

# Ottomans and Europeans



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Contacts and Conflicts

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Virginia H. Aksan, currently Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History at McMaster University, began her post-secondary education at Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, with a BA in French in 1968. In 1966-67, she spent her junior year at Princeton University, as a Critical Languages Student, a program under the aegis of the Carnegie-Mellon Foundation, which aimed at redressing the lack of crucial foreign languages in the United States of the time. The languages considered critical were Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Her teacher at Princeton was Talat Halman, whose command of the language and literature of Turkey was unparalleled. After graduating from Allegheny College, the next few years were spent in Palo Alto, California. Following several years of work in Stanford University Library, Aksan commuted to U. C. Berkeley for a library degree (MLS), acquired in 1973. Returning to Princeton as a librarian, she worked at Firestone Library from 1973 to 1981. A brief interlude in Chicago, including work at Northwestern University, was followed by relocation to Toronto, Ontario, Canada, where the option to return to graduate study of the Ottoman Empire presented itself. Enrolling in the Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, she was awarded an MA in 1984, and the PhD in 1991, both in Middle East history, and assumed her teaching position at McMaster University in the fall of 1992.

Aksan is the author of *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783* (E. J. Brill, 1995), which was translated into Turkish by Tarih Vakfı Savaş ve Barışta Bir Devlet Adamı: *Ahmed Resmi Efendi 1700-1780* (Istanbul, 1997). The articles included in this volume represent work from that period as well as preliminary explorative essays concerning her new work, *Ottoman Warfare 1700-1870*, which is scheduled for publication with Pearson Education (Longman) in 2005. One of them, "Breaking the Spell of the Baron de Tott," was a recipient of an Honorable Mention for the Turkish Studies Association's Ömer Lütfi Barkan Article Prize 2003 competition. She is completing an edited volume with Daniel Goffman called "The Early Modern Ottoman World: A Reinterpretation," under contract with Cambridge University Press. Three extensive reviews of recent publications on the Ottomans not included in this volume are: "The Ottoman Story Today," a review article published in the *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 25 (2001), 35-42, "Ottoman Military Matters," a review article of twelve works, *Journal of Early Modern History* 6 (2002), 315-25, and "Finding the Way Back to the Ottoman Empire: Review Article," *International History Review* 25 (2003), 96-107.

Aksan serves on editorial boards, and as a reader for several presses and journals, notably the *Islamic Civilization* series for Cambridge University Press. She served as Secretary of the Turkish Studies Association from 1992-97; as President-Elect from 1999-2000, and as President from 2000-2001. While associated with TSA, she was instrumental in the start of the TSA website and H-Turk. She has organized three workshops on Ottoman history (conversations) at MESA annual meetings. She also served on the Board of the Middle East Studies Association of North America from 1997-99.

