

## ANMA / In Memoriam

*“Dergimizin kurucusu Nejat Göyünç’ü  
vefatının 15. yıldönümünde rahmetle anıyoruz”*

### To the memory of Prof. Nejat Göyünç

It was a Sunday morning on the 1st of July (2001) when I received a phone call in Athens informing me of the death of Nejat Bey. I had only returned from Istanbul two days ago. The evening before my departure we had dined together with his family as usual at Üsküdar, a meal prepared as always with love and great care by kind-hearted, untiring Ayten Hanım. I had not even had time to open the package containing the biscuits with the pul biberi that he always prepared for me when I returned to Greece. “To go with your wine”, he would say, and on saying goodbye he would hand me the package.

The home of Nejat Bey and Ayten Hanım was open to all, without discrimination. Everyone was welcome. Foreign academics coming to Istanbul for conferences or research in archives and libraries, and local young students arriving from Anatolia during the hot summers to find material for their theses and doçentlik in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi. Nejat Bey served as director at the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi where he would spend hours helping young students with their archival research, ever eager to discuss their topic, to treat them to lunch, in the knowledge that most of them would only eat a simit with tea to save money for their photocopies at the Archive. The good-natured, discreet, jovial Nejat Bey, always had a kind word for everyone.

I, too, met him in the Ottoman Archives, where he unfailingly worked for many hours, unless he was in some provincial university teaching voluntarily,

helping young colleagues set up proper departments in Ottoman Studies. The case of Nejat Bey is, I believe, very special. I don't know many academics that have done so much voluntary work in their field, and I must say that nobody from the field of Ottoman Studies has worked for the field so generously and without bias. All young Ottomanologists owe him a great deal, and Turkey even more as it was very fortunate to have such an exceptional citizen. In today's world with its excess of pettiness and narrow-mindedness, one feels his absence more than ever. Different customs and practices are now the order of the day. I say this with great remorse.

His example is there though to provide a yardstick. He always tried to repay the help he received as an orphan from the Turkish state to study and become an academic, to return the favour. There is a story behind his famous book *Mardin Sancađı*, a landmark for all those of us who have worked with the defters. He dedicated his first academic efforts to far-off, isolated Mardin where he was first appointed as a high school teacher. In difficult times, without subsidies, with his savings and his diligence only, he launched the first international periodical on Ottoman Studies. I hope that those who took it on will never forget the profile Nejat Bey chose for his periodical. It was open to all, a podium for all. While he was still alive he donated his outstanding library and Archive to İSAM Kütüphanesi which at that time was being formed, and what he didn't have time to give, his family donated with the same generosity.

I feel very lucky to have known such a good academic and at the same time such a good person as Nejat Bey. The combination is unusual. And as I grow older, I increasingly recognize and admire the wisdom that made him choose this particular attitude to life.

*Nur içinde yatsın!*

**Evangelia Balta**