



FEKETE, LAJOS

FEKETE, Lajos (b. Tardos, 12 June 1891; d. Budapest, 16 May 1969), Hungarian historian and specialist of Turkish-Persian paleography. In 1914 he obtained teacher's diploma in history and Latin. At the outbreak of the World War I, he was drafted to the front service. He was soon captured and spent six years in the POW camp of Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. He learned Turkish from his fellow prisoners. After his release in 1921, he studied Ottoman-Turkish philology in Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin. He learned Arabic and Persian and specialized in Ottoman-Persian paleography and diplomacy. From 1923 to 1948, he had worked for the Hungarian National Archives. From 1929 he was private-docent at the Péter Pázmány University in Budapest. He systematically collected and processed documents pertaining to the time of the Turkish occupation of Hungary. He published many descriptive reports on primary sources in this field on the pages of the *Levéltári Közlemények* ('Archival Communications'). In 1948 he was appointed instructor in the Department of Turkish Philology of the University of Budapest. In 1952 he advanced to the position of full professor of the same department. From 1937 he was a corresponding member, and from 1961 a regular member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1966 he became honorary member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He died in Budapest on 16 May 1969.

He was a towering figure in the field of Ottoman history and an internationally acknowledged authority in Ottoman-Persian paleography and diplomacy. He established this status by several major publications of documents produced in various forms and styles of the Arabic writing, among



them the hard-to-decipher Siāqat script.

Closest to Iranian Studies is his book *Einführung in die persische Paläographie*, a posthumous edition carefully made by the eminent Ottoman specialist Georg Hazai in 1977. It contains 101 Persian official documents and letters, the oldest of which dates from 1396 and the latest from 1701-02. The letters are published in their original Arabic script together with a translation into German. The original documents are attached in carefully produced neat and legible facsimile. The editor invited the best available experts to help put out these valuable materials. Bozorg 'Alavi, Persian professor and writer, reviewed the printed Persian text. Manfred Lorenz, professor of Iranian studies, translated the documents into German using Fekete's notes. Philological data and a description of the contents precede every document. Forty-five pages of Fekete's original introduction, with some technical adjustments, are also included in the book which is a mine of information in many aspects, from practical advice to scholarly observations. Extremely valuable is Fekete's contribution to Turkish linguistics, especially to the study of loan elements in Hungarian from the time of the Turkish occupation.

Lajos Fekete was a respected and appreciated member of the academic community of Hungary. He was decorated with the Kossuth Prize in 1956. In 1961 he received the Order of Labor, and in 1967 the Golden Degree of the Order of Labor.

He was a passionate teacher eager to share the results of his work with his students. He knew that skill and knowledge, obtained through appropriate methods, experience, and tireless efforts and required for the deciphering of hard-to-read graphemes, can only be transferred to the students by continued common engagement with them in actual research (Sinkovics, p. 221).

He worked 14-15 hours a day (Kálmán, p. 4), and yet he was very generous with his time. His late afternoon classes were ended not by the sound of the bell, but by the janitor who would come to turn off the light for the night. In Tardos, his native town, a school was named after him.

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