

# A Journey Through History with Author ERDAL KABATEPE

## Honouring the Legacy: A Journey into the Gallipoli Campaign

In the annals of history, amidst the echoes of battles fought and sacrifices made, there exists a narrative that transcends generations—a story of bravery, resilience, and the enduring spirit of those who dared to stand against adversity. It is within this tapestry of valor that we find the compelling saga of Major Ali Faik Bey, a gallant commander whose legacy resonates through the ages.

In an exclusive interview with Erdal Kabatepe, the acclaimed author behind the stirring account titled *I, Major Ali Faik Bey*, we embark on a poignant

**Erdal Kabatepe, author of “I, Major Ali Faik Bey,” delves into the profound legacy of his family’s wartime heroism.**

Major Ali Faik Bey Exhibition for all to behold.

Yet, amidst the triumphs of discovery, Kabatepe’s journey is not without its challenges. Faced with the daunting task of uncovering truths obscured by time, he navigates a labyrinth of archival resources and historical intricacies, driven by an unwavering commitment to accuracy and authenticity.

As the interview unfolds, Kabatepe’s insights into the camaraderie forged amidst the chaos of war offer a poignant reminder of the shared humanity that transcends borders and allegiances. Through tales of valor and compassion, he paints a vivid portrait of the bonds that unite soldiers from disparate nations on the battlefield.

However, Kabatepe’s mission extends beyond mere remembrance—it is a call to action, a plea for recognition long overdue. Through his advocacy for the acknowledgment of Turkish participants in the Gallipoli War, he strives to honor the bravery and sacrifices of those who fought tirelessly for their homeland.

As we conclude this captivating interview, we are left with a sense of awe and admiration for the indomitable spirit of Major Ali Faik Bey and his family. Through Erdal Kabatepe’s tireless efforts, their legacy lives on—a beacon of hope and inspiration for generations to come.

We invite you to read on and immerse yourself in the rich history and personal journey of Major Ali Faik Bey as shared by his grandson, Erdal Kabatepe.

**What inspired you to write about Major Ali Faik Bey and his experiences during the Gallipoli Campaign?**

This postcard from Enver Pasha, once treasured by my grandmother, used to hang in her room where she

would gently cradle it while praying for her husband in tears. I was almost 13 when I gathered the courage to ask her about my grandfather and his role in the Gallipoli War. At the time her emotions ran deep, and she could only share fragmented recollections.

My curiosity peaked when my father Colonel Ahmet Naci Kabatepe had the card translated from Ottoman to Turkish and I started documenting my grandmother and my father’s recollections as they shared them with me. My grandfather, Major Ali Faik Bey served as the Commander of the 33rd Regiment and died a martyr in the Gallipoli War on April 30, 1915, at Kabatepe Hill when he was struck down by a bullet on his forehead. His brother Lieutenant Mehmet Fevzi Efendi, also met his end as a Gallipoli martyr, succumbing to 12 wounds during the midnight in the 2nd bayonet battle with the Anzacs on their first day of attacks on April 25, 1915. Their father Kolağası Şakir Efendi (Senior Captain) was also a hero in the Dömeke Pitched Battle between Turks and Greeks in 1897 for which he was awarded the Gold Liyakat Medal by Padishah Abdülhamit the 2nd. Also noteworthy is my grandfather’s bravery which led to the victory of the Soroviç Battle on November 6, 1912, and a recommendation for promotion.

The wounds opened by wars do not heal easily and the sufferings of those left behind are colossal. I learned that Mother Safiye Hanım who had already lost her one son in the Gallipoli War became crippled upon this postcard’s arrival. On the other hand, that same card played a vital role in sustaining my grandmother throughout the years. When the Surname Law was enacted in 1934, my father adopted the surname “KABATEPE” for the hill on which his father died a martyr. Kabatepe Family, a lineage of soldiers, is the only Turkish family that lost two officer brothers in

the Gallipoli War.

Learning all these details in the family life, I decided to write a book about my grandfather and the family.

**What motivated you to create the Major Ali Faik Bey Exhibition, and what can visitors expect to see there?**

Reflecting on the personal belongings of my grandfather, which I once used in childhood war games, has brought about a profound shift in perspective. These items, including but not limited to pieces of his ceremonial uniform, his leather military tag, inkwell and pen, Quran, wallet, cigarette case and holder, ashtrays, and the seal of 1st Battalion of the 33rd Regiment carry a deep historical significance spanning 150 years. I now hold them with great care, just as my grandmother and father did before me, recognizing their immense value both sentimentally and historically. Then I decided to have an exhibition to let also the people see all these valuables instead of only me watching them every day at home. Now, these objects and documents are displayed in Ali Faik Bey’s Exhibition in Çanakkale Epic Promotion Center in Kabatepe.

**Can you share some insights into the process of collecting and translating Major Ali Faik Bey’s diaries for this book?**

Years later, while retiring from business life in the 2010s, I collected all the documents that belonged to my grandfather and my notes, and started to write a book about him. I am neither a historian nor a history author, but I am a very experienced and qualified researcher. I decided to write the history in his words starting from his birth to his death as a martyr in Gallipoli. The main objective was to bring to light his diary of the 1st Balkan War. The translation of the Diary from Ottoman to Turkish was the first thing to do. In his diary, my grandfather meticulously recorded every order he had received and issued, and entered all the losses, attendants, supplies, etc. Each entry is dated and



*The images from Acting Commander-in-Chief Enver Pasha, cherished by the narrator's grandmother, serves as a poignant reminder of familial sacrifice in the Gallipoli War. Through personal recollections and historical documentation, the narrator explores the heroic legacy of Major Ali Faik Bey and Lieutenant Mehmet Fevzi Efendi, their father Kolağası Şakir Efendi, and the Kabatepe Family's lineage of military service. The narrative highlights efforts to preserve and honor Major Ali Faik Bey's legacy, including writing a book, obtaining translations, and advocating for recognition of Gallipoli War participants. Despite challenges, the narrator remains dedicated to ensuring the valor and sacrifices of those who fought in the war are acknowledged and remembered.*



includes the name of the current location, providing a comprehensive account of his experiences during that time. The second thing I did was to create a map (not to scale) illustrating the movements of the army from one location to another. My Goodness! The names of many places had been changed and some do not exist anymore. This was the hardest task I had undertaken but I accomplished and prepared two maps of the Balkans. The first map depicted the political borders before the 1st Balkan War, while the second map illustrated the current political borders.

**How did you ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the historical events presented in the book?**

As I continued my research over the years, I faced many challenges in reaching the necessary resources. Only around 20% of the war documents were archived and translated in Türkiye, and many of the available documents were not permitted to be copied despite my being the grandson of a martyr commander. Consequently, my search for truths shifted to foreign resources which are quite reliable and supported by the original

**Erdal Kabatepe’s meticulous research and heartfelt storytelling illuminate the courage and sacrifices of Major Ali Faik Bey and his family.**

sources. As a result, preparation of the first edition of my book “I, Major Ali Faik Bey” took about 10 years to write and every day I am uncovering new facts.

Major Ali Faik Bey kept a diary also during the Gallipoli War which was captured by the Anzacs after he died a martyr and found its way into the hands of General William Riddell Birdwood “Birdy”, the Commander of the Anzac Forces, who had it translated into English, then distributed to his commanders also shared it with the Australian media, titled as “THE DIARY TAKEN FROM DEAD TURKISH OFFICER (MAJOR COMMANDING 1ST BATTALION 33RD REGIMENT)”. I obtained the full translation of the diary from AWM since all war archives in Australia are freely accessible, however, the original diary remains elusive, but I am determined to find it.

**Can you provide insights into the camaraderie or bonds formed among the soldiers from different nations during the Gallipoli Campaign?**

It is important to dispel the notion that it was a gentlemanly war. While there may have been occasional acts of chivalry, such as aiding wounded soldiers regardless of allegiance, the reality of the battlefield was far from genteel; it was marked by intense violence and bloodshed. On the other hand we can say that there was sympathy and admiration on both sides.

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

Yes, it is striking that while

Gallipoli War Medals were awarded to all participants on the losing side, the victorious Turks were not similarly honored. Over 20 million medals were bestowed upon martyrs and veterans of the Entente Powers and their allies, with an additional 5.4 million awarded by the Germans, who allied with the Ottomans. However, Turkish participants, who emerged triumphant, were overlooked in this recognition. Furthermore, the medal “Gallipoli Star” or “Eiserner Halbmond” recognized by the majority in Türkiye and abroad has no special relevance to the Gallipoli War. Instead, it is the last war medal of the Ottomans dedicated to those participants (Ottoman or foreign) who showed bravery in the 1st World War.

To address this historical oversight, I took the initiative to introduce a bill titled “Awarding Medal of Honor to the Participants of the Gallipoli War” to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye on December 10, 2020. Regrettably, the bill is still in the Commission of National Defense. It is my hope that this 109 years overdue acknowledgment will soon come to fruition, honoring the bravery and sacrifices of those who fought in the Gallipoli War.

**Are there any future projects or plans related to Major Ali Faik Bey’s legacy that you are working on?**

A documentary based on the book is already prepared, what is next is a feature film on the life of the Military Family.