

İlber Ortaylı

History Professor İlber Ortaylı, born in Austria in 1947, is a leading expert in the Ottomans, who is known for making history accessible to a wider audience. He is Director of the Topkapı Palace Museum in İstanbul, Professor of History at Galatasaray University in İstanbul and Bilkent University in Ankara. He is author of many works on the Ottomans including *The German Influence on the Ottoman Empire*, *The Longest Century of the Empire*, *From Tradition to the Future*, *Studies on the Ottoman Transformation and Local Administration in the Ottoman Empire*.

As the son of a Crimean family, Mr. Ortaylı was born in a refugee camp in Bregenz, west Austria in 1947 and came to Turkey when he was 2 years old. Mr. Ortaylı attended elementary school and St. George's Austrian High School in İstanbul and then Ankara Atatürk High School. In 1968 he graduated from Ankara University Mekteb-i Mülkiye (Faculty of Political Science) and completed his postgraduate studies at the University of

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Chicago under Professor Halil İnalcık and at the University of Vienna. He obtained his doctorate at Ankara University in the Faculty of Political Sciences. His doctoral thesis was *Local Administration in the Tanzimat Period (1978)*. After his doctorate, he attended to the faculty at the School of Political Sciences of Ankara University. In 1979, he was appointed as associate professor.



In 1982, he resigned from his position, protesting the academic policy of the government established after the 1980 Turkish coup d'état. After teaching at several universities in Turkey, Europe and Russia, in 1989 he returned to the Ankara University and became professor of history and the head of the section of administrative history.

Although İlber Ortaylı is widely known as a polyglot, this is neither confirmed from an unique resource, nor stated by himself. According to different sources, the number of languages he

can speak varies between ten and seventeen. Turkish History Professor Ortaylı, gave many seminars and conferences as a visiting professor at the University of Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Princeton, Moscow, Rome, Munich, Strasbourg, Ioannina, Sofia, Kiev, Cambridge, Oxford and Tunis.

He has published many articles about the history of Russia in local and foreign journals. By "History of the Ottoman Empire's 16th and 19th Century" articles, he told the Turkish history to the rest of the world.



In between 1989-2002, he was head of Administration Department of History Ankara University Faculty of Political Science. Professor Ortaylı, taught for two years in Galatasaray University then continued his studies at Bilkent University. Till the early 70s, he has published articles on Ottoman and Russian history, particular emphasis on cities and the history of public administration, diplomatic, cultural and intellectual history. In 2001, he collected the Aydın Doğan Foundation Award. He is a member of the Foundation for International Studies, the European-Iran Examining Foundation and the Austrian-Turkish Academy of Sciences.

Mr. Ortaylı who is able to speak Turkish, Ottoman, Crimean Tatar, Arabic, Farsi, German, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Russian, Slovak, Romanian, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian, was awarded with the Pushkin Prize, for his great contribution to the spread and study of the Russian language, the preservation of cultural heritage and the rapprochement and mutual enrichment of different nations and people's cultures, by the sign of Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2007.

Till the year of 2005 Topkapı Palace Museum Director İlber Ortaylı, gathered his all historical researches on Topkapı Palace, which the place he qualifies as 'Family home of Ottoman Sultans', in the book of "Locations and Events with the Topkapı Palace". Topkapı Palace, opened its doors to the visitors till 1924, hosts a secret in its every frame. The Topkapı Palace was witness lots of victories, revolutions and routs in the 550 year history" says Prof. Ortaylı, "Palace, central authority of Ottoman's, today serves as a museum. It was the official and primary residence in the city of the Ottoman Sultans for 400 years of their 624-year reign from 1465 to 1856. Palace is a unique cultural asset with the buildings established in İstanbul's most gentrified corners, world's richest tile collections and the treasures in showcases and depository. The most important factor, that makes the Palace priceless, is the tradition that shapes these monuments and memories permeates in each stone. Every teenager should visit Topkapı Palace, where the most beautiful Ottoman, Asian and European motifs unfold."

The Topkapı Palace Museum Director Ortaylı, as well as continues giving history lessons at the Galatasaray University, mentioned that there is a big difference in terms of responsibilities, working hours and area between his two duties, and adds " It is my duty toward the nation and country. I have to fulfill my responsibilities."

"The important thing is the quality of the visitors, not the quantity. Unfortunately, the visitors of Topkapı Palace, damage the properties. Budget's allocations are not enough. That's why we can't hire enough employees. Palace cannot lift the intensity of visitors. Appointment system should be introduced for foreign tourists at least" İlber Ortaylı ends his words by saying "It is shame that, trying to find revolving fund even for small expenditures of the Museum. The things cannot go just by the help of the government, our citizens has to protect their historical wealth. National initiative is very important for museums. We all know that our country was founded with great difficulties. To remember this, we have to visit all historical museums. The museums' cultural assets are not for analyzing by touching, just for imagining that time. If we damage them, we'll damage the imagines of future generations. Not to forget that, a generation who does not know own history, not be sure of the future."

