

# Preface

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.118.001pre>

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**Tradition, Tension and Translation in Turkey**

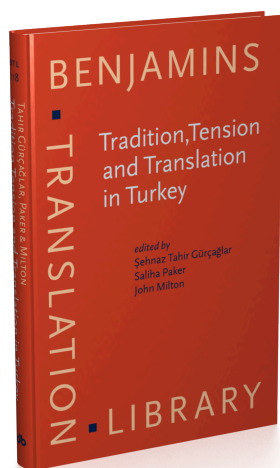
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[Benjamins Translation Library, 118] 2015. xiii, 311 pp.

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## Preface

The idea of editing a volume on the historical and contemporary dimensions of translation in the Ottoman times and modern Turkey came up during John Milton's visiting professorship at Boğaziçi University from 2006 to 2007. In fact, he suggested it and followed it through, proposing some of the topics covered by the present book. His liminal position both as an outsider and insider in Turkey provided him with a unique vantage point, which has also found its critical reflection on the essays in this book during the editing process.

At the time, the editors were aware of the proliferation of interest and research in various aspects of translation in Turkey. Three pioneering PhD dissertations in the Turkish translation and interpreting context were published in book form by international publishers in the 2000s (Diriker 2004; Susam-Sarajeva 2006; Tahir Gürçağlar 2008) and others were completed, while an increasing number of articles on translation by Turkish academics appeared in international journals and books. Research-related developments were accompanied by a growing interest in translated Turkish literature abroad, partly triggered by the Nobel Prize for Literature which went to Turkey's first laureate, Orhan Pamuk, in 2006. The political climate had also turned in favor of Turkey, which started accession talks with the EU in 2005 as the country became more and more visible in the global political and cultural context. So when we met at a coffee shop in Istanbul near the now famous Gezi Park one rainy afternoon, we all agreed that it was the right time to situate Turkey's important translation landscape and legacy on the world's translation studies map. It was a happy coincidence that the editors of the journal *Translation Studies* were also thinking along similar lines at around the same time, producing a special issue titled "Contemporary Perspectives on Translation in Turkey," guest-edited by the late Elif Daldeniz, who incisively wrote in her introduction: "The Ottoman Empire and contemporary Turkey are certainly fruitful sites for research incorporating different perspectives from translation studies and providing a variety of case studies to test and develop methodologies" (Daldeniz 2010: 129).

We chose to invite contributions from a number of established and emerging scholars representing diverse facets of translation research on Turkey. Needless to mention, not all areas we wished to cover found a place in this volume. However,

we believed that it could introduce a spectrum broad enough to reflect the diversity and dynamism of the long tradition of translation in Turkish culture. The dynamics of change were so prevalent that new translational issues continued to develop and emerge even during the writing and editing of this volume. For instance, as political and cultural developments unfolded and the Kurdish language gained political and cultural “legitimacy” in the public sphere, we were very happy to have included an essay on translations from Kurdish literature. Likewise, censorship pressures on translated literature in Turkey, which became more acute from the late 2000s, made our choice of an essay on this topic even more pertinent. Ever-changing dynamics, including the political, also meant that it was difficult to keep up with and cover all aspects of contemporary translation practice. For instance, the very interesting example of translation activism displayed during and after the anti-government Gezi Park protests in May-June 2013, a critical moment in Turkey’s modern history, began to emerge only recently as a field of research for scholars and students of translation (see Ergil and Tekgöl 2014). Court interpreting and the right to use Kurdish (or not) in the courts became a topical issue especially in 2012–2013, creating a rare moment when interpreting became a hot topic on the public agenda. In the meantime, medical interpreting involving Kurdish has also started attracting scholarly attention during the past few years (Schouten et al. 2012; Ross 2014). These and similar topics will continue to evolve and serve as fruitful grounds upon which new research and scholarship will flourish.

Despite many lacunae, the volume we intended, and hopefully managed to produce, is the most comprehensive one ever concerning translation in Turkey. We believe that it will serve as a point of reference for international and Turkish readers alike who wish to acquaint themselves not only with the trajectories in translation practice and research in the modern cultural and political context but also with at least a few of those traditional ones, now almost forgotten. The volume will provide a critical overview for both readerships, by laying bare diachronic and synchronic tensions in the Ottoman/Turkish translation tradition(s) and highlighting continuities and discontinuities, as well as networks, among concepts and agents hitherto unexplored.

The Editors

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