ house is actually a school.

-It was actually a school.

-As you know up to the restoration…

-When I moved here it was a school and then it became the district national education directorate, it’s director was Mr. Mehmet Ali. 26:26

26:27-27:39- Tea break

27:40- That’s what I heard. Butique Sedat lives here and he witness this.

27:53- Emre: think about it though, the sons of the sons or the daughters of the daughters who come, come with what memory serves them. We can’t really know for sure, the addresses can get mixed up when transferring the information.

He probably has a house and it’s probably very near but we don’t that it was a school, there is even the permit in the Ottoman Education Directorate. Don’t forget these are Turkish citizen and back then, unlike in modern Turkey today, the government didn’t come to make a school but rather they would collect money to construct schools, usually the Muslim and Armenian communities would collect money.

28:37- Sebahattin [...]- In that case I need to change my article with this new information. The article about here was published already as the epic story within 4 walls.

28:59- Emre: the real answer might not be in my memory but at the Archives, the land might belong to an individual, the individual might have donated it to it’s community or church, might have been a house first and then a school. We both might be right.

29:23-Sebahattin [...]: Everything is possible. I wrote according to what the lady told me.

23:35-Sebahattin [...]: isn’t that how history works, it can change anytime.

29:39-Emre: We corroborate actually meaning we check if what we have heard somewhere is heard somewhere else too. For example I hear something from you, from Krystalli, from myself, then I check the archives and I will deduct that not all 4 sources can be wrong which is also difficult because, there is an expression that says that the most repeated mistake is more trustworthy than any trustworthy word, so sometimes mistakes are repeated but we know a few stories. By the way my family knew the owners, people would come to deliver letters, they came to the right place. We can see the family in the archives. They are also a merchant family and they trade salt. They even do the first eco-ville that works with electricity… it’s in my book.

30: 33-Krystalli do you have my book with you?

30:35-Krystalli: I do

Emre bey: I just want to physically show him.

Krystalli: Yes, yes, yes.

30:38 – Emre: we talked on the phone but I couldn’t show you. Krystalli has my book, I can show you. I’m trying to translate it to Turkish and it’s complicated.

30:44- Sebahattin [...]: Yes these studies take so much time, I don’t know how you find it.

30:53- Emre: It’s in English, came out in 2014, it’s the picture of your neighbourhood.

31:01-Sebahattin [...]: Yes it’s a very famous photograph. I guess it’s Felix Sartiaux.

31:09-Emre: No, it’s not. It says Foto Ayhan.

31:16-Sebahattin [...]: I know him well.

31:14- Emre: When I was here…

31:16-Sebahattin [...]: There was Rıfkı before that, did he take it from him?

31:19-Emre: No. 1 or 2 persons were gathering photographs around him. I have relatives here, I had a soldier relative and asked him if he could share from his personal archive. That Ayhan Aktar came from an academician. 31:32

31:33-Sebahattin [...]: It could also be…I guess they are your relatives too, Işıl Trim’s father…31:44: Selçuk Trim, they also had an archive. 31:50

31:51- Emre: We will go there, we’ll talk.

31:54-Sebahattin [...]: yes there is an archive there. 31:56-Emre: Yes

31:57-Yes because if we start, it’s dark so…

32:00-Sebahattin [...]: I was going to say.

32:02-Emre: The light will change

32:37-Emre: Thank you so much for the information you have provided. Krystalli is interested in the near history. The forced migration in 1914, the Midilli family coming here in 1922, did you find anything while you studied? When did you first find out? What did you find about that period? You are a curious man so I’m guessing you must have dumped into some things. 33: 06

33:07-Sebahattin [...]: Yes actually, there was a marriage that I dumped into. This marriage is the story between a girl from Thessaloniki and a boy born in Erzincan Kemaliye. I followed them and found that Zeynep a 12 year old hears the news about the population exchange being signed while her father is in the woods cutting trees. It happens in the evening and Zeynep’s older sister tells her to go to the woods to tell her father so that they can pack and leave the town in Thessaloniki. The girl goes to the wood, scared, tells her dad that the exchange agreement has been signed and that they need to go. He throws all the wood he has piled on the chariot, fills it with all the most precious belongings they own stuffing blankets. A father and 2 daughters hit the road and arrive to Kapıkule days later. 34:42

34:43- 35:00- Street sounds

35:00-Sebahattin [...]: In Kapıkule everyone receive a card even if the kids are young. 1 bread a day. The card is normally given to adults over 18. The custom’s officer gives them a card even if they are 12. Thanks to those card they feel very rich and good because they can get bread too. A long and difficult period starts. Months later, they settle in Kayışlar in Manisa Edirne, they are exhausted from travelling on chariot for days, in the cold, snow and sickness. 35:50

35:51- When they get a house there, they forget all the humiliation, suffering and desperation. They have a house now. So they celebrate that they have a new home and a new country. When they grow up they move to a town in Foça where she is married to the youngest son of a family that comes from a small town in Erzincan. She still lives in Foça and is one of the oldest people in Foça; Mrs Zeynep who was 12 at the time. 36:39

36:42 Emre: Than you. We have heard about the exchange here, that was very nice, we see how stories cross over. Have you heard anything about the forced migration? Before the exchange, in regards to the world war or the occupation period, do you have any stories about that?

37:03-Sebahattin [...]: There is, about the forced migration, I mean I know they forced people to migrate, from what I have read and heard from old people, and I am one of them, my grandfather, from a town called Refaiye in Erzincan, his mother was killed by Armenians. The relatives took the 3 orphans and moved to Ankara. They used to tell us when I was a kid that we were from Erzincan and that Armenians came and slaughtered everything.

37:46-After I came here, I dug into the history. What I had heard back I found here. We get attracted by what Foça went through with the forced migration and we get sad sometimes. This isn’t one sided unfortunately. The Midilli family suffered a lot in Mytilene. He came to Mytilene from Urfa as a imam to the basilica and gets killed there.

38:26- By who, by Greek nationalist. When a lot of Greek were living here, in Közbeli, Foça, New Foça, Geren, there were a lot of people from different cultures, Greeks, Armenians and Jews, suddenly they started to gang up and they forced the people living here to migrate by entering their houses and attacking them.

39:18-They don’t kill them, though they have to endure the pressure of the gangs and are forced to leave. This happens before the forced migration agreement which results in a decrease of the population. When 16000 people leave Foça, the trade decreases and the living standards drop. Suddenly the fertile beautiful Greek city becomes a small town because the riches leave, business drops. The population doesn’t know what to do. Life crumbles within the whole town.

40:19-These pages are what saddens me the most about Foça.

40:30-Emre: Ok. Is there anything you would like to add? There was a story about the colour, we can ask about that. 40:39

40:40-Sebahattin [...]: About Foça’s colour, I saw that the purple colour of Foça had taken it’s place in the history books when I read a historian named Herst Bukos and George William. When I looked closer I found out that Foça makes the best purple with it’s alum.

41:12-There is also alum in Greece, in Syria and Egypt but the colour made there fade away under the sun but the colour made in Foça stays alive and bright. Probably due to the quality of the alum. The purple made in Foça becomes very respected in Europe.

41:45-It appears as the most expensive colour in the Middle Age. The kings and aristocrats forbid the people from wearing purple so that only they can wear it. It’s already very expensive and purple is a noble colour so the people are forbidden from buying or wearing it. We want this colour to be used in Foça, it has history. I wrote in one of my articles; Let’s used the historical colour purple in Foça. In 3-4 years everywhere started to become purple.42:38

42:41-Emre: Thank you very much, you explained everything so well.

42:56 Emre: I remember now, when we talked I suggested it.