

KİTAP İNCELEMESİ / BOOK REVIEW

KÂTİP CHALABİ: A GENIUS COMBINING EAST AND WEST IN SCIENCE

Prof. Dr. Nurettin GEMİCİ

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KÂTİP ÇELEBİ: DOĞU VE BATI'YI İLİMDE BİRLEŐTİREN BİR DEHÂ

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ABSTRACT

The number of academic studies on Kâtîp Chalabi (1609-1657), one of the important names of Turkish-Islamic Thought, has been increasing in recent years. One of these studies is Prof. Dr. Nurettin Gemici's work titled "Kâtîp Chalabi: A Genius Combining East and West in Science." Kâtîp Chalabi, who was born in Istanbul in 1609 and who packed many works into his short life, was originally named Mustafa and his father's name was Abdullah. He is one of the important names who left his mark on the 17th century. He is one of the rare Ottoman authors who wrote many works in various fields, especially history, biography, geography, astronomy, mathematics. Kâtîp Chalabi dealt with the issues that emerged in his time or before and caused problems for the Ottoman state and social order, and tried to find solutions to these issues. The most important characteristic of his thought is that he realised the importance of the society and the state in which he lived and endeavoured to find solutions to the problems as much as he could. For this reason, almost every subject he wrote about was penned in order to respond to an issue of the day. In this respect, Kâtîp Chalabi is also a thinker who witnessed the period he lived in. In this study, which has been prepared with a rich academic literature by using the main sources in the field, the subjects are handled in a concise manner and Kâtîp Chalabi's life, scholarly personality, world of thought and works are examined from an academic perspective in various aspects.

Keywords: Kâtîp Chalabi, Scientific Personality, The Works, Fadhlakat, Jihannuma.

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ÖZET

Türk-İslam Düşüncesinin önemli isimlerinden birisi olan Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657) ile ilgili yapılan akademik çalışmaların sayısı son yıllarda giderek artmaktadır. Bunlardan biri de Prof. Dr. Nurettin Gemici'nin kaleme almış olduğu “Kâtip Çelebi: Doğu ve Batı'yı İlimde Birleştiren Bir Dehâ” başlıklı eseridir. 1609'da İstanbul'da dünyaya gelen ve kısa sayılan ömrüne birçok eseri sıgdıran Kâtip Çelebi'nin asıl ismi Mustafa, babasının ismi Abdullah'tır. Kâtip Çelebi, XVII. yüzyıla damga vurmuş önemli isimlerin başında gelmektedir. Tarih, biyografi, coğrafya, astronomi, matematik başta olmak üzere değişik alanlarda birçok eser kaleme alan ender Osmanlı yazarlarından. Kâtip Çelebi, yaşadığı dönemde veya daha önce ortaya çıkmış Osmanlı devlet ve toplum düzenini sıkıntıya sokan sorunlarla uğraşmış ve bu sorunlara çözüm üretmeye çalışmıştır. Onun düşüncesinin en önemli özelliği, içinde yaşadığı toplumun ve devletin önemini kavrayarak elinden geldiğince meselelere çözüm bulmak için çaba sarf etmesidir. Bu nedendir ki, hakkında yazı yazdığı hemen her konu, o günkü yaşanan bir meseleye cevap olmak amacıyla kaleme alınmıştır, ki bu açıdan Kâtip Çelebi, aynı zamanda yaşadığı devire tanıklık etmiş bir mütefekkidir. Alanında konuyla ilgili temel kaynaklar kullanılarak zengin bir akademik literatürle hazırlanmış olan çalışmada; konular özlü bir şekilde ele alınmış, Kâtip Çelebi'nin hayatı, ilmî şahsiyeti, düşünce dünyası ve eserleri çeşitli yönleriyle akademik bir perspektiften incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kâtip Çelebi, İlmi Kişiliği, Eserleri, Fezleke, Cihannümâ.

Kâtîp Chalabi was recognized not only in the Islamic world but also in the Western world. It is his biographical and bibliographical works, which are not only based on the East but also seminal for the West, that made him well-known in the West. Kâtîp Chalabi provided introductory bibliographical information not only about the works and authors written in the field of religious sciences, but also about books written in different branches of science. He also emphasized the necessity of learning rational sciences along with Islamic sciences and stated that rational sciences were essential for the correct understanding of Islamic sciences and the practice of these sciences.

Although Kâtîp Chalabi was a bureaucrat belonging to the penal class, he left his mark on Ottoman scientific and cultural life; he produced various works in the fields of history, geography, biography, astronomy, mathematics, bibliography, philosophy, etc. Kâtîp Chalabi is a distinguished figure who was the carrier of Islamic culture. Kâtîp Chalabi, who did not find the works written in his own time sufficient and benefited from the works written in Europe, functioned as a bridge between Eastern and Western culture and made many innovations, realized a renaissance in Ottoman scientific life in a sense.

Contrary to the widespread understanding of education in his time, he did not receive a serious madrasa education; he educated himself with an autodidactic method in his later years. In this process, he took private lessons from special teachers and continued his education until his advanced age. He trained many students by giving lectures while studying at the same time.

The work we will examine consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion and an appendix.

In the introduction (pp. 13-14); topics such as the subject of the work, its purpose, and the reason for its writing are mentioned.

In Chapter One (pp.15-61), under the title "*Kātīp Chalabi, the Sun of Çelebiler's Century*", the situation of the Ottoman Empire in the period in which Kātīp Chalabi lived, and information about Kātīp Chalabi's life, education, scholarly personality and personality are given.

We would like to mention his scholarly personality here for its importance:

Kātīp Chalabi, who had previously served as a soldier in the Ottoman army, completely devoted himself to science after Murad IV's Revan Expedition (1634). With this decision, during his stay in Aleppo on his return to Istanbul from the expedition, he began to review the books in the bookshops and make notes about them. Upon the death of a relative on his return to Istanbul, he built a library with a significant portion of his inheritance and read these books. His interest was mostly in books written in the fields of history, geography, vefâyât, and tabakât, and the very important works he wrote on these subjects are a natural consequence of this. Kātīp Chalabi, who learned from the teachers around him, read many books during this time and became a lecturer himself.

Chapter Two (pp. 62-68) is titled "*Kātīp Chalabi and the World Around Him*". Kātīp Chalabi observed the decline in the functioning of state institutions, especially the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire, and the low quality of human material during his lifetime by personally working as a civil servant. Kātīp Chalabi saw that the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire were over, thought about what should be done in order for the state to regain its former power and might, and wrote works in this direction.

In the third chapter (pp. 69-80), under the title "*Kātīp Chalabi's Teachers*", information is given about his teachers such as A'rec Mustafa Efendi, Kadızâde Mehmed Efendi, Preacher Veli Efendi, Keçi Mehmed Efendi, Abdullah Efendi, Ermenek Mufti Molla Veliyüddin Mehmed İhlâsî. Among his teachers, Kadızâde Mehmed Efendi ensured Kātīp Chalabi's good upbringing and pioneered him to reach a certain place in science.

His teacher, Mehmed İhlâsî Efendi, assisted Kātīp Chalabi in the translation of Western works. In particular, he contributed greatly to the preparation of Kātīp Çelebi's geographical works.

In Chapter Four (pp. 81-102), under the title "*Kātīp Chalabi's Ideas and Works*", the main works of Kātīp Chalabi, who wrote dozens of works in fields such as history, biography, astronomy, bibliography, philosophy, geography, etc., the reasons for their writing, and the subjects these works cover are analyzed.

Here we would like to give brief information about his works " Jihannuma " and " Kashf az-Zunūn " due to their importance.

Jihannuma: Kâtîp Çelebi's work on geography. Jihannuma, which is the first systematic geography book of the Ottoman countries, is among the most important works of Kâtîp Chalabi, who was interested in different fields of science. Jihannuma broke new ground in Ottoman geography. Jihannuma, which Kâtîp Chalabi prepared by utilizing many Western geography books, changed the classical Ottoman understanding of geography and influenced the Ottomans' view of the world.

Kashf az-Zunûn an asâmil-kutub va'l-funûn: Kâtîp Chalabi 's most famous work. The work is written in Arabic and is a comprehensive bibliography and encyclopedia of sciences. The work contains the names and authors of nearly 15 thousand books and treatises. Kashf az-Zunûn is a basic reference work used by those doing research on Islamic sources in the West, and it was also influential in the birth of the idea of an Islamic encyclopedia. Kâtîp Chalabi was the first in the history of Ottoman science to compile nearly 15,000 works in a single book. In this work, which is a very comprehensive biography book written in Arabic, the title of the work is given first, followed by the name of the author and the date of his death, and then information about the date of composition, the language in which the work was written and the subject of the work is presented. The Arabic text of the work, prepared by Prof. Dr. Şerafeddin Yaltkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge, was published on various dates (vol. 1-2, MEB Publications, Istanbul 1941-1943; vol. 1-2, MEB Publications, Istanbul 1971-72; vol. 1-2, TTK Publications, Ankara 2014). The work was translated by Rüştü Balcı in 5 volumes and published by the History Foundation Yurt Publications (1st edition, Istanbul 2007; 2nd edition, Istanbul 2017).

In Chapter Five (pp. 103-107), under the title "*Kâtîp Chalabi and Evliya Çelebi*", Evliya Çelebi and Kâtîp Chalabi are compared from different perspectives. Both of them produced voluminous works. However, since both of them are in different fields, they have many advantages over each other. The advantage of Evliya Çelebi is the early publication of his Seyahatname.

In the Conclusion (pp. 108-110), a general evaluation of the study is made and the study is concluded.

In the Appendix (pp. 111-114), in the section titled "Selections from the Works of Kâtîp Chalabi", two books (Letâifü'l İşârât, Câmiu'l-Fusûleyn fi'l-Fürû') mentioned in Kashf az-Zunûn are introduced.

In conclusion, this study is an important reference for academics and researchers interested in the subject due to its systematic and holistic treatment of the issues, its preparation using a very rich academic literature, the author's mastery of the subject, original comments and evaluations, and the fact that it provides a serious literature contribution to the scientific studies to be carried out in the field.