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Born in 1947, İlber Ortaylı had a double major in Ankara University, Faculty of Political Science and the Faculty of letters, History and Geography, Department of History. He studied with Professor Halil İncalçık at the University of Chicago for a master's degree. Ortaylı received his doctorate in 1974 with a dissertation entitled "Local Administration in the post-Tanzimat (Reform) Era." In 1979 he was appointed as associate professorship and in 1980 professorship of political science. He was awarded associate professorship for his monograph German Influence in the Ottoman Empire. Ortaylı served as visiting professor in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Princeton, Moscow, Rome, Munich, Strasbourg, Jannina, Sofia, Kiel, Cambridge, Oxford and Tunis. He published articles on the 16th and 19th century Ottoman Empire and Russia in academically acclaimed journals both in Turkey and abroad. He was Chair of Department of the History of Public Administration from 1989 until 2002, at the Faculty of Political Science, Ankara University. From 2002 until 2004, he taught at Galatasaray University in Istanbul, and from 2004 to 2005 at Bilkent University, Department of International Relations in Ankara. Professor Ortaylı is an executive committee member of the International Ottoman Studies Association and holds membership in the European Association of Iranian Studies. He is currently the president of the Topkapı Palace Museum. Ortaylı is the author of:

- Türkiye İdare Tarihi (1979) (History of Turkish Public Administration)
- Hukuk ve İdare Adamı Olarak Kadı (1994) (The Role of Kadı as Lawgiver and Public Administrator)
- İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı (1983) (The Longest Century of the Empire)
- İstanbul'dan Sayfalar (1986) (Aspects of İstanbul)
- Studies on Ottoman Transformation (1994)
- Türkiye'de Belediyeciliğin Evrimi (1978, co-authored with İlhan Tekeli) (The Evolution of City Management in Turkey)
- Tanzimat'tan Sonra Mahalli İdareler (1974) (Local Administration in the post-Tanzimat Era)
- Türkiye İdare Tarihine Giriş (1996) (An Introduction to the History of Turkish Public Administration)
- Alman Nüfuzunda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu (1980) (German Influence in the Ottoman Empire)
- Gelenekten Geleceğe (1982) (From Tradition to the Future)
- Osmanlı Aile Yapısı (2000) (Ottoman Family Structures)
- Osmanlı İmparatorluğu İktisadi ve Sosyal Değişim: Makaleler I (2001) (Economics and Social Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, Collected essays I)
- İlber Ortaylı ile Tarihin Sınırlarına Yolculuk (2002) (A Journey to the Borders of History with İlber Ortaylı)
- Osmanlı Mirasından Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'ne (2002, co-authored with Taha Akyol)
- Osmanlı Barışı (2004) (Pax Ottomana)
- Avrupa ve Biz (Turhan Kitabevi, 2007)
- Tarihin Sınırlarına Yolculuk (Timaş Yayınları, 2007)
- Eski Dünya Seyahatnamesi (Aşina Kitaplar, 2007)

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