

Germany), but admired by his students and highly respected by his colleagues. He also was a family man, very proud of his two young boys (and glad that they are scouts, too). They and his wife always remained his priority in life. He tried to spend as many evenings and week-ends with his family as possible, struggling with his tremendous workload late at night or early in the morning. We all miss him as a warm-hearted person and friend. His sudden death by cancer is a terrible loss for many, but far more so for his family, his wife and their two sons. My deepest condolences go to them. ✂

Jörn Thielmann

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## Gilles Veinstein

1945-2013

GILLES VEINSTEIN WAS BORN IN PARIS ON JULY 18, 1945, INTO A HIGHLY cultured family that was passionate about the theater. He did well at *lycée* and was accepted to the *École Normale Supérieure* in 1966, passing the *aggregation* in history in 1970. Encouraged by Alexandre Bennigsen, he began to acquire an interest in the Turkish and Ottoman world. He learned Turkish under Louis Bazin at the School of Oriental Languages, then was trained in Ottoman paleography by Pertev [Naili] Boratav, Irène Beldiceanu Steinherr, and Nicoara Beldiceanu.

After his military service, Veinstein became *chef de travaux* of the Sixth Section of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, which later became the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*. He moved steadily up through its ranks, becoming *Maître assistant*, then *Maître de conférences*, and finally *Directeur d'études* in 1986. His seminar, where students deciphered and analyzed Ottoman documents, featured a different theme every year and attracted both neophytes and established scholars in a friendly yet studious atmosphere. Through his publications, his presentations at international conferences, and his teaching, which won him disciples not only in France but elsewhere in Europe and in Turkey, he established himself as one of the world's top experts in Ottoman history and, in France, as the leader of this field. As director, beginning in 1984, of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique's research seminar "History of the Ottoman Empire, Eastern Europe, and Turkey," he oversaw the union of

this unit with the Turkish Studies team, resulting in the seminar “Ottoman and Turkish Studies” (known by its French acronym ÉTO), today the Center for Turkish, Ottoman, Balkan, and Central Asian Studies (CÉTOBAC). Under his directorship, this center became a true place of collaboration and exchange. His election to the Collège de France, in December 1998, demonstrated the increasing importance of Ottoman studies in French higher education and the fact that, more than anyone else, he was the architect of the discipline’s advancement and increasingly mainstream status.

Veinstein’s published output is vast and has addressed, over the decades, a variety of subjects. As a student of Bennigsen, he was initially interested in the northern Black Sea region, in the relations of the Eurasian steppe and the Crimean khanate with the Ottoman Empire, and above all in the question of the emergence of the Cossack problem. The establishment of Ottoman institutions in conquered territories and the persistence of pre-existing local practices were topics of particular interest to him, as were land tenure and Ottoman society and its component communities, especially the *ayan* [provincial notables] and Ottoman Jews, to whom he devoted numerous studies. In later years, he came to be interested in the State, producing works on the organization of the army and on the Porte’s political and military relations with France and other powers. When he fell ill, he was working on an ambitious project on the slaves of the Porte; his lectures at the Collège de France had given a thrilling foretaste of this endeavor. A recent collection of his articles attests to his quest to understand the identity and functions of the Ottoman sultan.

Veinstein was first and foremost a man of the archives. His career began just as the Ottoman archives were opened to researchers, and he was a pioneer in exploiting their riches while also supplementing them with documentation from the archives of other countries. He not only extracted factual information from these archival sources but also paid attention to the words they used and to the subtleties of diplomatics—an essential concern that enabled him to enrich his analysis and avoid misinterpretations.

With his induction into the Collège de France and the associated teaching obligations and public service came the period of grand syntheses, marked by the publication of a work on sultanic accession and a study of the Ottoman Empire’s relations with Europe (an English version of which has just appeared), as well as the regular publication of summaries of his lectures. But Veinstein never stayed away long from the primary sources. He was preparing to publish the letters of the Ottoman sultans to the kings of France. He was working, on the basis above all of his beloved *mühimme defterleri* [“registers of important

affairs”], on a survey concerning the slaves of the Porte. His premature death deprives us of these works.

The impressive corpus of studies briefly reviewed here should not give the impression that Gilles Veinstein was a “library rat.” His historical acumen, which ranged far beyond the field of his specialization, was matched by a pronounced literary and musical acumen. He had a passion for beautiful objects and amassed a collection of his own. He was also a fine cook and a lover of good food, a lively and eloquent table companion. He traveled the world, but he did not forget the Norman garden where he used to watch the squirrels eating his cherries and the foxes going down to drink at the river. ✂

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Translated from the French by Jane Hathaway

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