

CĀBĪ °ÖMER

(b. 1750s; d. 1814?)

LIFE

Except for the short entry in Bursalı Meḥmed Ṭāhir's *°Osmānlı Mü'ellifleri*, there is no record of C.°Ö. in biographical and bibliographical sources.¹ The place and date of C.°Ö.'s birth is unknown. If we assume that he was middle aged when he wrote his *Ta'rīḥ* (in 1203/1789, however, then he must have been born in the second half of the 18th century. Because of the lack of information on C.°Ö., many scholars have referred to him erroneously as Cābī Sa°id and his work as *Cābī Sa°id Ta'rīḥi* instead of *Cābī Ta'rīḥi*.² Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar made another mistake regarding the name of the author. A note on the inside cover of the Istanbul University manuscript calls the work *Cābī Sa°id'in Ta'rīḥi*, but Tanpınar, who used this copy as a source, refers to the work as *Cābī °İsmet Bey Ta'rīḥi* in *19. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, the first edition of which appeared in 1942.³ Although the origin of the name "Sa°id" is unknown, it certainly has nothing to do with the author, whose name is recorded as "Cābī-yi Ayasofya °Ömer Efendi" on fol. 278a. Thus, the attributions to "Sa°id" and to "Cābī °İsmet Bey" are unfounded. Fol. 379a of the autograph copy records °Ömer Efendi's name and official title (Esad Efendi 2152) written by a different hand.

Some of the information on C.°Ö.'s life comes from explicit statements and clues in his work. C.°Ö. notes that he lived in Üsküdār several times. For example, he ascribes the warm welcome he received from Seyyid Feyzullāh Efendi, the viceroy (*nā'ib*) of Saqız (Chios), and his retinue during his exile on that island to the fact that they were both from Üsküdār.⁴ C.°Ö. had been sent to exile in Saqız for his illegal correspondences concerning a house with disputed *waqf* status located in Istanbul-Ortaköy. His life in exile began on 7 Safar 1225/14 March 1810 and ended after three months on 5 Jumada I 1225/8 June 1810, when he returned to Istanbul either upon the completion of his sentence or with a pardon.⁵

C.°Ö. appears to have had many friends in bureaucratic circles who helped him compile accurate records of various *fermāns* and imperial decrees (*hatt-ı hümayūn*). Although he generally refers to them as summaries (*me'al*), comparisons with official chronicles establish these documents as verbatim copies of the originals. The statesmen C.°Ö. mentions in his work must have allowed him to consult these documents. For example, his cordial conversation with Mehmed Rāḡīb Efendi, who held the office of *defterdār* between 3 Shawwal 1223-26 Jumada I 1226/22 November 1808-12 June 1811, leaves the impression that they were close friends. During the fiscal crisis which began in Rajab 1224/August-September 1809, C.°Ö. was obliged to pay a due of 3000 *kuruş* because of his title. When he met with *defterdār* Mehmed Rāḡīb to pay the money, however, he was able to reduce his share to 1500 *kuruş*.⁶ The author was the tax collector of the Ayasofya district (*Ayasofya cābīliḡi*), but scholars

do not know if he held any other offices. C.°Ö. made his first written reference to this office on 3 Rajab 1224/14 August 1809,⁷ but the date of his first appointment as tax official is unknown. The lack of any information concerning C.°Ö.'s father's name, birth place, or pseudonym also impedes archival research on the author. Therefore, it is difficult to establish whether the two references to a certain °Ömer Ḥalife b. °Alī in a register of appointments of tax collectors dated Muharram-Safar 1218/May 1803 actually refer to C.°Ö.⁸

The exact date of C.°Ö.'s death is unknown. The date 13 Safar 1229/4 February 1814 located at the bottom of the last paragraph of his work marks the date of the last event C.°Ö. recorded, but there is no indication that *Ta'rīḥi* ends there. After all, the *reddade* on the last folio of the autograph copy confirms that the work was not completed.⁹ C.°Ö. probably left the *Ta'rīḥi* (unfinished because of illness or sudden death. Thus C.°Ö. probably died soon after 13 Safar 1229/4 February 1814. Although the exact dates of his birth and death are unknown, C.°Ö. probably lived during the second half of the 18th and the first quarter of the 19th centuries.

Frequent spelling errors, incorrect vocabulary usage, and idiomatic defects suggest that C.°Ö. lacked a good education and taught himself to read and write. His use of French vocabulary, his etymological analyses, and his references to Quranic verses, hadiths, Arabic proverbs and poems, all suggest, however, that C.°Ö. was an intelligent and curious researcher who could grasp and assimilate what he read.

WORK

① *Cābī Ta'rīḥi, Ta'rīḥ-i Sulṭān Selīm-i ṣālīs ve Maḥmūd-ı ṣānī*

C.°Ö.'s only known work. Concisely known as *Cābī Ta'rīḥi* in scholarly circles, *Ta'rīḥ* covers the period between 1203-1229/1789-1814. There are three extant manuscripts of the work in three volumes. In the first paragraph of the first volume, C.°Ö. states that he composed his work to relate the events that transpired during the reign of Selīm III. *Ta'rīḥ* covers the reign of Selīm III (1203-1222/1789-1807), the short reign of Muṣṭafā IV (1222-1223/1807-1808) and the first five years of the reign of Maḥmūd II (1223-beg. 1229/1808-1814). Although the title of the work is recorded as *Ta'rīḥ-i Sulṭān Selīm Ḥan* on the inside cover of the autograph copy and the catalogue of Esad Efendi Library, °*Osmānlı Mü'ellifleri* and later the *İstanbul Kütüphaneleri Tarih-Coğrafya Yazmaları Katalogları* refer to it by the correct title *Ta'rīḥ-i Sulṭān Selīm-i ṣālīs ve Maḥmūd-ı Ṣānī*. Because C.°Ö. did not give his work a specific title, some scholars argue that the title *Ta'rīḥ-i Sulṭān Selīm-i ṣālīs ve Maḥmūd-ı ṣānī* is inaccurate.¹⁰ Given the coverage of *Ta'rīḥ*, however, this title is most appropriate for the work.

Ta'rīḥ is an important source on contemporary Ottoman history. The author witnessed many historical events which occurred in the Ottoman capital. In his work which covers a period of a quarter of a century from the succession of Selīm III up to and including the first five years of the reign of Maḥmūd II, C.°Ö. relates important events which took place in Istanbul, including the death of °Abdülḥamīd I, the

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ascension to the throne of Selīm III, the *Nizam-ı Cedid* movement, the French occupation of Egypt, the recapture of Egypt, rebellions of some local notables and feudal lords (*a^cyan, derebeyi*), wars between European states, the rebellion of Boğaz yamakları, the deposition of Selīm III and the succession of Mus(t)afā IV, °Alemdār Muştafā's (d. 1223/1808) arrival in Istanbul, the succession of Maḥmūd II, and the °Alemdār episode. *Cābī Ta'rīḫi* also includes information regarding daily events in Istanbul, street fights among janissaries and the oppression suffered by the people, price movements in markets, economic aspects of the social life such as the purchasing power of money, inner workings of the bureaucracy, anecdotes concerning some statesmen, information on grants of offices and deaths, news about natural disasters such as fires, earthquakes, and storms.

Cābī Ta'rīḫi has been a source for later Ottoman chronicles. Foremost among these is one of the most important late Ottoman chronicles entitled *Şānizāde Ta'rīḫi*.¹¹ Although Aḥmed Cevdet does not explicitly state that he used *Cābī Ta'rīḫi*, the fact that he utilized *Şānizāde Ta'rīḫi* shows that he borrowed from C.°Ö.'s work indirectly.

Manuscripts: (1) Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Hs. or. oct. 1034/1 (formerly Marburg Staatsbibliothek). Part of the Süssheim Collection. Copied by Seyyid Aḥmed Tebrīzī from the Esad Efendi manuscript in 1910-11. Each part is arranged as a separate volume. The bindings are black and the paper is yellow and glossy. The dimensions of the bindings vary. Those of the first volume are 23x15 cm., the second 23x15,5 cm. and the third 26,5x18 cm. The numbers of folios of the three volumes vary. The total number of folios is 730. There are 19 lines on each page, written in *ta^cliq* script.¹² (2) Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Semineri Kitaplığı KA.282. Copied from the Esad Efendi manuscript. An incomplete copy with words, lines, paragraphs and even folios omitted. Its dimensions are 20x30 cm. and the number of lines per page is 25. Numbered as 1040 pages (520 fols.). Written in *riq^ca* from the beginning up to page 1010 (fol. 505a). The rest is written in *nesih*. Various terms and names, including the names of sultans, grand viziers, viziers, queen mothers, and the wives of sultans are recorded in red ink. There is no information on its copyist. (3) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 2152. Consists of 622 folios with the dimensions 17x22 cm. The number of lines per page vary between 20 and 34. Written in *nesih* script.¹³ The text does not include section headings. All three parts are included in one volume with consecutive folio numbers. The paper is white and was rubbed smooth. The other two manuscripts are copies of this oldest extant manuscript. Many personal and place names are left blank, indicating that the author did not know these names when he was composing his work and intended to complete these sections later. In the other two manuscripts, however, these lacunae have been filled. The text includes many words which were crossed out and later rewritten. Some information which the author forgot to include are recorded between the lines or on the margins. As such, this manuscript appears to be the autograph copy of the work.

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An indexed critical edition of *Câbî Ta'rîhi* was published in two volumes by M. Ali Beyhan in 2003.

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¹ Bursalı Mehmed Tahir, *°Osmanlı Mü'ellifleri*, vol. 3 (Istanbul, 1324/1906-1907), 181.

² Cavid Baysun, "Mustafa IV," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8 (1979), 709; Ahmet Cevat Eren, "Selim III," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10 (1980), 454; Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Tarih Kaynaklarımız," *Tercüman*, 20 Mart 1975, 4; Yılmaz Öztuna, *II. Mahmud* (Ankara, 1989), 19-20; Semavi Eyice, "Mango, Cyril:

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³ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1985), 53, 57, 62, 116.

⁴ Cābī ‘Ömer Efendi, *Cābī Ta’rīhi* veya *Ta’rīh-i Sulṭān Selīm-i ṣālīṣ ve Maḥmūd-ı ṣānī*, ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan (Ankara, 2003), 603 [henceforth *CT*].

⁵ *CT*, XVII.

⁶ *CT*, 519.

⁷ *CT*, 519.

⁸ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, *Ruus Defteri*, no. 126, 133-134.

⁹ Compare with Ludwig Forrer, “Handschriften Osmanischen Historiker in Istanbul,” *Der Islam*, 26/3 (1942), 173-220.

¹⁰ Nihal Atsız, “Tanınmamış Osmanlı Tarihleri,” *Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği Bülteni*, 1-2 (1957), 72-73.

¹¹ Mehmet Ali Beyhan, “Şânizâde Tarihi’nin Kaynaklarından Cābī Tarihi,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, XV (1995), 239-283.

¹² Barbara Flemming, *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*, 13/1 (Wiesbaden, 1968), 163.

¹³ On page 224 of *Istanbul Kütüphaneleri Tarih-Coğrafya Yazmaları Katalogları* (Istanbul, 1943), the dimensions of the manuscript are recorded as 218 x 170 mm and its script as *riq‘a*.

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