

## PROFESSOR KESSLER'S PLACE IN TURKISH HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY AND HIS PUBLICATIONS IN TURKEY

by

*Dr. Cavit Orhan Tütengil*

Professor Gerhard Kessler taught sociology between 1933 - 1951 at Istanbul University in the Faculties of Law, Letters and Economics. With his death in Germany, we have lost a foreign sociologist who has occupied a place in Turkish history of sociology.

In terms of the sociological schools of A. Comte and F. Le Play, sociology in Turkey enters an era of growth with the Turkish representatives of E. Durkheim and E. Demolins. The beginning phase can be detected in our various intellectual endeavours prior to «*Sociologie*» and in the first influences of French sociology in our history of thought<sup>1</sup>. It can be said that influences originating from English and German sociologies, to some extent appeared as an opposition against Durkheim's sociology. In the same way in the following years, we, also observe the landmarks of American sociology.

The topic which attracts our attention in relation to Kessler is the foreigners participating in the sociology instruction in Turkey. Considering this event in terms of the sociology instruction in our universities, it can be observed that a direct relationship was established with the French circles, with Max Bonnafeous lecturing in sociology at Istanbul University. A textbook and some research remains from this sociology instruction which was based on the point of view that (like nature, the society also is ruled by certain laws the change and alteration of which is not in hands of human beings)<sup>2</sup>.

---

1) Z. Fahri, History of Sociology Among Turkish People, *İş* (Action), No. 3 - 4, pp. 146 - 170.

2) The above - mentioned book is «*İçtimaiyat*» (Sociology) which the author wrote in collaboration with N. Sadık. Istanbul, 1927, 215 + XIV pp.

Direct contact with the German circles began with Kessler's accepting a post at Istanbul University. During the same years Professor Alexander Rüstow (1885 - 1963) who comes from the same circles, also participated in the sociology instruction for a short period<sup>3</sup>. It is known that A. Rüstow who was professor of History of Economics and Economic Geography had a close interest in the ancient economic customs and traditions of Anatolia<sup>4</sup>.

Professor Kessler's work and influence who was appointed Professor of Sociology and Social Insight at Istanbul University has been more extensive as a social policy expert. However, he has a special place in Turkish history of sociology also.

Kessler, who was born in Eastern Prussia in 1883 and who first studied history and geography and later studied economic and social sciences in the Universities of Berlin and Leipzig, became the student of many famous professors. The thesis he defended in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the doctor's degree in 1905 in Leipzig University was related to Roman history. We learn from one of his articles that his first book on economics is on «Management Associations in Germany» published in 1907<sup>5</sup>.

Kessler's sociology instruction in Istanbul University has two idiosyncrasies. The first one is his point of view about sociology and social relations. According to Kessler, «all social relations are rational and voluntary relations between people». This line of thinking becomes more clear in the following phrase : «In my opinion the roots of the nature of social relations are in wisdom.. There is no social life without and rational thinking»<sup>6</sup>. As professor Fındıkoğlu has pointed out, «besides Ziya Gökalp's sociology which gives a determinist, scientific and mechanical frame of reference for an explanation, Kessler's instruction indoctrinates a rationalistic, independent and teleological point of view»<sup>7</sup>.

3) About the books by A. Rüstow translated into Turkish whose lecture notes have not been published, we refer the reader to «Yeni Yayınlar», Vol. VIII, No. 9, pp. 281 (Sept. 1963).

4) His small brochure published in 1939 has been published again in the following book : «Folklor ve Etnoğrafya Kılavuzu» (Folklore and Ethnography Guide), Istanbul, 1949, pp. 24 - 33 : Ancient Economic Customs and Traditions of Anatolia and Their Importance.

5) *İş*, No. 113, pp. 36.

6) *Sosyoloji* (Sociology), Istanbul, 1934, pp. 62.

7) *İçtimaiyata Başlangıç* (Introduction to Sociology), Istanbul, 1938, pp. 2.

Kessler is of the opinion that present day sociology is divided in and limited to «two different spiritual areas of investigation», namely, «Philosophy of History» the topic of which is the «History of society and social dynamics» and the «Theory of Relations» which emphasizes on the «reality of the society». It's real topic is «this second type of sociology not based on reasoning but on realistic observations»<sup>8</sup>. The basic concept of this science is, society which «always is a relation ordered by rational thinking». However, Kessler agrees that there are «non - rational elements» in social life. «The natural community created us; but then we created the cultured society»<sup>9</sup>. As he states this, he reaches some kind of reconciliation. It may be observed that Kessler tries to surpass Tönnies' theory.

Kessler's place in our history of sociology, can be expressed as a reaction against a traditional consideration within the general frame. The first influences of German sociology we encounter in the works of Mehmet İzzet, become generalized with Kessler. As Sabri F. Ülgener has stated, «The introduction of a system to the culture of the country which is strictly the opposite that of Durkheim's sociology to which there was a very close and intensely fanatical adherence for a long time, even if with some exaggerations, should doubtlessly be noted with great pleasure»<sup>10</sup>.

The second idiosyncrasy we observe in Kessler's sociology instruction is his orientation to life and to the society. In his opening lecture, on the topic of «The Duties of Sociology in Turkey» he suggests, «conducting research on various and real appearances of social life, instead of thinking about an imaginary society in scientific investigations»<sup>11</sup>. According to him, «science serves life. Sociology, therefore, should serve the social life of the country.»

It is known that Kessler made considerable efforts in order to get to know the country and to find solutions to social problems. The interesting point is that Kessler never failed to apply his rationalist and teleological considerations to the various social problems of Turkey. To consider sociology as a means to aid life and to deal

8) Op. cit. pp. 4.

9) Op. cit. pp. 31.

10) *İ. Ü. İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* (Review of the Faculty of Economics of Istanbul University), Vol. I, pp. 277.

11) *İstanbul Üniversitesi Açılış Dersleri* (Opening lectures at Istanbul University), Istanbul, 1933 - 1935, pp. 298.

with problems with the intention of giving direction to the society, has been a model behavior of Kessler for all others. A careful investigation of his publications in Turkey will reveal various examples of this behavior.

\*  
\*\*

Kessler's publications in Turkey can be grouped under the following headings :

- I — His books.
- II — His articles in the publications in honor of others and his articles appearing in books with other co - authors.
- III — His articles in the journals.
- IV — His published public lectures.
- V — Bibliographical articles.

Interested readers will find extensive bibliography on Kessler's publications in Turkey in the original Turkish version of our article. In order to emphasize his orientation towards action sufficiently, his published public lectures are mentioned under a separate heading; and in order to show the importance he attributed to bibliography his articles on this problem are grouped together. Some of his articles were published in German in the journal «*İş*» (Action) and in the «*Hukuk Gazetesi*» (Law Newspaper) some of his articles were published in French. The original versions of these articles are in Turkish. The German version of his articles published in the «*Istanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*» (Review of the Faculty of Economics of Istanbul University) may be found in the special issues of that journal published in the «*Revue de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques de l'Université d'Istanbul*» \*.

---

\*) I wish to thank my friend Dr. Oğuz Ari who was helpful in writing the English version of this article.