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Franz Babinger as a German Orientalist

Alman Oryantalist Olarak Franz Babinger

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Bu çalışma yazarın Franz Babinger'in Osmanlı tarihçiliğine özgün katkıları isimli yüksek lisans tezinden üretilmiştir.

This study is based on the author's M.A thesis, Franz Babinger'in Osmanlı tarihçiliğine özgün katkıları, Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İslam Tarihi, YL.

Öz

İslam Tarihi, geçmişte batılı bilim insanlarının ilgi odaklarından biri olmuştur. Özellikle Osmanlı tarihi çok kez incelenmiş, farklı araştırma ve çalışmalar ortaya konmuştur. Alana katkı sağlayan önemli isimlerden biri de Franz Babinger'dir. Franz Babinger, "Fatih Sultan Mehmet ve Zamanı" ile "Osmanlı Tarih Yazarları ve Eserleri" isimli çalışmalarıyla Türkiye'de tanınan bir tarihçidir. Çarpıcı iddialar ortaya atmış olan Alman oryantalist, farklı eleştirilere maruz kalmıştır. Bu çalışmada, Franz Babinger'in hayatı ortaya konarak akademik yeterliliklerini, bilimsel çalışma yöntemini ve çalışma ortamını incelemeye çalıştık.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Tarihi, Oryantalizm, Babinger, Alman Oryantalizmi, Osmanlı Tarihi

Franz Babinger as a German Orientalist

Abstract

Islamic History has been one of the most important areas of interest for Western scholars in the past. Especially Ottoman history has been analyzed through the centuries and different researches and studies have been claimed. One of the important names contributing to the field is Franz Babinger. Franz Babinger is a historian known in Turkey for his works titled "*Mehmet the Conqueror and His Time*" and "*Ottoman History Writers and Their Works*". The German orientalist, who made surprising claims, was subjected to different criticisms. Therefore, in this study, Franz Babinger's life is presented and his academic qualifications, scientific working methods and his working environment are discussed.

Keywords: Islamic History, Orientalism, Babinger, German Orientalism, Ottoman History.

Introduction

Countless works on Ottoman History have been written by western scholars. Although some of these works, which have quite different characteristics, have been written in accordance with academic style and method, a considerable number of them have been put forward in a way that is far from scientific. However, the studies by orientalists have not been properly analysed by Turkish scholars. In particular, Franz Babinger, who has created an agenda in Turkey with his work titled "Fatih Sultan Mehmet and His Time", has not been properly researched and studied. Except for an short article written about him in the Islamic Encyclopedia, there is no study in Turkey about the life of a scholar who has made such an impact and been criticised. With our study, we aim to fill an important gap. The biographical study, which we have prepared by utilising mainly German studies, reveals how different the environment and environment in which an orientalist grows up can be. It must be said that we have reached very interesting information about his family and his youth. Whether it was his private life or his academic career, he was greatly affected by the First and Second World Wars. In the light of the data we have accessed, we present to you the life story of a scientist who has not neglected to carry out academic studies in a contradictory life between the identities of military service and academic membership and has always pursued knowledge.

1. His Family and Education

Having been an Orientalist and Turkologist who faced different difficulties in his life as a scholar, Franz Babinger was born in January 15, 1891 in Weiden, Bavaria, Germany. Although he was a member of a Catholic family, it is said that he also had Jewish ancestors. Whether this claim is true or not, Babinger might be subjected to this kind of concerns. In 1897, he went to the primary school in Würzburg, where his family moved, and his

education career began there.¹ His family was a conservative Bavarian family so it is notable that they were famous for their civil service. One of his student named Hans Joachim Kissling, states that as Babinger comes from a well-established family, he was very favorable and enthusiastic man thus this situation motivated him to study on *genealogy*. In this context, he started to collect photographs of Orientalists on a person-by-person basis.²

It is said that Babinger's interest in Oriental studies, began during his high school years and his grades were reported to have been average at school. He spent most of his time at the libraries by researching orientalist works. He read the works of Karl Mays and Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer with great interest.³

In addition, Babinger learned Persian and Hebrew from grammar books by himself. German was his native language, but he also studied French, Latin and Greek at high school. It is unclear when he learned English and Italian. In addition to these, he chose Hebrew as an elective course in high school. It may be reasonable that he had a great talent for learning new languages. Thus, this talent and enthusiasm for foreign languages would have enabled him to fulfill his dreams regarding his career.⁴

While he was studying at library, he also created a collection of photographs of famous and important Orientalists of that period. This situation shows his interest in the field of Orientalism. It is assumed that due to his interest in Orientalism, Babinger kept in touch with Ignaz Goldziher during his high school years.⁵

In 1911, he began his undergraduate studies in the Department of Hindology at the University of Munich. Unlike in high school, he had a very enthusiastic and successful undergraduate life here. He maintained to take not only the history and language courses but also he participated in art history, and history of literature courses. Moreover, he was said to have improved in Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Persian and Sanskrit, Turkish and Coptic.⁶ He expresses his enthusiasm and knowledge languages that *"I can read and understand French, English, Latin, Greek, Serbian, Italian, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit."*⁷

He prepared his doctoral dissertation titled *"The Life and Works of Orientalist Gottfried Siegfried (1694-1738)"* with his advisor Ernst Kuhn and completed it on July 6, 1914. Additionally, in this study he also used several sources written in Russian language so that means he could read Russian. His jury members were composed of his advisor Ernst Kuhn, Fritz Hommel and Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing. Ernst Kuhn reported that Babinger was very successful in using undiscovered primary sources also he produced a reasonable biography of Gottfried Siegfried Bayer.⁸

Although Babinger wanted to improve himself in Arabic, the general condition of his age were not favorable due to the fact that the First World War broke out and he had to postpone his plans concerning to improve Arabic. His signing up at the university was suspended due to his participation in the World War I from the fall semester of 1914-15 until the

¹ G. Grimm, "Franz Babinger (1892-1967): Ein lebensgeschichtlicher Essay," Die Welt des Islams, Vol. 38, 1998, s. 295.

² H. J. Kissling, "Franz Babinger (1892-1967)", SOF XXVI, München 1967, s. 376.

³ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 297.

⁴ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s.298.

⁵ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 298.

⁶ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 300-301.

⁷ Yılmaz Öztuna, "Alman Türkoloğu Prof. Babinger'le Bir Konuşma", Hayat Tarih Mecmuası, Sy. 9, 1967, s. 19.

⁸ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 303.

fallsemester of 1918-1919.⁹ He was officially recorded as a "mercenary " until November 18, 1918.¹⁰

2. The First Turning Point: World War I

He completed his initial training as a soldier in the Bavarian Field Artillery Corps and then was called in the Ottoman artillery units located in Istanbul. His rise within the ranks of the artillery was notable that as he became an officer at first and then was promoted as the *first lieutenant*. However, Franz Babinger was said to have not satisfied with this promotion so in order to make himself more "useful", he wrote to the relevant governmental authorities and asked them whether he might be served in more effective fields. His request was positively replied and he began to work as a translator for the German general and Ottoman Field Marshal Liman Pasha on the Istanbul front.¹¹ It is assumed that his qualification of both Turkish and Arabic was very determinative in his appointment to this position. He might have felt that he would not be useful as much as he wished if he continue to serve as a soldier in the artillery unit, thus he wanted to work as a translator. Furthermore, he found a better opportunity to use the linguistic knowledge and qualifications which he had gained during his high school and university years in his service as a translator.

In 1915, Babinger continued to serve as a *Liaison Officer* and *Warrant Officer* in Dardanelles due to his knowledge of various languages. He became ill due to hygiene problems in the war environment and was sent to Germany on leave for a short time.

Babinger, who spent whole summer at home, started to write down the various events that occurred in his stay during the war. In addition to his notes, he did not neglected to share the photographs and reports that he already collected to inform German society about what was going on at the war in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which is one of the significant newspapers of that era.¹²

During his stay on the Gallipoli Front, Babinger had the opportunity to meet Mustafa Kemal Pasha. He described this situation as follows:

"When Turkey entered the First World War in 1914, I was sent to your country as a reserve officer. However, I became Mustafa Kemal Pasha's adjutant in Çanakkale soon. It was a great opportunity to have met the founder of the new Turkey and his entourage."¹³

There are significant claims regarding this memory of Babinger. It is asserted that he was working as an agent of the German state when he was in Turkey so he interacted with Mustafa Kemal for governmental interest. However, it is also claimed that his meeting, previously mentioned, with Mustafa Kemal Pasha was said to have not occurred and it was only a figment of his imagination. First of all, this claim is still controversial but it should be remembered that his meeting with Mustafa Pasha should be regarded as it is commonplace for a military officer who served as a translator to have met with high-ranking soldiers or commanders. Therefore, Babinger's meeting with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, was a highly possible meeting. On the other hand, why did Babinger mention an event that had not occurred? Therefore, Babinger's meeting with Mustafa Kemal Pasha seems to have happened

⁹ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 306.

¹⁰ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 307.

¹¹ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 307.

¹² Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 307-308.

¹³ Öztuna, "Alman Türkoloğu", s. 19.

and the claims reporting that this meeting was unreal interview should be rejected. As Babinger reports that he met Mustafa Kemal when he was on the Gallipoli Front and he was proud of it.

He won many medals as a result of this war. One of the most important of these medals is *the Medal of Merit*, as it is one of the few medals that are rarely awarded.¹⁴ This shows that Babinger was involved in important battles or missions during the war.

In the summer of 1918, Babinger was assigned to the *Deutsche Asienkorps*¹⁵. However he tried to continue his academic studies during the war. He was said to have studied on manuscripts in Gallipoli. When he fell ill again, he was allowed to leave the Ottoman front in Syria, thus he gave up his service in the First World War.¹⁶

3. Post-War Academic Career

At end of the war, political, social and economic problems appeared in Germany as in many other countries. Babinger was undoubtedly influenced by those problems. There are great differences between the period when he finished his doctorate and the post-war period in the sense of enviromental conditions. When he came back to Germany, he searched for a suitable job. He might have wanted to go on *academia* by making a comperative study including his pre-war education and the impressions that he gained during the war years, thus he had notable tendencies toward this decision.¹⁷

During his stay in Turkey, he mainly interested in its culture and science, and the contents of his studies were composed of this subject. His first attempt was his application to the University of Marburg in 1921, but his application wasnot approved. Then he applied for an associate professorship at the University of Berlin. In the same year, he presented a paper titled "*Der Islam in Kleinasien, Neue Wege der Islamforschung*" and his presentation made the jury satified and he was appreciated. Thus he started to work at the University of Berlin as an associate professor.¹⁸ In 1925, he began teaching Arabic as a lecturer in the department of *Oriental Studies* at the same university. There is no accurate information proving when Babinger became a professor.¹⁹

When he was in Berlin, Babinger had meetings with Johann Heinrich Mordtmann, who had served as an ambassador in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, and tried to benefit from his experience in *academia*. Having went on studying harder, Babinger also prepared his most important work, titled "*Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*". Having been published in 1927, this important work includes lots of manuscripts that he collected from different libraries in Europe and analyzed them. These documents have been written in the Ottoman Empire.

Babinger was interested in the researches regarding Serbian, Ukrainian, Slovenian and Albanian kingdoms, he made various journeys to the Balkans so that he could collect Turkish and Arabic manuscripts that he want to use on his writings.

¹⁴ Kissling, "Franz Babinger (1892-1967)", s. 376.

¹⁵ German troops sent to help the Ottoman army.

¹⁶ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 310.

¹⁷ H. G. Beck, "Franz Babinger", Jahrbuch der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, München 1970, s. 197.

¹⁸ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 313.

¹⁹ G. Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 314.

In the aftermath of the rise of the NSDAP²⁰ in Germany, which was the strongest party in the parliament in 1933, very important changes were made throughout the country. When the BBG²¹ and anti-Semitic laws were edicted in 1933, colleges and academics were influenced. As a result of these movements, Babinger was forced to leave his position at the University of Berlin on June 30, 1933. The main reason of this situation was said that he has had a conflict with the Nazi administration It is also mentioned that some of his colleagues labeled Franz Babinger.²²

When Babinger realized that he had no chance of retrieving his position in Berlin, he decided to return to the University of Munich. However, due to the evaluation and expert report, he was not chosen for a position at the University of Munich. Some of the allegations in the report says that he was not qualified to teach at academic units and that his knowledge of Semitic languages was insufficient. Also it is asserted that he behaved inappropriately as an employee and his Aryan thoughts were suspected. Meanwhile, there were heavy accusations against Babinger's character. When all these situations are considered, it was concluded that Babinger's dismissal was essential for the normal continuation of the working environment.²³

Upon these developments, the *"NS-Kampfblatt Der Stürmer"*²⁴ published a news article about Franz Babinger, which was almost a continuation of the Nazis' defamation policy in 1934. The article states that:

"Professor Babinger. The tragedy of a Jewish mulatto. There are laws of blood and inheritance, which are irrevocable, eternally valid and not subject to any current of time. These laws of blood and heredity also dictate that a Jewish hybrid, or a degenerate Jew, inherits the characteristics of his race and can never deny his Jewishness. Because the Jewish hybrid was also a Jew, National Socialist Germany removed him from all government offices, from all professorial positions. Dr. Franz Babinger, a university professor in Berlin, was also of Jewish descent. His grandmother Maria Stürmer was a Nazi weekly newspaper published by Julius Streicher".²⁵

It was published from April 20, 1923 to February 22, 1945 as the important official newspaper of the NSDAP. The newspaper was an important part of the Nazi propaganda and it contained virulent antisemitic statements.

Although Henle (his grandmother) was baptized by Catholics, he remained Jewish. Through his grandmother, Dr. Babinger is consanguine to Uhlfelder, who was a Jewish. Dr. Babinger knows this fact. Nevertheless, he tried to get a professorship at the University of Munich. In Adolf Hitler's Germany, ethnic Jews had no place on the chairs of German universities. Therefore, Dr. Babinger has no place there and all his attempts are in vain.

²⁰ NSDAP, National Socialist German Workers' Party.

²¹ BBG, Federal Civil Service Act.

²² H. J. Kissling, "Franz Babinger (1892-1967)", s. 376.

G. Grimm, "Franz Babinger (1892-1967)", s. 317.

²³ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 318.

²⁴ Der Stürmer was the weekly Nazi newspaper published by Julius Streicher. It was published as the major official newspaper of the NSDAP from 20 April 1923 to 22 February 1945. The newspaper was an important part of Nazi propaganda tools and contained violently antisemitic statements.

²⁵ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 319.

As a result of both visible and invisible attacks, Babinger was not only denied from a position at the University of Munich, but was also forced to retire on unpaid leave. Thus his academic life, in Nazi Germany, was completely over.²⁶

4. The Second Turning Point: The Struggle with the Nazi State

After his obligatory retirement, Babinger's monthly salary was just DM 300, which negatively influenced on his economic and personal life. Having met just his fundamental needs due to the low monthly salary, Franz Babinger earned almost no income from his publications. Meanwhile, many academics, living in Germany, received offers from the USA and continued their academic careers there. Even Babinger also received various opportunities, but he did not accept them at first because he had to take care of his mother. Later, he was invited to the University of Bucharest in Romania as a *Visiting Professor*. This invitation was made by Nicolae Iorga, the Romanian Minister of the Interior. He worked there from 1934. It is reported that he learned Romanian language very quickly and soon he was able to give courses in Romanian language.²⁷

In 1939, Franz Babinger was appointed as a professor in the department of Islamic Sciences at the University of Iasi. One year later, he was promoted as the director of Institute of Turkology that was the newly established. During his stay in Romania, Babinger had the opportunity to study the Ottoman heritage in several countries such as Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania. Then he decided to establish an institute and started to collect books for this purpose and traveled to Turkey several times.

In the course of time, as Hitler's policy strengthened and Romania came under his influence, Babinger was also affected by this situation. Babinger began to feel uncomfortable in his position at the University of Iasi and he had tendency to go to America, but he could not fulfill this plan because the Second World War was declared. Although he was in Romania, he was under surveillance by the SD. He was therefore reinstated in the army. He served helping his Jewish colleagues who had been captured.

In 1943, Babinger returned to Germany at the urging of the state. He resided with his mother in Würzburg and continued his life there. Under the strict control of the SD, i.e. the legal government, Babinger had to report any change regarding his accomodation or address to the relevant authorities. Scientists and scholars who had to live in Nazi Germany had a very difficult time during this period. Those who did not want to endure this situation migrated to the USA or received a tenure offer from a university and settled there. However, as mentioned above, Babinger was not so lucky as his enviroments and conditions were not availbale to migrate and he tried to continue his academic life under these difficult conditions. He sometimes traveled to Ukraine to continue his scholarly activities and he was able to publish a book, a manuscript and an article in Germany.

An air raid destroyed Babinger's mother's house in Würzburg, all his academic papers, and documents were also ruined Babinger's personal library was located there. In other words, many manuscripts, personal papers, correspondence and notes were destroyed in this attack. Probably many of Babinger's important works or books ready for publication or completed works were destroyed in the meantime. This attack occured on March 16, 1945 and it was drived Franz Babinger to start all over again.

²⁶ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 319-320.

²⁷ Grimm, "Franz Babinger", s. 321.

In the following period, Babinger tried to establish himself in another city. He found a small house in Ochsenfurt, near Würzburg, and a temporary job at the *Bavarian State Archives* with the guidance of the employment agency, which gave him the opportunity to resume his academic work. Although there was a shortage of professors at universities after the war, the departments of Islamic Studies or Turkology were neglected in these years and it was very difficult to settle in a university as priorities in works fields were given to fields such as medicine and law. However he was offered notable job opportunity from the University of Berlin, there is no certain any information whether he accepted this offer or not.

Meanwhile he applied to academic positions in different universities in Bavaria, but he could not get a position. It may be stated that Babinger's character was the main reason for the rejection of his application to the University of Munich. To extent; he might not even be considered as a suitable academician for this university and the reason of this might be that he was not well known among the scholars who were studying on orientalist studies. In short, for the vacant position at the University of Munich, the university administration probably thought to prefer another scholar both in terms of knowledge and character, and he was not Babinger.

5. The Last Years of His Life

After all these failed affairs, the Ministry of Culture granted Babinger a statue of "Honorary Professorship" in the field of "Eastern Culture, History and Literature", that allowed him to continue his academic studies in a semi-officially position. In addition, his civil service was lasted. On January 16, 1948, he received the title of "Ordinary Professor" and devoted his life entirely to his academic works. Meanwhile, in the summer of the same year, he married Margot Nagel for the second time.

In 1953, on the *500th Anniversary of the Conquest of Constantinople*, Babinger's most important, most acclaimed and most criticized work titled "*Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*", was published. In 1955 he returned to the Faculty of Philosophy as a tenured lecturer. Three years later, he voluntarily retired from his academic servc due to his age. He tried a lot to place his student named Hans Joachim Kissling in his position. Even though his retirement, his academic works were maintained.. Meanwhile, he traveled a lot so hat he could improve his knowledge and expand his library. His last academic visit was at the University of Tirana (Albania) as a guest. A scholar who traveled so much would not be expected to pass away in his own country. Babinger died in Durres (Albania) in June 1967. There are different claims concerning his death. According to his student Hans Joachim Kissling, the cause of his death was a heart attack. It is known that his body was taken to Vienna on a private plane and cremated there. The burial and interment of his ashes took place in the family cemetery in Würzburg on June 24, 1967.

Franz Babinger had a wide range of works on different periods of Ottoman history. Since the introduction and evaluation of all his works would exceed the limits of this study, it is better to mention briefly his two well-known works in Turkey, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* and *Mehmet der Eroberer und seine Zeit*. However, the chronological list of his publications in the form of books and articles are as below;

Books:

- Stambuler Buchwesen im 18. Jahrhundert*²⁸
- Scheich Bedr ed-Din, der Sohn des Richters von Simaw*²⁹
- Die grossherrliche Tughra*³⁰
- Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*³¹
- Zur Geschichte der Papiererzeugung im Osmanischen Reiche*³²
- Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien (14.-15. Jahrhundert)*³³
- Reliquenschacher am Osmanenhof im XV. Jahrhundert*³⁴
- Sultanische Urkunden zur Geschichte der osmanischen Wirtschaft und Staatsverwaltung am Ausgang der Herrschaft Mehmeds II., des Eroberers*³⁵
- Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit*³⁶

Articles:

- Der Islam in Kleinasien. Neue Wege der Islamforschung*³⁷
- Byzantinisch-Osmanische Grenzstudien*³⁸
- Mehmed's II. Heirat mit Sitt-Chatun*³⁹
- Ja'qub-Pascha, Ein Leibarzt Mehmed's II. Leben und Schicksale des Maestro Jacopo aus Gaeta*⁴⁰
- Mehmeds II., Des Eroberers, Mutter – Legende und Wirklichkeit*⁴¹
- Ein Venedischer Lageplan der Feste Rumeli Hisari*⁴²

²⁸ Franz Babinger, *Stambuler Buchwesen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Dt. Verein für Buchwesen und Schrifttum, 1919).

²⁹ Franz Babinger, *Scheich Bedr ed-Din, der Sohn des Richters von Simaw* (Berlin u. Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1921).

³⁰ Franz Babinger, *Die grossherrliche Tughra*, (İstanbul: Doğan Kardeş Yayınları, 1925).

³¹ Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*, (Leipzig: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1927).

³² Franz Babinger, *Zur Geschichte der Papiererzeugung im Osmanischen Reiche*, (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1931).

³³ Franz Babinger, *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien (14.-15. Jahrhundert)*, (München: Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1944).

³⁴ Franz Babinger, *Reliquenschacher am Osmanenhof im XV. Jahrhundert*, (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1956).

³⁵ Franz Babinger, *Sultanische Urkunden zur Geschichte der osmanischen Wirtschaft und Staatsverwaltung am Ausgang der Herrschaft Mehmeds II., des Eroberers*, (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1956).

³⁶ Franz Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit*, (München: Bruckmann Verlag, 1953).

³⁷ Franz Babinger, "Der Islam in Kleinasien. Neue Wege der Islamforschung", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (ZDMG)* (1922), 126-152.

³⁸ Franz Babinger, "Byzantinisch-Osmanische Grenzstudien", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (Ocak 1892), 411-415.

³⁹ Franz Babinger, "Mehmed's II. Heirat mit Sitt-Chatun", *Der Islam* (1949), 217-235.

⁴⁰ Franz Babinger, "Ja'qub-Pascha, Ein Leibarzt Mehmed's II. Leben und Schicksale des Maestro Jacopo aus Gaeta", *Rivista degli studi orientali*, (Guigno 1951).

⁴¹ Franz Babinger, "Mehmeds II., Des Eroberers, Mutter – Legende und Wirklichkeit", *Münchener Beiträge zur Slawenkunde*, (1953), 3-12.

⁴² Franz Babinger, "Ein Venedischer Lageplan der Feste Rumeli Hisari", *La Bibliofilia* (1922), 188-195.

6. *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und Ihre Werke*

The full title of the work is *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*. It was published in 1927 in Leipzig. In this work, the Ottoman historiographers are directly listed. This study was translated into Turkish by Prof. Dr. Coşkun Üçok under the title *Osmanlı Tarih Yazarları ve Eserleri* and published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture in Ankara in 1982.

As this book is a bio-bibliographical study, it covers the histories written in the Ottoman period and their authors. Babinger completes the work by listing them in a chronological order starting from the oldest author and his work. The first historiographer on the list is Yahşi Fakih and the last one is Bursalı Mehmet Tahir.

According to Babinger, there has never been a study collecting the history books of the Ottoman period and therefore he aimed to fulfil this need. In this respect, although Brockelmann's *Geschichte Der Arabischen Litteratur* is an example, the lack of such a comprehensive work in Ottoman history has been recognized. Therefore Babinger wanted to produce a similar study based on Brockelmann's *Geschichte Der Arabischen Litteratur*. He aimed not only to give a brief biography of each author, but also to evaluate and criticise their views and to explain their works. However, it should be noted that Babinger considers the Ottoman sources as extremely primitive, shapeless, epic and sultan-centred works. He claimed that especially the works that had been written until the 15th century described the events in a disconnected and epic language, and that the information written in the context of history was difficult to understand.⁴³

7. *Mehmet der Eroberer und seine Zeit*

The full title of the work is *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit-Weltenstürmer einer Zeitenwende* and it was published in Munich in 1953. Dost Körpe translated Babinger's work from the English edition into Turkish⁴⁴. On the first page there is a portrait of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror drawn by Gentili and published by Babinger.

Franz Babinger's aforementioned work can be described as a "masterpiece". Because it was written towards the end of his life, it was such a work that required extensive and intensive researches. This work consists of 7 chapters, which Babinger calls each parts as a book. The first six chapters mention the last years of Murat II and chronologically cover the period from the birth to the death of Mehmet the Conqueror. The last chapter contains information about Fatih's personality, Ottoman state structure, art, science and culture etc.

The aforementioned work is a comprehensive biographical study that points out different fields rather than being a just political history work. Babinger provides detailed descriptions and narrations on the characteristics, interests and behaviours of Mehmet the Conqueror, the conflicts between the grand viziers of the period, the details and features of the architectural structures of the period, art history, geographical information, state administration, state economy, communication with non-Muslims.

⁴³ Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*, 7-9.

⁴⁴ Franz Babinger, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed ve Zamani*, çev. Dost Körpe (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayınları, 2002).

Although Babinger did not specifically mention the sources of his work, he did include some names in the text. In general, he was said to have used the libraries and archives in Italy and benefited from some Western scientists.⁴⁵

It is notable that the etiquette or title “Byzantine historians” was the one of the most mentioned sources and these Byzantine were visibly used Babinger. Rarely some of these Byzantine historians are namely mentioned such as Chalkokandyles, Michael Dukas, Kritoboulos, Sphrantez.

Conclusion

Although Franz Babinger, being a German orientalist, Turkologist and historian, published works on different periods of Ottoman History, he concentrated his studies on Mehmet the Conqueror reign. He got great attention especially for his bibliography on Mehmet the Conqueror. Based on this work of Babinger, unfounded and defamatory claims were made about him and his academic inadequacy was mentioned. In this context, the view that Babinger did not make serious contributions to Ottoman historiography has prevailed. The claim arguing that he did not take Ottoman sources into account or even ignored them in his studies is not valid for a historian who has written a bio-bibliographical masterpiece in the field.

Despite the fact that Babinger, who actively lived through both world wars, suffered economic difficulties and could not provide a scientific working environment in some periods, he managed to write a wide range of works. Babinger, who had been exiled from his own country and continued his studies at a university in Romania, found several opportunities to travel. Thus he always managed to collect scientific knowledge during his travels and turned them into academic activities. His interest and enthusiasm, in information and documents, became an example of motivation for many academicians.

⁴⁵ Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, XII.

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