

## The Relation Between Translation and Ideology as an Instrument for the Establishment of a National Literature

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### Article abstract

The relation between translation and ideology is an example of a concrete case for a nation's struggle to take its place in the modern world. In the early years of the Turkish Republic, established by M. Kemal Atatürk and his followers after the Turkish War of Liberation (1919-1923), the dominant state ideology focused on a full-scale enlightenment and development initiative on all levels of society. The conditions which created the Renaissance and the spirit of humanism in the West were taken as a model and translation became one of the main instruments for the establishment of a modern society and a national literature following many reforms in education and language. This paper investigates how the state ideology manipulated translation, and its effects on the emergence of modern Turkish Literature.

# The Relation Between Translation and Ideology as an Instrument for the Establishment of a National Literature

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## RÉSUMÉ

La relation entre la traduction et l'idéologie est un exemple concret de la lutte d'une nation cherchant à prendre sa place dans le monde moderne. Durant les premières années de la République turque, qui a été établie par M. Kemal Atatürk et ses successeurs (1923), l'idéologie d'État dominante a été marquée par le mouvement de renouveau intellectuel et culturel des Lumières et l'esprit d'entreprise à tous les niveaux de la société. Les conditions qui ont créé la Renaissance et l'esprit humaniste à l'Ouest ont été prises comme modèle et la traduction est devenue l'un des principaux instruments de mise en place d'une société moderne ainsi qu'une littérature nationale, à la suite de nombreuses réformes de l'éducation et de la langue. Le présent article examine comment l'idéologie d'État a manipulé la traduction, et les conséquences sur l'émergence de la littérature turque moderne.

## ABSTRACT

The relation between translation and ideology is an example of a concrete case for a nation's struggle to take its place in the modern world. In the early years of the Turkish Republic, established by M. Kemal Atatürk and his followers after the Turkish War of Liberation (1919-1923), the dominant state ideology focused on a full-scale enlightenment and development initiative on all levels of society. The conditions which created the Renaissance and the spirit of humanism in the West were taken as a model and translation became one of the main instruments for the establishment of a modern society and a national literature following many reforms in education and language. This paper investigates how the state ideology manipulated translation, and its effects on the emergence of modern Turkish Literature.

## MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

histoire de la traduction, idéologie, littérature turque, humanisme, Lumières  
history of translation, ideology, Turkish Literature, humanism, Enlightenment

The subject of translation history has for some years engaged a considerable share in academic circles in the field of translation studies, not only as a branch prescribed by academic duty, but as being suitably adapted to the days in which we live. In order to supply evidence of this trend towards probing into historical research, one needs to look at the developments in the fields of cultural studies, sociology, history and social sciences in general, which employ multi-disciplinary research methods. In the case of translation studies, non-biased, objective and comprehensive methods of research necessitate a multi-disciplinary approach in order to explore and investigate the cultural and social background that creates the basis of translation activities in a country.

Starting from this perspective, the recent history of the Turkish Republic as a free, secular and democratic state established following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Liberation (1919-1923) provides an inspirational exemplar for many researches in Turkey, not only for translation studies, but to explore other social science fields as well. Translation scholars in Turkey regard their new state as an example of literary renaissance or revival, where translation played an important role under the manipulation of state in the direction of creating a modern, enlightened and developed nation. Hence, the interest in the recent history of Turkey has been fueled by what is seen as the achievement of Turkey in creating a national identity as a part of an ideological project, largely by a cultural realisation and transformation in which translation played an important role. Politically and culturally, we may as well say that the example of Turkey provided translation studies scholars in Turkey with an inspirational source for a comprehensive study in developing ideas about the influence of translation history in the larger picture of research in translation studies.

Within this framework, the conscious development of modern Turkish literature is an evolution demanding not only observation but discussion from many perspectives including historical, cultural and, to a certain extent, political studies. A commitment to making a free, modern nation out of a fallen Empire was not an idealistic, abstract object in the difficult and early years of the Republic but a determination demanding careful and difficult decisions in social and cultural lives as well as in science and technology.

In this respect, a large scale state initiative in the field of translation was set in motion to complement the larger project of creating Western enlightenment and humanism throughout the Anatolian soil and in the Turkish society. Creating a modern, national literature was one of the prerequisites of the state project which, as was hoped at that time, could be achieved by the help of a large-scale translation activity.

The relation between translation and the idea of *community building* has been taken up by Venuti who sees translation as an *imagined community building* act which is based on the sense of a particular nation which has a common ideology and a cultural discourse or which is sharing a common history and a common future. In his essay *Translation, Community, Utopia*, he writes that translations have undoubtedly formed such communities by importing foreign ideas that stimulated the rise of large-scale political movements at home, such as the Chinese translator Yan Fu who chose works on evolutionary theory precisely to build a national Chinese culture (Venuti 2000: 482-483). Brisset, on the other hand, in her article *The Search for a Native Language: Translation and Cultural Identity* studies recent Quebec's drama translations which were designed to form a cultural identity in the direction of a nationalistic agenda and she shows how cultural and political initiatives were taken along with resorting to translation for development in certain cultures (Brisset 2000: 343-373). One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Turkish experience in translation is that the initiatives to use translation as a nation or community building process were manipulated basically by the Turkish State itself, which was aligned with the dominant state ideology aimed at attaining and implementing Western enlightenment and modernity in the Turkish society. In this paper, we will consider only state-governed translation activities carried out by the Translation Bureau of the Turkish National Education Ministry between 1939-1946. The activities of the

few private publishing houses or enterprises will be excluded to keep the context of this study within a workable range.

### 1. Translation and ideology

The relation between translation and ideology has received increasing attention since the *cultural turn* in translation studies which sparked an interest in the historical aspect of translation. Bassnett, in her introduction for Özlem Berk's (2004) book *Translation and Westernisation in Turkey* explains what she means by the *cultural turn* as:

The cultural turn also had its diachronic dimension. Early in the formation of thinking in the field of Translation Studies the need to construct a comprehensive history of translation, a genealogy of translation practice as André Lefevere put it, had been seen as important, and the increased emphasis on cultural questions further prompted the study of translation history [...]. Crucially, the cultural turn opened up questions regarding the different status of literatures, the ideological implications that lie beneath translation, the power relationships between cultures (Bassnett, cited in Berk 2004: xii).

This new turn in translation studies enabled researchers to look into the identity forming, manipulative and ideologically oriented power of translation. The influence of translation in a society in the form of enrichment and acculturation is also taken up by scholars such as Theo Hermans, André Lefevere, Lawrence Venuti, Edwin Gentzler and Susan Bassnett who goes on to write the following in her introduction to Özlem Berk's book:

Literary revivals, such as Czech or Finnish cases demonstrate, were intimately linked to translation. Through translation, innovative ideas and ways of writing can be introduced, enabling writers working in the developing language to experiment and combine their own traditions with those brought in from outside. Such was also the Turkish case [...]. What happened in Turkey was an extended and deliberate process of cultural policy and translation activity, designed to transform and modernize the state and the Turkish language [...] the principle periods of translation activity in Turkey was one of acculturation, and that translation was therefore linked to the creation of a specifically Turkish identity (Bassnett, cited in Berk 2004: xiii).

Edwin Gentzler evaluates the role played by translations in the creation of a literary system in terms of the central importance of literary forms in the target culture imported via translations. He puts forward his views in *Contemporary Translation Theories* (Gentzler 1993) by citing from Matthisson (1931):

British cultural history in the fifteenth century is generally regarded as lacking in great works; yet translation, especially from Greek and Roman texts, [...]. And the poetics imported from source systems paid enormous dividends in terms of the development of original writing in the sixteenth century (Matthisson 1931, cited in Gentzler 1993: 169).

Similarly, Vladimir Macura, who makes an assessment of the impact of translations in the revival of Czech literature, arrives at a generalization based on his research in his article *Culture as Translation*, in the following words:

The development of national cultures is marked by periods when the culture as a whole, or in part, exhibits some typological features of translation, when it takes over cultural phenomena that have originated elsewhere, and adopts them. This is a typical feature of the formative period of new national cultures, the period of “Renaissance.” We find ample evidence of such a trend in many smaller nations of Europe [...]. But the same phenomenon also occurs in the history of bigger nations in their periods of extensive cultural trans-orientation, as evidenced by the traditional cultures of the Orient in this and previous centuries marked by the impact of Europe (Macura 1990: 70).

On the other hand, Niranjana, Derrida, and de Man, or Álvarez and Vidal among other scholars adopt a post-structuralist perspective and see translation as a colonial enterprise, and as a tool for subjectification of native culture and language as well as an abuse of power. Derrida brings the reader to acknowledge that translation reveals a problematic relation between tongues and languages, and leaves the translator in a state of undecidability when he discusses the name and the possibilities of the word *Babel*, and underlines the role of translation as an imposition of colonial violence:

In seeking to “make a name for themselves,” to find at the same time a universal tongue and a unique genealogy, the semites want to bring the world to reason, and this reason can signify simultaneously a colonial violence (since they would thus universalize their idiom) and a peaceful transparency of the human community (Derrida 1985: 174).

Similarly, Álvarez and Vidal put forward their ideas on translation as such:

Translation always implies an unstable balance between the power one culture can exert over another. Translation is not the production of text equivalent to another text, but rather a complex process of rewriting that runs parallel both to the overall view of language and of the “Other” people have throughout history; and to the influences and the balance of power that exist between one culture and another (Álvarez and Vidal 1996: 4).

The abuse of power in translation and in the larger frame of language has been taken up elsewhere such as in Patricia Palmer’s (2001) book *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland* where she shows that there was a powerful linguistic dimension to the Elizabethan re-conquest of Ireland. She concludes that language was intimately bound up with the ideologies that legitimised colonisation and describes the official policy as “occluded translation” (Palmer 2001: 14).

Apparently, in these instances translation is seen as a means to suppress national identities and culture as opposed to the approach which regards translation as a tool for acculturation and enrichment. Both approaches operate within the larger framework of cultural studies and depend on historical data and survey as their methods. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to reveal a problematizing relation between translation and ideology in terms of subversion, but to look at the relation as an act of enriching and supporting initiatives within the power relations in the young Turkish Republic from its establishment to the 1960s which marks a turn in the power structures of the society.

## 2. The study of the history of translation

Since translation is regarded as an independent and multi-focused discipline, constructing a history of translation is important in order to see how cultural and intellectual interactions between cultures and civilizations materialized throughout

history. All the awakening periods in the history of nations start with translations, as explored in detail by the Turkish thinker and scholar Hilmi Ziya Ülken's (1935/1997) book *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü (The Role of Translation in Awakening Periods)*. In his book, Ülken writes that opening up to modernization and progress involves opening the doors to all influences of cultural, scientific and intellectual activities taking place abroad. Translation, which is at the crossroads of different cultures and civilizations, introduces nations to various perspectives in their endeavours for modernization and intellectual advancement. Hilmi Ziya Ülken provides the reader with a detailed study in his book on translation activities of ancient civilizations since prehistoric times until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and emphasizes that in all nations' awakening periods which constitute turning points in the progress towards modernization and progress, the greatness of works of art can only be measured in terms of the doors of influences they open up; no doubt, translation is the primary influence among them. The ancient Greek awakening happened through translations from Anatolia, Phoenicia, and Egypt; the Turk-Uighur awakening benefited greatly from Indian, Persian and Nestorian translations; the Islamic awakening was influenced by the Greek (Nestorians, Jacobites) and Indian translation; and similarly, the European Renaissance could only be achieved largely due to the translations from Islamic, Jewish and Greek sources (Ülken 1935/1997: 11-33).

The modernizing power of translation throughout the centuries is revealed by means of a thorough study of the history of translation in books such as *Translators through History* (1995) by Delisle and Woodsworth; *Uyanış Devirlerinde Tercümenin Rolü (The Role of Translation in Awakening Periods – 1935)* by Hilmi Ziya Ülken; *The Translator's Art* (1987) edited by William Radice and Barbara Reynolds; *Türkiye'de Tercüme Müesseseleri (Translation Institutions in Turkey – 1998)* by Taceddin Kayaoğlu; and in articles such as *Uygurluk ve Çeviri (Civilization and Translation – 1983)* by Nedim Gürsel; *Türkiye'de Çeviri (Translation in Turkey – 1983)* by Vedat Günyol; *Edebiyatta Tercümenin Rolü (The Role of Translation in Literature – 1944)* by Edip Adıvar. There are in fact, several Ph.D. dissertations and various articles dealing with the relation of civilization and translation in Turkey, as well as abroad, which are easily accessible through today's communication network. The power of translation on the way to modernization is taken up in its diachronic and synchronic functions by Gürsel as such:

Undoubtedly, translation is an activity between languages. But from another aspect, it turns its face towards the past, to the ancient cultures. As in the above examples, in Renaissance or in Islamic philosophy it carries over the remains of the past, the values created by human beings throughout history, while on the other hand it synchronically enables the exchange between national cultures. Hence, translation enables the formation of a synthesis of modern culture and a solidarity among new values and their interaction. The most significant function of translation is to materialize a cultural transformation which could not be achieved by the internal dynamics of a society in the process of a transformation (Gürsel 1983: 323-324).<sup>1</sup>

Looking at the subject of this paper from this perspective, the role of translation in the young Turkish Republic of the 1940s and 1950s has a unique place in the cultural transformation of the nation and the country. The Turkish Republic was established in 1923 by M. Kemal Atatürk and his followers after the Turkish War of Liberation which was carried out against the Western forces who invaded the Turkish

soil following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I (see Bernard Lewis' *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*). Creating a contemporary and new cultural synthesis became one of the major targets of the larger project of development and Westernisation in the young Republic which were the main pillars of the Kemalist ideology, which was put forward by the historian Bernard Lewis in the following passage:

In his political ideas Kemal Atatürk was an heir to the Young Turks – more especially of the nationalist, positivist, and Westernizing wing among them. The two dominant beliefs of his life were in the Turkish nation and in progress; the future of both lay in civilization, which for him meant the modern civilization of the West, and no other. His nationalism was healthy and reasonable; there was no arrogant trampling on the rights or aspirations of other nations, no neurotic reflection of responsibility for the national past. The Turks were a great people of great achievement, who had gone astray through the evil effects of certain elements and forces among them; they must be restored to the path of progress, to find their place in the community of civilized nations [...]. Unlike so many reformers, Kemal Atatürk was well aware that a mere façade of modernization was worthless, and if Turkey was to hold her own in the world of our time, fundamental changes were necessary in the whole structure of society and culture (Lewis 1961/2002: 292).

Although the Turks fought against the Western forces to throw them out of their motherland, they regarded the way to modernization and progress as a continuous process of materializing their own independence and enlightenment by benefiting from the historical experiences of the West. Berk in *Translation and Westernisation in Turkey* writes the following about this initiative:

The acculturation model was extended during the early Republican era due to a conscious and deliberate central government policy to follow Western models. Attempts at creating the modern Turkish nation of the Turkish Republic established after the independence struggle against European powers in 1923, were not based on refusing European cultural values, but on loosening ties with Islam and the Eastern world and claiming a place within European culture and civilisation. In this respect, the very foundations of the Republic were mainly translations from the West affecting in every respect socio-cultural life in Turkey (Berk 2004: 4).

Kemalist ideology, which was shaped by the principles of the founder of the Republic, M. Kemal Atatürk, emphasized the creation of a national identity based on a concept of regarding all the people of Anatolia regardless of their ethnic origin or religion as one nation. Equipping this nation with all the concepts and institutions of Western humanism and enlightenment was one of the targets of Kemalism. Lewis writes the following about this target by referring to Atatürk's own words:

The Turkish nation has perceived with great joy that the obstacles which constantly, for centuries, had kept Turkey from joining the civilized nations marching forward on the path of progress, have been removed. Uncivilized people he said on another occasion, are doomed to remain under the feet of those who are civilized. And civilization meant the West, the modern world, of which Turkey must become a part in order to survive. The nation has finally decided to achieve, in essence and in form exactly, and completely, the life and means that contemporary civilization assures to all nations (Lewis 1961/2002: 268).

### 3. Translation activities in the early years of the Turkish Republic

In the direction of materializing the target of attaining Western civilization and development, and in line with the state ideology, a full-scale translation activity was ignited with the initiatives of the National Education Ministry and by its Minister Hasan Ali Yücel. It was an attempt at forming a national culture inspired from humanism and enlightenment which would pave the way for the development of a national literature. Turkish scholar Saliha Paker makes an evaluation of the translation project of the Turkish Ministry of Education in *Turkish Tradition* part of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* in the following manner:

The revolutionary move made by Hasan Ali Yücel, Minister of Education, in setting up a Translation Committee in 1939 and a Translation Office in 1940 was intended to reinforce the new language policies and to organize a programme for cultural revival [...]. The general aim was to “generate” the spirit of humanism by cultivating and assimilating foreign literatures through translation. This, it was felt, would bring about a renaissance and contribute to the development of the Turkish language and culture (Paker 1998:579).

Hasan Ali Yücel introduced this great project to the audience during the 1<sup>st</sup> *Turkish Publication Congress* held in 1939:

Republican Turkey which aspires to and is determined to become a distinguished member of Western culture and thinking is obliged to translate into its own language the works of the old and new thinking of the modern world and thus to strengthen its own existence with their perception and thought. This obligation invites us to start a full-scale translation project (Yücel 1939: 125).

The *Congress* consisted of several Committees on publication issues and among them the *Translation Committee* received utmost attention in the *General Board of Congress* and provided the *Congress* with a report summarized below:

- 1) A list of works to be translated into Turkish has been attached to this report, which is in no way restricted only to the above names. It is hoped that the translation of these works will be materialized by the Ministry of Education for the sake of speed and accuracy. Works to be translated have been chosen in terms of their role and place in the formation of humanist culture;
- 2) Private publishing houses and companies should be encouraged to carry out translation projects on condition that they give priority to the works of the humanist culture;
- 3) The establishment of a Translation Bureau within the body of Ministry is necessary in order to organize and carry out translation activities in an orderly manner;
- 4) Compilation of a Turkish language dictionary should be carried out by the Translation Bureau;
- 5) The publication of a Translation Journal is of utmost importance;
- 6) The Translation Bureau should also be responsible for the publication of children’s books and translations.

(Yücel 1939: 125-127)

Canan Yücel Eronat, daughter of the Minister of Education H. Ali Yücel, describes the sentiment in those days about this large-scale project:

May 1939 marks a turning point in our culture. Great number of intellectuals such as educationists, men of letters, painters, writers, politicians etc. gathered in this Congress.



They searched for solutions and ways to create a national library, to circulate books in towns, villages, to start a translation project [...]. 186 delegates with different world views united around a common ideal, in an atmosphere of freedom. The Congress turned into a cultural festivity (Eronat 1997: 8).

The ultimate aim in the report of the *Translation Committee* was to set the course for private translation initiatives for organized and systematic translation activities. The Minister, Hasan Ali Yücel put forward this aim in many of his speeches and in the forewords he wrote to the translations:

The reason why the Ministry of Education is seriously involved in translation activities is to lay the foundation for translation activities' development outside state. Our purpose is to create a cultural awareness for the Western sources which are necessary in order to create the spirit of humanism and to contribute to the Turkish Renaissance which started with the establishment of the Turkish Republic (Yücel quoted in Günyol 1983: 330).

Elsewhere Yücel himself writes the following about why translation was regarded as an outstanding and effective tool in the modernization project of the Turkish Republic. In the following excerpt, Yücel makes explicit references to the state ideology and its role in the translation project, and he reflects on the expected outcomes of this project and its contributions to the Turkish Language Reform:

The first phase of understanding the spirit of humanism is to identify oneself with the artistic creations which are the concrete expression of human existence [...]. This is why we consider translation an effective and important activity on our way to civilization. Literature has an everlasting and penetrating influence on the masses in nations who can turn their intellect to all kinds of such works. The nation which has the largest library ranks first in the intellectual capacity of the civilized world. Turkish readers feel great attachment to this translation project, when they think of all the gains of the Turkish language (Yücel 1941: 5).

Finally, in line with the proposal of the *Translation Committee* in the *1st Publication Congress*, the Ministry of Education and Yücel, as the Minister, set the course for the establishment of a *Translation Bureau* for an organized and systematic translation activity.

The *Translation Bureau* functioned between the years 1940 and 1967 and the most fruitful period was between 1940 and 1946. A *Translation Commission* had already been established following the report of the *Committee* and the *Commission* had its first meeting in Ankara, on February 28, 1940. During this meeting, issues concerning the method of translations, preparation of foreign language dictionaries, editing of the translations and concerns about the style of the translations were discussed. The first meeting was followed by four other meetings in Ankara in the same year. The *Commission* members were the following names led by Dr. Adnan Adıvar: Halide Edip Adıvar, Saffet Pala, Bedri Tahir Saman, Avni Başman, Nurettin Artan, Ragıp Hulusi Erdem, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Nurullah Ataç, Bedrettin Tuncel, Enver Ziya Karal, Sabahattin Ali, Cemal Köprülü, Abdülkadir İnan, Kadri Yörükoğlu (Berk 2004: 130).

During three successive meetings a list of works to be translated was prepared which mainly consisted of works belonging to Western humanistic culture and some representatives of Eastern literature. Main criteria for the selection of the works to

be included in the list were their value and artistic, intellectual quality in Western civilization, which was expressed in the *Commission's* report in summary as such:

The list comprises works which are especially related to the humanistic culture [...] translation is very important for the development of knowledge and culture in our country and it will serve to bring forth the ideas and elements of the modern world, and also help to enrich our language (Yücel 1939: 125-127).

The activities of the *Bureau* were constructively criticized by one of its leading translators and man of letters, Orhan Burian in his article entitled *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının Çeviri Yayınları Üzerine (On Translations of National Ministry of Education)*. He proposed that the list should be revised and made more comprehensive and that universities should also take part in the translation project so that translation activities could be independent of Ministries and Ministers (Burian 1999a: 255-256).

The *Translation Bureau* started its activities in 1940, a year after the *1st Publication Congress*. It was first led by Nurullah Ataç and then by Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, both of whom were important men of letters and translators. Other translators were all competent and respected men of letters, writers, thinkers, poets, and scholars who were enthusiastic and devoted to the project. Some of these names were Orhan Burian, Saffet Korkut, Azra Erhat, İrfan Şahinbaş, Nurettin Sevin, Mehmet Karasan, Samimoğlu brothers, Melahat Özgü, Lütfi Ay, Bedrettin Tuncel, Ziya İshan, Nusret Hızır, İbrahim Abdülkadir Meriçboyu (A. Kadir) and Servet Lunel (Günyol 1983: 328).

The activities of the *Bureau* and its methods were determined by the *Bureau* members who gathered at the beginning of each week to set a course of action and a method. According to Orhan Burian, the methods and the activities could be summed up as:

- 1) To gather people who have actively been involved in the act and problems of translation in Turkey in theory and practice and consult with them;
- 2) To prepare a list of works recognized as world classics in major languages;
- 3) To work out a plan to translate these works in 5 years;
- 4) To distribute these works to the volunteer translators; in case of any doubt about the competence of the volunteers to test the volunteer's ability to translate;
- 5) To double check the incoming translations in terms of correction and quality of expression;
- 6) To publish the translation uniformly with the other books in the series after approval.

(Burian 1999a/b: 250-256)

The manipulation of the *Translation Bureau* by the Ministry of Education since the *Bureau* was a body within it created poetical constraints on the translators to move towards acceptability and domestication in their translation strategies. Since translation was regarded by the state as a tool for enlightenment and modernization, and since the aim of the *Bureau* was to enrich, improve and elevate Turkish culture and language and thus encourage Turkish men of letters to produce original works, the translations were in conformity with the expectations of the state and the spirit of a great number of people. Hence, the objectives of the *Bureau* were expressed as such by some of its members:

- 1) To enrich Turkish culture and to materialize cultural contact with other civilizations;
- 2) To make great sources of Western and Eastern civilizations accessible to Turkish readers and to democratize culture throughout Anatolia by establishing libraries of translated works;
- 3) To enrich and nourish the Turkish language with all the concepts of contemporary Western thought and sciences.

(Burian 1999b:250; Dino 1978: 110; Tuncel 1958: 72-74)

The last objective was especially important for the *Bureau* since it was in parallel with the objectives of the *Turkish Language Institute*, established in 1932, by the directive of M. Kemal Atatürk. The activities of the *Institute* briefly revolved around three main issues:

- 1) To carry out research on Turkish language;
- 2) To find solutions to the daily problems of Turkish language;
- 3) To enrich and nourish Turkish language in its all forms of use.

(*Türk Dil Kurumu* 2010)<sup>2</sup>

In fact, before the establishment of the *Institute*, a revolutionary initiative was made by selecting Latin letters as the script for the new Turkish alphabet. This reform was in line with the modernization policy of the state. Hence, translation was also important for the enrichment of the language and implementation of the language reform. Suat Yakup Baydur explains the content of the language reform and its goals as follows:

- 1) It was necessary to adopt the Latin alphabet because of the difficulties in spelling and pronunciation of words borrowed from Arabic and Persian;
- 2) Ottoman language was unintelligible for the young generation and it had to be abolished in schools;
- 3) Under the influence of European culture and science, the terms and concepts, in Arabic and Persian were insufficient to meet the needs for development and advancement in culture, humanities, and sciences;
- 4) In order to get closer to the Anatolian people and their speech and conversation, a new alphabet and systematized language had to be available soon.

(Baydur 1999: 10-11)

When one looks at *Tercüme Dergisi* (*Translation Journal*) published by the *Bureau* during the period of its activities (1940-1966), it is evident that the *Journal* aimed at becoming a forum for discussions and exchange of ideas on and about translation in theory as well as in practice. In that respect, translators put forward their ideas about methods to be employed by them in their translations, taking into consideration the objectives of the *Bureau* and the language reform. For instance Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, one of the leading figures of the *Bureau* meticulously tried to make the animals speak with the finest and best idioms in the Turkish tongue in his translation of La Fontaine's *Fables*. As a result, the 17<sup>th</sup> century elaborate court French turned into ordinary and everyday Turkish. Another translator and linguist, Nurullah Ataç, wrote the following about his translation of Paul Valéry's *Mauvaises Pensées et autres*:

I keep searching for a softer form in Turkish while trying to figure out what the writer would say if he were a Turk [...]. I prefer to give a conversational tone to the narrative

mode. What we really expect to see in a translation is the proof that Turkish is capable of expressing things thought in other languages, without distorting or changing them (Ataç 1941: 505-507).

Can Yücel, a famous poet and translator who translated Katherine Mansfield's *The Doll House* into Turkish, has been loyal to Mansfield's style in terms of thought flow, chronology of events, speech and thought presentations, verb tenses etc. but preferred to use a vocabulary consisting only of local and native idioms, expressions and words. The conversational Turkish in the dialogues sound like that of local Turkish people. Similarly, Professor Ioanna Kuçuradi, a famous Turkish Philosophy scholar discusses the translations of Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* into Turkish by Ahmet Cevat Emre, one of the translators of the *Bureau*, who translated both works in 1941, 1942, and 1957. According to Kuçuradi, the translator acted under the ideological and poetical constraints of the period and in line with the language reform. Consequently, he favoured the method of domestication more as opposed to foreignization and intended to recreate Homer's epic world for the Turkish public without making incongruous associations with the Turkish epic world. To this effect, he used language structures and devices from the oldest Turkish inscriptions *Orhun Yazıtları* (Kuçuradi 1978: 115-116). On the other hand, a target oriented translation method was not favored by all members of the *Translation Bureau*. Suut Kemal Yetkin and Tahsin Yücel who both worked for the *Bureau* were of the opposite opinion. Suut Kemal Yetkin who was the chairman of the *Bureau* between 1947-1950 believed that translator's first duty was to the original author's style and manner of expression and that he should refrain from being too visible in his translation (Yetkin 1978: 43-44).

In 1944, the Ministry of Education published a pamphlet of regulations to standardize the *Bureau's* activities of translation. The pamphlet is especially important since it contained rules set up by the Ministry and thus, by the state, and one would of course expect them to be in accordance with the state's ideology. Özlem Berk in her published Ph.D. dissertation writes that the regulations in the pamphlet were an indication of the authoritarian nature of the *Bureau* on the selection and on the outcome and the presentation of the translations. The *Translation Bureau*, Berk goes on to say, was particularly meticulous on the translated text, to ensure not only its faithfulness to its original but also a correct and fluent use of Turkish. In the pamphlet, the rules applying to private publishing houses were also listed (Berk 2004: 133-134).

From its establishment in 1940, the *Translation Bureau* managed to publish 1247 volumes up to 1966 when it was closed down. Western classics that formed the basis for the creation of European Enlightenment represented the largest number overall. By 1946, the *Bureau* had published almost 500 works. In the first three years only, 39 works from ancient Greek, 38 from French, 10 from German, 8 from English, 6 from Latin, 5 from Eastern classics, 2 from Russian and 1 from Scandinavian were translated. The detailed list of translations for the years 1940-1966 can be seen in *Milli Eğitim Yayınları Bibliyografyası* (Bibliography of Ministry of National Education Publications – 1923-1985) edited by Ferit Ragıp Tuncer (1989). The *Translation Bureau's* most influential years were 1940-1946 after which it experienced a change of attitude when Hasan Ali Yücel left his post as Minister and was replaced by Şemsettin Sırer. During Sırer's post, a new list was prepared and emphasis was put on works from Eastern literature and old Turkish texts. Works in the fields of sciences

and history were also heavily included in the list. However, the *Bureau* lost its impetus due to political changes in Turkey around the 1950s. Suat Karantay, a translation studies scholar, evaluates the end of the *Translation Bureau* this way:

With Hasan Ali Yücel's leaving office and especially with the political changes in 1950, different cultural and educational policies were adopted which resulted in the diminishing activities of the Translation Bureau. Some politicians regarded the classic works with doubt (Karantay 1991: 96-101).

Özkırımlı also attributes the diminishing role of the *Bureau* to political changes which affected the way culture was regarded in the 1950s (Özkırımlı 1999: 221). Gürçağlar looks at the *Translation Bureau* and the discourse generated by Turkish scholars around it in a political and ideological background, and assesses the reason for the change after 1946 which also affected the role and activities of the Bureau, as such:

The situation changed after 1946 when the Minister of Education Hasan Ali Yücel, considered to be the founding father of the Bureau, resigned from his post. This was a political turn brought about by the adoption of the multi-party system in the country. From 1946 until 1950 when the Democrat Party took over the government, the ruling Republican People's Party had to agree with popular policies shifting gears towards a more conservative line. The Translation Bureau suffered from this shift and in 1947, the production of the Bureau dropped to 58 books from 165 books the year before (Yücel 1961b: 18). This illustrates how immediate the effect of ideological changes can be on translation activity (Gürçağlar 2003: 125).

On the other hand, during the state manipulated activities of the *Bureau*, private publishing houses also began to flourish under the support of the state in accordance with the objectives of the *Translation Committee* set down in the *Commission* report of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Publication Congress*. With the diminishing role of the *Bureau*, many translators went into the business of starting their own publishing house or began to work in an already existing one, and carried out translation projects of various kinds (Günyol 1983; Gürsel 1978).

#### 4. Translation activities and Turkish literature

Translation activities in the early years of the Turkish Republic were part of a greater project of modernization and progress in line with the state ideology which necessitated a policy in culture.

As put forward in the previous part of this paper, the *Translation Bureau* as an organ of the Ministry of National Education published 1247 volumes in 26 years until its closing down. Western classics that formed the basis for the European Renaissance formed the largest number, especially in the first 6 years of its activities. Azra Erhat, a *Bureau* member and one of its translators, evaluates the *Bureau* and its official journal *Tercüme (Translation)* many years later as such:

Translation Bureau, *Tercüme* and the translation of the classics opened a new epoch in Turkey [...]. This epoch not only brought innovations to our culture and literature and shaped our language, it also brought a system to our publication business, caused the dependence on the text and concrete facts in sciences, enabled the Turkish intellectuals and artists to communicate with the world thinking, literature, and arts [...]. (Erhat 1982: 6-11).

The contributions of the translation activities to the emergence of modern Turkish literature have been investigated and researched in many academic studies, and numerous publications have been printed. Many of these studies took up this great project of translation within a wider framework of making a literary and sociological assessment of the early years of the Turkish Republic. This paper does not intend to go into the deeper sociological, literary or political aspects of the translation activities since such an assessment requires different research tools and methods. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile, from a Translation Studies perspective, to sum up the innovations brought about in the following genres in the literary poly-system of Turkey towards the creation of modern Turkish Literature briefly as such: poetry, drama, novel, criticism.

#### 4.1. Poetry

Turkish poetry made a giant leap during and after the activities of the *Translation Bureau*. The intellectual, cultural and economic milieu of the times due to the reforms carried out in the fields of language and culture in the early years of the Republic, enabled the poets to create their own voice while at the same time drawing inspiration from the Court Poetry (Divan) and Turkish public verse. In parallel with the inherited traditional and native sources the development of Turkish poetry owes a great deal of inspiration to the Western models introduced to Turkish cultural life during the activities of the *Bureau*. The translated poems brought the re-orientation source out of the vicious circle Divan poetry had been locked in. In the first place, language of Divan Poetry was a big handicap to fully nourish the Turkish poets since it was heavily Ottoman, consisting of Arabic and Persian vocabulary. As Feyyaz Kayacan Fergar the Turkish poet and translator says, “one cannot force a nation to speak with a voice not its own” (Fergar 1992: 35). Although the Anatolian public verse is still alive today, Divan poetry had already lost all relevance. The poet-sociologist Ziya Gökalp evaluated this situation in those days as such in his own words: “We belong to the Turkish Nation, the Islamic community, and Western civilization. Our literature must go to the people and at the same time towards the West” (Gökalp 1992: 35).

The inspiration came from the translations of the *Bureau* and in the journal *Tercüme (Translation)* hand in hand with the language reform of the newly found Republic. Turkish poets were introduced to an array of new voices, tones, modes of expression and forms through these translations. As Fergar (1992: 36) writes,

[t]he second linguistic shake-up occurred during the late thirties, a period of feverish cultural ferment in Turkey. All the major works of world literature-ancient, classical and modern-were being translated and published with sustained regularity. The magazine “Translation,” published by the Ministry of Education, provided work for many young writers including (poets) Orhan Veli and Melih Cevdet Anday and opened many, many new doors for its avid readers.

Hence, modern Turkish poetry moved from love and natural descriptions to more social and personal subjects. In terms of form, free verse and other formal elements emerged as a result of the innovations and a synthesis was achieved in Turkish poetry in terms of originality and artistic quality. Sabahattin Eyüboğlu writes the following about how Turkish poetry developed through the translations:

It is a strange fact that in the poetry history of nations, the most fruitful periods are those when the largest number of translations have been made [...]. When we look at the most fruitful years of our poetry we see that translations have increased greatly in those years [...]. We will better understand how much these translations affected our new poetry understanding and taste (Eyüboğlu 1997: 503).

#### 4.2. *Drama*

Drama, which had taken root in Anatolian folk tradition dated back to Ottoman times or even before that when the Turks were not yet converted into Islam. On the other hand, Drama translations carried out from Greek and Roman sources as well as translations from French, English and Scandinavian literatures enriched Turkish drama tradition in terms of content, dramatology, and variety. The translations helped Turkish drama to develop its own character through close engagement with Anatolian genres, and new genres and sub-genres imported via translations, such as musicals. The result was an exploitation of traditional oral Turkish genres and language with a synthesis of Western models. While the roots of the form of the modern Turkish drama are firmly set in Anatolian oral tradition, nevertheless, evolution of drama texts and stage performances owes a great deal to translations in terms of setting, subject matter and artistic effects. In fact, apart from *State Theatre Institution*, there are a large number of private theatre companies which created a considerable amount of audience especially in big cities (Yüksel 2008; Saroyan 1989: 126; Taner 1989: 5).

#### 4.3. *Novel*

The extent of the effects of the activities of the *Translation Bureau* in the evolution of the Turkish novel has been taken up in many academic and culture oriented studies on the Modern Turkish Novel. It is an accepted fact that the Reformation Period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century paved the way for the actual birth of the novel genre in the Ottoman Empire in the form of adaptations and imitations. However, the necessary conditions for the natural development of this genre could not take place at that time due to the inconvenient circumstances of the Empire which was in the process of a decline. The Ottoman state as a remedy to this decline initiated Westernization efforts by way of imitating some technological and economic institutions from the West. Meanwhile, great capitulations which were given to the British Empire in 1838 (*Ottoman-British Trade Treaty*) and to France earlier gave way to the entrance of the Western capital which brought along its culture and literature. Hence, translations made especially in the field of the novel genre served to introduce this new form of writing to the Ottoman culture which did not exist before (Paker 1998: 578). A famous Turkish critic and thinker Fethi Naci evaluates the entrance of the novel genre into the Ottoman culture as such:

Hence, Western literature began to enter the country which was gradually becoming a half-colony: First translations, followed by novels imitating their Western models [...]. In short, without the British Trade Treaty and Reformation Bill, the novel, most probably, could not enter Turkey for many more years to come (Naci 1999: 11).

The novel which took at its center the individual and the bourgeoisie developed in the West. In the pre-Republic times in Turkey, however, due to economic reasons the necessary conditions could not develop for the emergence of the *individual* until the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Although the Ottoman intellectuals were aware of the dissimilarities of the conditions of the Ottoman Empire and that of the West, they were more or less confused and in disagreement about how to deal with that important issue (Moran 1991: 13). Hence, the actual development of the novel genre took place after the establishment of the Turkish Republic which brought about revolutionary transformations in the social, economic, cultural and almost all aspects of life of the country. Another famous Turkish author and thinker Ahmet H. Tanpınar writes the following in this respect:

A worldview which regarded the individual as non-existing and which closed its eyes to life of course could not establish an artistic tradition which turns around the human being. The human being had to become worthy in order for the development of Turkish story-telling. Modern novel revolves around the individual, whereas the old art accepts neither the individual's freedom in the face of life and destiny, nor his existence at all (Tanpınar 1964<sup>3</sup>, cited in Naci 1999: 13).

The *Translation project* and the activities of the *Translation Bureau* as instruments of the greater project of attainment of cultural and intellectual transformation enabled the proliferation and development of intellectual activities and created the necessary climate for the formation of a group of novel readers. Also, the reforms carried out in the Turkish language and education system enabled those translations to be read and appreciated artistically. Thus, a consistent interest in the novel genre led Turkish authors to create their own stories with the force and potential of the Turkish language and on topics revolving around the newly existing *individual* and the society based upon Western models which arrived by way of translated artistic works.

According to translation studies scholar Suat Karantay, the effects of the *Bureau* translations could be described as:

Translation Bureau has made very valuable contributions to Turkish Literature and culture [...]. It led the way to a cultural renewal [...]. The Ottoman Literature which was open to the elite could not go beyond İstanbul. Towards the end of 1940's writers who were originally villagers and who were the graduates of Village Institutes and knew the classics very well, included village life into Turkish works. They had new stories to tell, and new world views to convey. They brought national creativity to Turkish literature which did not exist before (Karantay 1991: 96-101).

Translation activities of the *Bureau* indeed enriched and motivated the efforts of Turkish writers in terms of technique, narrative qualities, creativity, and subject matter. Another researcher Vedat Günyol concludes his article *On the Translation Bureau* in the following words where he makes an evaluation of the *Bureau* and its targets:

Today, institutions such as the Translation Bureau and the Village Institutes which were established to move Turkey towards modernization have been closed down [...]. Nevertheless, those of our artists who have become world famous, without any doubt, are all related in some way to those two institutions (Günyol 1983: 65).



#### 4.4. Criticism

Apart from introducing new genres and innovations, translation activities helped the creation of meta-literature corpus, a theoretical framework for the research and study of Turkish literature, and for the development of translation studies in Turkey. *Tercüme (Translation)* which was the official journal of the *Bureau* was very important in this respect. *Tercüme* was first published in May 1940. It consisted of two parts. In the first part, samples of translations and their originals were printed. The second part included theoretical and critical writings on literature and translation, as well as translation criticisms and discussions. Hence, it acted as a forum for discussions on translational issues and literature. It was the first of its kind, and became a model for the other private journals which were to follow. As expressed by Çıkar, Günyol and many other critics and researchers, *Tercüme* contributed greatly to the establishment of literary criticism and translation studies in Turkey:

The creative force of the translations were soon felt in poetry and in contemporary Turkish literature. Also, *Tercüme*, as a publication had great impact on the formation of a consciousness on translation issues and hence on the emergence of a brand new perspective in the field of mother tongue. Consequently new directions and research in language showed a steady development (Günyol 1981: 65).

#### 5. Conclusion

First hand statements of the researchers, translators and men of letters who were attached to the *Translation Bureau* and who lived during those times, and who witnessed the conditions and atmosphere behind the translation project of the Ministry of Education in Turkey enable one to conclude that translation became a great tool under the manipulation of the state in the early years of the Turkish Republic to attain its goal of modernization, which is closely connected with the emergence of a national literature in all its forms. The actual spectrum of the effects of translation activities and their bearings on Turkish literature, culture and society in all aspects deserve a thorough sociological and cultural studies based research. Any further analysis may be carried out from here by future researchers on this subject which is a concrete example of how the paths of ideology and translation crossed in one nation's history.

#### NOTES

1. The quotations from Turkish sources are translated into English by the author of this article.
2. *Türk Dil Kurumu*. Visited 3 March 2010, <<http://www.tdk.gov.tr>>.
3. TANPINAR, Ahmet Hamdi (1964): Önsöy. In: Fethi NACI (1999) *Yüzyılın 100 Türk Romanı* (The Hundred Turkish Novels of the Age), İstanbul Adam Yayınları, 13-14.

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