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## THE FIRST TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUR'AN IN MODERN TURKEY (1924–38)

The Turkish government in Ankara announced that it would support the translation and publication of the Holy Qur'an in the Turkish language. Their heretical idea has been headed toward this action for many years in order to turn the devout people among them away from the word of God the Exalted, who revealed it to the Arabian Prophet Muhammad "in the clear Arabic tongue,"<sup>1</sup> with a Turkish translation—which consists of their words, their composition, and their arrangement—in order to facilitate the distortion of the translation so that they can use it as they wish.<sup>2</sup>

—Muhammad Rashid Rida, 1924

The debut of Turkish-language translations of the Qur'an in the newly founded Republic of Turkey sparked lively debates over whether Qur'an translation was possible or desirable, who should engage in interpretation of the text, and what characteristics a Turkish-language rendering of the Qur'an should have. Whereas the abolition of the Islamic caliphate, closure of the *medreses*, and prohibition of the Sufi orders have received considerable attention in histories of early republican Turkey, the state-sponsored translation of the Qur'an into Turkish remains both neglected and misunderstood.<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Rashid Rida, who was highly influential in shaping opinion in the Muslim world, portrayed the state-sponsored project as a long-term plot to displace the Arabic Qur'an. Other accounts misrepresent the involvement of President Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in the promotion of Qur'an translation by anachronistically suggesting that he sparked the initiative and led a "campaign" in support of it.<sup>4</sup> Mustafa Kemal had no hand in the composition of Turkish Qur'an translations published in 1924, other than helping create the political context in which they could be published. Their composition began well before the foundation of the Turkish republic, and their inspiration emerged from the intellectual milieu of the late Ottoman public sphere.

In fact, state involvement in Qur'an translation occurred only after private publishers printed translations in 1924 that ignited considerable controversy, leading the parliament to sponsor the composition of a reliable and eloquent Turkish translation. Support for a Turkish-language Qur'an translation and commentary was broad, crossing and complicating the categories "Islamist" and "Turkist," which are often invoked to describe the intellectual divisions of the day. Recent scholarship indicates that many intellectuals

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of the period were devout Muslims as well as nationalists, and the case of Qur'an translation lends further support to this finding.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the unpopular closure of the *medreses* and Sufi orders and the abolition of the caliphate, the Turkish state's support for the composition of a Qur'an translation actually responded to the concerns of devout intellectuals to produce a dignified, accurate translation. It did not have the radical flair of other reforms; in fact, it cannot truly be called a "reform" at all. Rather, this Qur'an translation initiative was a state-sponsored writing project of uncertain duration that enlisted the talents of the politically marginalized devout intelligentsia.

#### QUR'AN "TRANSLATION" AND THE OTTOMAN BACKGROUND

Why was the notion of translating (in Arabic, *tarjama*; in Turkish, *tercüme*) the Qur'an controversial? Within the tradition of Muslim legal thought and theology, most jurists define the Qur'an as an Arabic text and understand the particular linguistic arrangement or form (*naẓm*) of the text to have divine qualities. The Qur'an is remarkably self-conscious about its own language and/or its original audience,<sup>6</sup> referring to itself repeatedly as an "Arabic" revelation; for instance, sura Yusuf states, "We revealed it as an Arabic recitation so that you might understand."<sup>7</sup> Based on such textual indications, jurists define the Qur'an as both the meaning as well as the Arabic linguistic structure.<sup>8</sup> In this view, the idea of a "German Qur'an," for instance, is a contradiction in terms because the Qur'an is Arabic *by definition*. Only the revealed Arabic text can be described as *being* the Qur'an.

The prevalent view that Qur'anic Arabic is divine, miraculous, and impossible to imitate has obvious implications for translation. This understanding emerges out of the Prophet Muhammad's challenge (*tahaddī*) to his detractors to bring forth a text that could rival the linguistic splendor of the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup> Muslim theologians formalized this idea with the concept of the "inimitability" (*irjāz*) of the Qur'an. Most scholars define inimitability as the inability of any human linguistic creation to replicate the Qur'an's style and eloquence, which have miraculous qualities.<sup>10</sup>

Given the importance of Arabic language to the very definition of the Qur'an and its miraculous nature, the prospect of translating the text into other languages has posed a theoretical and practical problem for most Muslim thinkers. Jurists feared, among other things, that translations would distort the Qur'an and fail to convey its true splendor because the miraculous aspects of the revealed Arabic text could not be transmitted. In addition, jurists expressed concern that someone might attempt to substitute the revealed Arabic text with a translation, potentially leading to the neglect of the original, as in the case of the Latin or English translations of the Bible.

Only certain members of the Hanafi legal school defended the permissibility of Qur'an translations in ritual contexts based on a controversial opinion of Abu Hanifa Nu'man bin Thabit (d. 767). This opinion gave license to Persian speakers to recite Persian-language translations of the Qur'an within their daily prayers, regardless of whether they knew how to perform them in Arabic. Abu Hanifa contended that the Qur'an consisted of the meaning contained within the Arabic linguistic form rather than the linguistic form per se. Moreover, he held that the meaning of the Qur'an was the locus of its inimitable quality. Abu Hanifa's successors Muhammad abu Yusuf (d. 798) and

Muhammad al-Shaybani (d. 804) accepted the recitation of translations in prayer conditionally. They stipulated that people who do not know Arabic may recite in their own language until they learn the Arabic original. Once they know the Arabic version, they must recite in Arabic, given that the miraculous nature of the Qur'an inheres in both its linguistic structure and meaning.<sup>11</sup> In the late Ottoman and early Turkish-republican contexts, virtually all the partisans in debates on translating the Qur'an were Hanafis, and they referred frequently to these early legal opinions of the Hanafi school on Qur'an translations and their ritual use.<sup>12</sup>

Despite juristic concern for Qur'anic Arabic, oral and written translations of the text have played an important role in the teaching and explanation of Islam to non-Arabs since the early years of the Muslim community. Turkic translations of the Qur'an have a long history, dating back to at least the 13th or 14th century,<sup>13</sup> and there are dozens of extant interlinear manuscript translations from the 15th to 19th centuries.<sup>14</sup> Often scribbled below the calligraphic Arabic Qur'anic text, these translations in terms of format make no suggestion of replacing the Qur'an or of being equal to it, nor do they appear to have been used for ritual recitation, as most lack any indication of vowel markings.<sup>15</sup>

Qur'an translation and Turkish-language Qur'anic commentary became issues of discussion for Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals beginning in the late 19th century.<sup>16</sup> As the print-based public sphere expanded between the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the perceived need to understand the Qur'an in one's own language bloomed among the intelligentsia. Just one month after the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908, when press freedoms expanded, a debate erupted on whether Qur'anic commentaries should be composed in Turkish, involving the famous writer and journalist Ahmed Midhat (1844–1912) and the Islamic scholar and future Sheikh ül-Islam Mustafa Sabri (1869–1954).<sup>17</sup>

A Muslim-modernist journal in Istanbul, *Strat-ı Müstakim* (The Straight Path), began to publish Turkish renderings of and commentaries on Qur'anic verses immediately following the 1908 revolution—although without referring to them as “translations.”<sup>18</sup> Musa Jarullah Bigiev, a Russian Muslim reformist who wrote in Turkish and published in the journals of Istanbul, argued that translating the Qur'an was not only permissible but also obligatory.<sup>19</sup> Kılıçzade İsmail Hakkı's manifesto, “Pek Uyanık Bir Uykü” (A Very Vigilant Sleep), envisioned translating the Qur'an into Turkish, along with opening the gate of *ijtihād* and arming every Muslim with “a gun, a thousand rounds, and a bag with three days worth of fresh bread always ready” as measures that would have to be taken to strengthen the empire.<sup>20</sup> Writer Ubeydullah Efgani proclaimed that the fundamental holiness of the Qur'an lay not in its language but rather in its meaning and contended that translating it was a religious obligation.<sup>21</sup> Even the conservative journal *Hayr'ül-Kelam* (The Best of All Speech) published a column that included “translations.”<sup>22</sup> In 1918, Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) penned his famous poem, “Vatan” (Homeland), the first stanza of which envisions ritual in the national language and the use of a “Turkish Qur'an”:

A country where in Turkish the call to prayer is said,  
The meaning of his prayer the villager can understand. . .  
A country in whose schools the Turkish Qur'an is read  
Everyone, young and old, understands the Guide's command. . .  
Oh Turkish son, there is your homeland!<sup>23</sup>

Support for Turkish-language renderings of the Qurʾan was diverse. Not everyone who supported the idea of Qurʾan translation agreed with Gökalp's vision of replacing the Arabic with a Turkish translation and using it to conduct worship in Turkish. In fact, Gökalp was in the minority. A participant in these discussions, Dr. İsmail Hakkı Milaşı, summarized the positions on translating the Qurʾan in the following manner:

One group of people says that there is no benefit in reading words that one does not understand, and that in order to be able to fully understand the rules and the meanings, it is necessary to translate the Holy Qurʾan into Turkish. They contend that it has already been translated into a great number of foreign languages and cannot imagine any impediment to a Turkish translation.

On the other hand, another group opposes translating the Qurʾan to Turkish and argues that the noble meanings can only be articulated in the form of Qurʾanic commentary [*tefsir*]. The most fundamental reason for this opposition is their assumption that some want to use the translation in ritual prayer [*namaz*] and beyond ritual prayer to replace the Arabic original. Actually among those who favor translation, there are some who want translations simply for understanding just as there are others who are of the opinion that it is necessary to recite the Turkish version in place of the Arabic original in ritual prayer and supererogatory prayer [*dua*].<sup>24</sup>

Prior to the foundation of the republic in 1923, several authors published partial Turkish-language works of Qurʾanic commentary, which contained translations of Qurʾanic verses, but no one succeeded in publishing a full-length translation using the word “translation” in the title.<sup>25</sup> In 1914, publisher İbrahim Hilmi tried to distribute an anonymous translation. The attempt to hide the identity of the author—a Syrian Catholic named Zeki Megamiz<sup>26</sup>—precipitated a scandal about providing Muslims with a translation by a Christian. A journal article warned the Sheikh ü-Islam's office about the danger this book posed, and authorities prevented its distribution.<sup>27</sup>

#### 1924: FIRST TRANSLATIONS OF THE NEW REPUBLIC

The concern of the ulema and devout intellectuals about translations of the Qurʾan in the early years of the Turkish republic should be appreciated within the context of the marginalization of the ulema and Islamic institutions that occurred steadily following the Constitutional Revolution of 1908.<sup>28</sup> By April 1924, when the first translations of the Qurʾan appeared, the new regime in Ankara had reorganized the ulema as a compliant Directorate of Religious Affairs (3 March), abolished the caliphate (3 March), eliminated the shariʿa courts (3 March), and closed the *medreses* (15 March).<sup>29</sup> The appearance of Qurʾan translations followed on the heels of these revolutionary changes. As the ulema's political power waned, it appeared possible to the devout that the new regime led by Mustafa Kemal might fundamentally alter or marginalize Islam in Turkey.<sup>30</sup> Worry over who translated the Qurʾan and how they translated it reflected these broader anxieties about the future of Islam under the new regime.

After the foundation of the republic and the destruction of the office of the Sheikh ü-Islam, the ulema establishment lost its ability to block the publication of translations. In 1924, this political shift opened the way for Qurʾan translations, three of which entered the Turkish book market that year. None managed to avoid controversy. The authors had similar backgrounds, all having worked the bulk of their professional lives in the service of the Ottoman state and journalism. Not one of the three had ever

worked within the religious establishment, nor did they have professional training in Qur'anic disciplines. All claimed to perform a religious service and to consult Qur'anic commentaries. Moreover, all referred openly to their works as “translations” (*tercüme*), and each provoked a deluge of criticism.

Both translators and critics claimed to champion the best interests of the people (*halk*). The translators promised to provide accessible texts in simple language to help the Turkish people understand the Qur'an. In contrast, critics saw it as their duty to defend the people from poor-quality translations by unqualified authors and preserve the meaning of the Qur'an as understood by the discipline of Qur'anic commentary.<sup>31</sup>

Private publishers released the first two translations during the first Ramadan of the Turkish republic (April 1924): Süleyman Tevfik's *Kur'an-i Kerim Tercümesi* (Translation of the Noble Qur'an)<sup>32</sup> and Hüseyin Kazım Kadri's *Nur'ul-Beyan* (The Light of Clarification). The first translator, Tevfik (1865–1939), worked for several years as a French-language teacher and then in a variety of minor Ottoman bureaucratic posts until the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, after which he dedicated himself full time to writing and journalism.<sup>33</sup> Tevfik was a prolific translator of French, Arabic, and English texts, and the author of a number of compilations and simplified popular books on sundry topics. His translations include Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*; French novels by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and Émile Zola; and Arabic works, including Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Scholarship) and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Qur'anic Commentary). His corpus numbers more than 150 works, counting both translations and compilations on subjects as varied as fortune-telling, cuisine, history, language, literature, and writing amulets.<sup>34</sup> Tevfik saw himself as a “people's writer” and a “collector of anecdotes.”<sup>35</sup>

Tevfik's translation appeared under three different titles in 1924. Tweaking Tevfik's identity, each version used the pseudonym “Seyyid Süleyman el-Hüseyini,” a pen name he used for many works. In this case as in previous ones, “Seyyid” and “el-Hüseyini” appear to have been chosen to bolster the Islamic credentials of the author, connecting him to descendants of the Prophet's family. In an advertisement of the book published in two different newspapers, the publisher Naci Kasım refers to Tevfik with even more copious honorifics, adding “effendi” (gentleman) and “*hazretleri*” (his grace), a term of extreme deference, to the already inflated “Seyyid Süleyman el-Hüseyini.”<sup>36</sup> These titles seem disproportionate and disingenuous given that most devout intellectuals considered Tevfik to be a literary hack.

Explaining the reason for the publication, publisher Naci Kasım wrote the following in the introduction:

It is impossible for those who do not know Arabic and Persian to understand the noble meaning of the Noble Qur'an that is the light of guidance of the civilized world, impossible to know its commands that guide the way. Though four noble works in Turkish have been published, . . . these were written a century ago, and their archaic style and stilted expressions prevented the students from benefiting from them.<sup>37</sup>

Kasım refers here to the dearth of *tefsir* works in Turkish and the prevalent practice of consulting Arabic and Persian Qur'anic commentaries. He contrasts them with Tevfik's translation that is a “literal translation. . . in a style that everyone can understand.”<sup>38</sup>

This translation met harsh criticism and provoked outright dismissals of Tevfik's character. His previous works on profane and esoteric subjects (including cookbooks published under female pseudonyms and works on sorcery) raised questions as to his credibility to translate the Qur'an. The influential Muslim-modernist journal *Sebilürreşad* (The Path of the Rightly Guided) denounced this translation as a "misguided attempt" by an unqualified and morally suspect author.<sup>39</sup> Rather than analyze the actual translation, *Sebilürreşad* cast doubt on the reliability and moral rectitude of Tevfik. In order to "give you an idea about the translator and commentator," the journal published passages he composed on casting spells, parts of which involved the incantation of Qur'anic verses.<sup>40</sup> The review remarks, "Sorcery is an art, but if it is mixed with Qur'anic commentary it is a great treason against religion and against the Qur'an."<sup>41</sup> Although Tevfik's translation contained nothing related to sorcery, his previous works on the subject disqualified him as a reliable author on Islamic subjects.

*Sebilürreşad's* dismissal of Tevfik demonstrates that an important segment of the devout intelligentsia felt that Qur'an translators should meet the conventional requirements of moral rectitude and reliability that pertained to other Islamic scholarly disciplines, wherein the quality of knowledge is governed by its source and transmitter as well as by content. The journal implicitly defined translation of the Qur'an as part of the scholarly discipline of Qur'anic exegesis. This view differed from the understanding held by the translators and editors of these early republican translations, who viewed translation as standing outside of the Islamic disciplines. For them, translation seemed more a linguistic craft involving the transfer of meanings between languages for which no special Islamic education or face-to-face transfer of knowledge was necessary. They claimed to consult commentaries to assist in their craft, and some even used "*tefsir*" in the title, but they implicitly defined translation as a separate discipline, distinct from but informed by commentary (although reviews demonstrate that the extent to which they actually consulted commentaries is questionable). Translators and publishers invoked the reliability and prestige of respected Qur'anic commentaries to add credibility to their works while disavowing that they themselves qualified or even needed to qualify as commentators.

Süleyman Tevfik's translation was not alone on the market. *Nur'ul-Beyan* (The Light of Explication) by Hüseyin Kazım Kadri (1870–1934) was also released in Ramadan 1924, sparking a commercial rivalry between the two. The publisher, İbrahim Hilmi, had initially intended to publish the book in complete volumes (which he eventually did), but allegedly because some bookstores had heard that *Nur'ul-Beyan* would appear in shorter installments, Hilmi decided to distribute the translation piecemeal. In fact, it seems that Hilmi rushed to publish the book in an incomplete format in order to compete with Tevfik's translation on the book market and ride the initial wave of public interest surrounding the release of the first translation of the Qur'an in the Turkish republic. The publishers of both works placed advertisements in multiple newspapers, creating a commercial buzz that devout intellectuals and ulema found disrespectful and scandalous for the Qur'an.<sup>42</sup>

The publisher attempted to bolster confidence in the reliability of *Nur'ul-Beyan*, indicating that "a committee that has referred to a number of Qur'anic commentaries" had composed it.<sup>43</sup> However, Kadri was the true author, and the committee of other nonspecialists merely proofread the translation. Like Tevfik, Kadri used a pseudonym,

that of “Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani,” a pen name he had used on other works. Kadri had studied at the English trade school in the city of İzmir, where he learned English and French. He obtained knowledge of Arabic and Persian, as well as Latin and Greek, through private tutors.<sup>44</sup> Kadri also had a keen interest in Turkic languages, studying Uygur, Chagatay, and Kazan Tatar.<sup>45</sup> He composed a multivolume Turkish-language dictionary that included examples of words used in “Western Turkish” from other Turkic languages, Arabic, and Persian.<sup>46</sup> During the rule of Sultan Abdülhamit II (r. 1876–1909), Kadri held several bureaucratic positions but left government service in 1904 and dedicated his time to agriculture and study. He joined the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) before its rise to power and held a seat on the central committee chosen during the first annual congress.<sup>47</sup> Kadri cofounded the newspaper *Tanin* (Echo), which became an organ of the CUP. After the 1908 revolution, the CUP appointed him to several governorships. However, Kadri later came into conflict with the party and was exiled to Thessalonica, and he and his family fled to Beirut in 1913.<sup>48</sup> After World War I, Kadri returned to Istanbul, where he became involved in the foundation of several political parties and served as a member of the parliament representing the province of Aydın. He held various positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy during the English occupation and then resigned in 1921.<sup>49</sup>

A bureaucrat, politician, and journalist, Kadri harbored no illusions about his own competency in Islamic fields of knowledge. In the introduction to his translation, he acknowledges his insufficient training in Arabic language, law, prophetic traditions, and Qur'anic commentary, indicating that he referred to several colleagues for assistance on these matters.<sup>50</sup> Kadri explains his motivation for writing a Qur'an translation:

But since the times in which the needs of humankind have multiplied and the security of life has become hard to come by, together with the resulting decrease in interest in the religious sciences, the ability to compose Qur'anic commentaries gradually decreased, and after this the works that were published either relied on earlier works or were written in the form of translations. For a long time, the difficulties of life that have multiplied and intensified in recent times began to make it unfeasible to spend such a long time studying those types of works.<sup>51</sup>

Kadri emphasizes the loss of security and the “difficulties of life” as reasons for the emergence of simplified forms of Qur'anic commentary and translations. Kadri is most likely referring to the Balkan Wars (1912–13), World War I (1914–18), and the Turkish War of Independence (1921–22) as well as the immense loss of life and sundry deprivations that these wars put upon inhabitants of the late Ottoman Empire. For Kadri, Qur'an translation is a substitute for the expansive commentary tradition; it is the genre of hard times:

Therefore, it became necessary to obtain a large amount of information in a short amount of time and, from all quarters, people began to feel the need for a Qur'anic commentary to be written in Turkish for the Turks, which is abridged, beneficial, in line with contemporary good taste, and easy to study.<sup>52</sup>

Since the late 19th century, Ottoman citizens had turned increasingly to secular, European modes of education, leaving less time for Islamic studies. In order to understand the Qur'an, they relied on condensed commentaries, most of which were archaic Turkish-language translations of Arabic and Persian commentaries.<sup>53</sup> Trying to achieve a genre

that provided the benefits of both commentary and translation, Kadri described *Nurʿul-Beyan* as an “explanatory translation” (*tercüme-i tefsiri*).<sup>54</sup> The book’s format provides the Arabic Qurʾanic verse, then its translation, followed by an explanatory passage.

*Nurʿul-Beyan* underwent a level of scrutiny and critique that few Qurʾan translations in history have received. The journal *Sebilürreşad* published a series of detailed articles that enumerated the errors perceived in the translation. Eşref Edip [Fergan], the editor, acknowledged that he respected the translators as persons but argued that they were completely unqualified to attempt a translation of the Qurʾan. In several installments, Edip identified and explained egregious errors, repeatedly asking the translators to acknowledge their mistakes and immediately “pull their hand away from this matter without the slightest protest. . . leaving it to those who are competent.”<sup>55</sup>

On 28 April, the head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Rifat Börekçi, wrote an article warning Muslims that the translations of Tefvik and Kadri contained many mistakes and demonstrated unawareness of the most basic elements of Arabic grammar and the discipline of Qurʾanic commentary.<sup>56</sup> In addition to inaccuracy, Börekçi criticized the quality of Turkish prose in Kadri’s *Nurʿul-Beyan*, arguing that a translation of the Qurʾan, if nothing else, ought to exhibit “the full capacity of expression of the Turkish language.”<sup>57</sup> A Qurʾan translation should be a literary masterpiece, and *Nurʿul-Beyan*, in his view, failed miserably. The negative reception deeply disappointed Kadri, who wrote several responses to his critics.<sup>58</sup>

In September 1924, yet another Qurʾan translation was published, that of Cemil Sait (Dikel) (1872–1942). The son of diplomat and writer Kemal Paşazade Mehmed Sait, Cemil Sait grew up in a literary milieu and published his first article at age thirteen. He attended the prestigious Galatasaray School in Istanbul, where he studied Turkish as well as French, and went on to attend the Ottoman Military Academy. Cemil Sait spent the bulk of his professional career as a military attaché at Ottoman embassies in St. Petersburg and Tehran. In 1908, following the revolution, he returned to Istanbul and reentered the literary scene.<sup>59</sup> He wrote a series of articles in imitation of Montesquieu’s *Lettres Persanes* called “Iran Mektupları” (Persian Letters), in which he criticized current events in Istanbul. He also championed the women’s movement by writing a play and a number of articles in the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women’s World).<sup>60</sup>

Sait argued for the necessity of translating the Qurʾan on the basis of practicality. In the introduction to his translation, he pointed out that Arabic speakers form a minority among the world’s Muslims and that many Muslims are completely incapable of understanding the Qurʾan in Arabic—a standard line of argument in protranslation repertoires. Given the important role of the Turkic peoples in the Muslim *umma*, he lamented the lack of a “literal” (*harfi*) translation in contemporary Turkish.<sup>61</sup> In order to legitimize the need for translation, Sait made a distinction between the commentary and translation genres and argued that traditional commentary provided the most well-known information about the Qurʾan based on the Islamic sciences. However, he continued, conventional commentary does not always inform the reader about the exoteric meaning of the Arabic text so much as it provides the personal interpretation of the commentator. The reader unaware of the exoteric or literal meaning of the original then has no means of evaluating the interpretation in the commentary.<sup>62</sup>

Sait offered translation as a literal rendering of the text’s exoteric meaning that complements conventional Qurʾanic commentary. He disavowed being an interpreter:



“My duty consists of literally translating from Arabic to Turkish. It is known that it is not good for a translator to clarify abstruse or vague points. That duty pertains to the commentators.”<sup>63</sup> Demarcating translation from Qur'anic commentary, Sait suggested that translation does not involve interpretation and that his task is to seamlessly transfer information from one language to another. As much as this view conflicts with the contemporary axiom that *every translation is an interpretation*, his noninterpretive definition legitimized the practice of Qur'an translation for writers without the conventional credentials for *tefsir*. The notion that translation is not interpretation but a technical practice separate and distinct from commentary granted theoretical license for authors of various backgrounds, such as Sait, to engage in Qur'an translation.

Sait's translation met an equally brutal reception in the journals. In addition to his incompetence for the task of Qur'an translation, critics argued that Sait had not actually translated directly from the Arabic.<sup>64</sup> It soon became unanimous that he had composed the translation based on Albert de Biberstein-Kazimirski's French translation, which had circulated for decades in Istanbul.<sup>65</sup> In a memoir, Sait acknowledges that Kazimirski's translation had inspired him and that he composed the work based on “several different translations,” contradicting the statement in his introduction that he had translated from the Arabic original and consulted a number of respected Qur'anic commentaries.<sup>66</sup>

Ahmet Hamdi Akseki (1887–1951), a leading figure in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, excoriated Sait for translating the attributes of God and accused him of committing libel against God for calling the work a “Qur'an translation.”<sup>67</sup> As in the cases of Tevfik and Kadri, Rifat Börekçi, head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, issued a warning to Muslims about Sait's translation:

The work published with the signature of Cemil Sait by the name of *Türkçe Kur'an-i Kerim* has been examined. As it is fundamentally not permissible to say “Turkish Qur'an,” it is also not permissible to rely on this work as a translation of the Holy Qur'an, which, upon comparison with the exalted Qur'an, is clearly distorted from beginning to end. Therefore, we consider it a duty to advise Muslims not to be deceived by such works that are published with various purposes.<sup>68</sup>

Given the high expectations for Turkish renderings of the Qur'an, “[t]hese translations, despite being promoted for some time in gilded advertisements in the daily newspapers, caused a deep disenchantment in everyone.”<sup>69</sup> Most devout intellectuals received the Turkish translations of 1924 with disappointment and outrage. A newspaper in the city of Balıkesir reported an incident in the market in which a man saw someone holding a copy of a translation, which he seized, tore to pieces, and then burned.<sup>70</sup> Reviews characterize these translations as “mistake ridden,”<sup>71</sup> “distorted,”<sup>72</sup> “atrocious,”<sup>73</sup> and “awful.”<sup>74</sup> They describe the translators as “negligent,”<sup>75</sup> “unqualified,”<sup>76</sup> and “incompetent”<sup>77</sup> and characterize their engagement with the Qur'an as “misguided attempts,” “deviations,”<sup>78</sup> and “sin.”<sup>79</sup>

Despite the disappointing debut of the 1924 translations, Börekçi, like many other devout intellectuals, held onto the hope that a suitable translation and commentary could be written: “We are of the opinion that a complete Turkish translation and commentary of the Holy Qur'an are necessary. We think that such a translation and commentary will be very auspicious and useful for our nation.”<sup>80</sup> In an article Eşref Edip, a leading critic, pointed out that if the translations had been of a higher quality, he would have celebrated and commended them. Moreover, he viewed Muhammad 'Ali's

English-language translation of the Qur'an as a model for success, admiring its format, respect for the text in terms of paper quality and binding, and its reception.<sup>81</sup> He wrote that the most noteworthy thing for Muslims was that the English press compared Muhammad 'Ali's translation of the Qur'an with the English-language translations of the Torah and the Gospels, which are exemplars of the English language. In contrast, he viewed the Turkish translation attempts as failures in terms of accuracy and style.<sup>82</sup>

#### THE STATE-SPONSORED TRANSLATION PROJECT

The opposition to uncontrolled translation of the Qur'an mobilized around the 1924 translations, precipitating calls for parliament to sponsor a Qur'an translation project. Producing an accurate, eloquent Qur'an translation now became a "powerful idea among the public."<sup>83</sup> On 21 February 1925, the parliament unanimously decided to fund a project to translate the Qur'an, compose a Turkish-language Qur'anic commentary, and translate al-Bukhari's collection of prophetic reports (hadith, Tr. *hadis*) into Turkish.<sup>84</sup> Edip describes the atmosphere in parliament and the general sentiment about the project:

An exalted comfort, a deep spiritual sensibility had overcome everyone's hearts. This was the spiritual sensibility that brings immense wealth in the midst of all deprivations. There was always a divine joyfulness in the atmosphere of the assembly, which opened with prayers and recitations of the Holy Qur'an and the prophetic reports from the collection of al-Bukhari. There was a deep trust in all hearts that the victory that God had promised to the believers and the determined would certainly come to pass. This spiritual trust and connection gave enthusiasm to everyone.

Those were the times in which hearts had been encouraged by that spiritual joy such that the *translation and commentary of the sacred book and the beloved Prophet's words were considered the most sacred task*, the Qur'an, which, amidst all deprivations, invigorated and sustained the nation against an immense invasion by the Crusaders, saved it from despair and hopelessness, giving the hearts determination and perseverance, and before which the entire nation had sacrificed its wealth, its life, its children, and its spouses. This decision was taken unanimously, and it was desired that the most capable and qualified writers would undertake this task.<sup>85</sup>

In agreement with parliament, the Directorate of Religious Affairs chose Mehmet Akif (Ersoy) (1873–1936) to translate the Qur'an and Muhammed Hamdi Yazır "Elmalılı" (1878–1942) to compose the commentary.

Although his father was a teacher at the Fatih Medrese, Mehmet Akif pursued his formal education in the state public schools (*mektep*) and trained as a veterinarian. After finishing his studies, he worked for the Ministry of Agriculture as a veterinarian and then held several teaching positions. Although Akif obtained extensive knowledge of Islamic disciplines and the Arabic language, he was not a member of the ulema. After the 1908 revolution, Akif cofounded and edited the Muslim-modernist journal *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, which later changed its name to *Sebilürreşad*. Akif published the bulk of his poetry in these journals and became a renowned poet with the sobriquet "the poet of Islam." In 1913, Akif criticized Ziya Gökalp's ideas about nationalism and other antireligious publications of CUP-related intellectuals, provoking a statement of disapproval from the CUP that forced him to leave his teaching post. During World War I, Akif worked on several missions for the Turkish intelligence service (Teşkilat-i Mahsusa) and played an active role in supporting the Turkish War of Independence through public speeches. He

composed the Turkish national anthem as well as a vast corpus of poetry and prose.<sup>86</sup> After the establishment of the republic in 1923, Akif joined the opposition in the Grand National Assembly, placing him at odds with Mustafa Kemal's ruling faction. In October 1923, he began to spend winters in Egypt as the guest of his friend and patron Abbas Hilmi Pasha. Beginning in 1925, Akif resided there permanently.<sup>87</sup>

Mehmet Akif accepted the Qur'an translation project with reluctance. He did not consent to calling the work a "translation" and agreed to participate only with the understanding that the final product would be called a "synopsis" of the meanings (*meal*).<sup>88</sup> He feared that nationalist leaders would attempt to replace the Arabic Qur'an with his translation and use it for ritual purposes.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, he was concerned that the translation would be published without a commentary, leading to unsanctioned interpretation by unqualified persons.<sup>90</sup>

Between 1926 and 1929, Akif worked diligently on the project and completed a preliminary draft, but he refused to submit it, insisting on further revisions. It is likely that Akif decided not to submit his translation in 1928, after parliament eliminated the stipulation in the constitution stating that Islam was the official religion of the Turkish republic.<sup>91</sup> He withdrew from the project and returned the advance that he had received.

However, there remained a great desire on the part of friends, readers, and Mustafa Kemal for Akif's translation. Many attempted to convince him to share it during his final years, but Akif remained firm and refused all petitioners. Leaving Cairo for medical treatment in Istanbul, he instructed his close friend Mehmet İhsan to keep the translation in his possession and to burn the manuscript if he did not return. Akif never returned, and his wishes concerning the manuscript were reportedly fulfilled.<sup>92</sup> The translation of Mehmet Akif has become an object of popular fascination, a landmark work of Islamic scholarship in the Turkish language that only a handful of Akif's close friends ever had the opportunity to read.<sup>93</sup>

Muhammed Hamdi Yazır "Elmalılı" took over the translation project in 1931. Unlike the authors discussed previously, Elmalılı was a distinguished member of the professional religious establishment (*ilmiye*). From the last generation of the Ottoman ulema, Elmalılı possessed a wide range of intellectual and artistic interests. He was a poet, calligrapher, translator, and author. Moreover, Elmalılı studied European philosophy and, in innovative fashion, taught in his *medrese* courses the works of British philosophers John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain as well as French philosophers Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles. He translated these works and published his rendering of Janet and Séailles' *Histoire de la philosophie* in Turkish.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to his intellectual and artistic pursuits, Elmalılı played an active role in politics. He joined the CUP and became a representative of Antalya in the Ottoman parliament. Elmalılı held a number of bureaucratic and teaching positions within the ulema ranks and served as the Minister of Pious Foundations. After the closure of the *medreses* in March 1924, Elmalılı found himself without a job and spent the rest of his days pursuing scholarly projects largely within the confines of his home under difficult financial circumstances. Elmalılı remained highly respected as a scholar, so the Directorate of Religious Affairs chose him to compose the state-sponsored Qur'anic commentary and, later, to take over the translation project.<sup>95</sup>

The introduction to his synopsis of the meanings and commentary, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* (The Religion of God, The Language of the Qur'an), is a remarkable document on the

subject of Qur'an translation. Elmalılı argues with considerable skill and color against the idea that the Qur'an can be translated and outlines his method of composition. In the opening passages of his introduction, Elmalılı spares no rhetorical flourish in condemning reliance on translations:

The one who feels not the pleasure of truth is doomed to his imagination,  
 The one who cannot verify becomes a prisoner to imitation.  
 The one who knows not God embraces the World,  
 The one who knows not the World in a daydream is twirled,  
 The one who embraces a daydream scolds this dimension.  
 The one who sees not his hero swoons at her mention.  
 The one who sees not the beloved faints at her reflection.  
 The one who sees not ahead sobers up at the end of the game.  
 The one who recognizes not the law sobers up in the flame.  
 The one who knows not the Book awakes at the judgment in consternation.  
 The one who understands not the Qur'an meanders in translations.<sup>96</sup>

Although Elmalılı rejected the term "translation" and discouraged reliance upon one, he felt that explaining the Qur'an to people was a duty and that he could not refuse to write commentary and "synopsis" that would assist in that task.<sup>97</sup>

Elmalılı defines translation (*tercüme*) as "expressing the meaning of speech in another language in an equivalent expression."<sup>98</sup> However, he adds further qualifications. A translation is to be equal in all respects:

It must be equivalent to the original expression in clarity and signification, in summary and in detail, in general and in particular, in liberating and in restricting, in strength and in accuracy, in beauty of style, in manner of elucidation, in the production of knowledge, and in craft.<sup>99</sup>

This definition of translation demands no less than perfect semantic equivalence on all registers, for "otherwise it is not a translation; it is a deficient explanation."<sup>100</sup> Elmalılı employs the logic that translation means "perfect replication" in another language to the extent that it can be called by the same name as the original text. Because perfect replication of the Qur'an in Turkish is impossible, Qur'an translation too is impossible.<sup>101</sup>

Elmalılı also suggests that translation should have functional equivalence. He describes the fragility of translation and its ability to evoke contradictory responses in the reader: "The one who reads a translation is frightened at a point where they should be pleased and pleased at a point where they should be frightened: where there should be peace, there is the proclamation of war, where there should be war they move to make peace."<sup>102</sup>

To reinforce the point that only the revealed Arabic text could be considered the Qur'an in any respect, Elmalılı cites Qur'anic verses from which jurists derive the definition of the Qur'an as an Arabic text: "A scripture whose verses are expounded, an Arabic recitation" (Q 41:3). Moreover, he argues that some names of the Qur'an also point to the centrality of the Arabic linguistic form (*naẓm*); *hüküm* refers to the basis of legal rulings on the Qur'anic text, *tenzil* points out that God revealed the Qur'an in Arabic, and *zıkr* affirms the recited, oral nature of the Arabic arrangement of the Qur'an.<sup>103</sup>

Also in the introduction, Elmalılı criticizes unqualified interpreters of the Qur'an who base their reasoning upon translations. He writes, "One should not move to deduce legal rulings or enter discussions on problematic matters saying that this or that Qur'an

translation said such and such.”<sup>104</sup> In order to separate the dilettantes from the experts, Elmalılı lays down a minimum requirement for anyone who wants to write about the Qur'an. He argues that, if nothing else, such a person should be able to correctly read a Qur'anic text that lacks vowel markings. He laments, “But what we see now are people who cannot even properly read a Qur'an *with* vowel markings pretending to do independent reasoning (*içtihad*) based on its rulings and meanings.”<sup>105</sup>

Elmalılı deplored the phrase “*Türkçe Kur'an*” (Turkish Qur'an), which was popularized in Ziya Gökalp's “Homeland” poem and used in Cemil Sait's 1924 translation and in the 1926 edition of Tevfik's translation. In 1932, President Mustafa Kemal spearheaded an experimental campaign to recite Turkish translations of the Qur'an at mosques in selected cities around the country, attempting to realize Gökalp's vision of worship in the national language with a “Turkish Qur'an.” Protests caused the project to be abandoned.<sup>106</sup> Writing only two or three years after this incident, in 1934 or 1935, Elmalılı submitted a version of the introduction to his commentary that included the line “God forbid a Turkish Qur'an!” The editors requested that he remove this line, which he did. However, he replaced it with the interrogative, “Is there such a thing as a Turkish Qur'an, you fool?”<sup>107</sup>

It is clear that Elmalılı did not want his synopsis and commentary to be used for any religious experiments, and the style and format of his text made it unsuitable for such purposes. Many Turks in the late Ottoman and early republican years had envisioned a Turkish translation of the Qur'an similar to Luther's German Bible, that is, a text anyone with a basic education could read and understand in clear, simple Turkish—a Qur'an for every citizen, as expressed in Gökalp's poem cited previously. Elmalılı produced something quite different. Despite his stated intention to write the synopsis in a “plain and terse” style,<sup>108</sup> the translation uses difficult vocabulary as well as complex and inverted sentences.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the introduction contains numerous untranslated, unreferenced quotations from the Qur'an in Arabic script, which he uses to prove points throughout the piece.<sup>110</sup> At times he seems to be writing for an audience that does not need his translation in the first place. In addition, the format is not conducive to reading the translation as an independent text because lengthy commentary passages interrupt and divide the verses.

Rather than an accessible rendering of the meanings of the Qur'an, Elmalılı's magnum opus is an erudite, multivolume work of Qur'anic commentary that includes translations of the verses. It was not the Qur'an for the people that late Ottoman intellectuals had imagined would communicate the meaning of the text in simple language. Elmalılı's *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* is one of the most formidable pieces of Islamic scholarship composed in the Turkish republican period. In recent years, Elmalılı's “interpretation of the meanings” has achieved renown in many circles as the best Turkish translation and continues to serve as a key *tefsir* text in Turkish divinity schools.<sup>111</sup>

## CONCLUSION

At the outset of the Turkish republic, broad support existed for a Turkish-language Qur'an translation or “synopsis” of the meanings, as well as for a Qur'anic commentary. The translations published in 1924 emerged out of private initiative and had no connection to any state project. These translations by nonspecialists roused the Turkish Grand National

Assembly to sponsor a devout intellectual and a member of the late Ottoman ulema to compose a translation and commentary of suitable quality. Contrary to Rashid Rida's view that the Turkish parliament wanted to alter the Qur'an and lead religious people astray, this motion had precisely the opposite intention: to prevent amateur, poor-quality translations that angered Turkish Muslims. The project engaged the expertise of two devout authors who clearly opposed replacing the Qur'an with a Turkish rendering of the text and rejected the very idea of "translating" the Qur'an. The ultimate product, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, took the form of a traditional commentary and did not become canonized as an "authorized version" of the Qur'an in Turkish, nor did it threaten to replace the Arabic Qur'an, as some dreamed and many feared.

Although Rida mischaracterized the impetus and nature of the Qur'an translation project, he and other critics of the early republican government were correct in their suspicions that Mustafa Kemal's regime would attempt to tamper with Islamic ritual. Yet this occurred on a separate timeline and should not be conflated with the sponsorship of a Turkish language *tefsir* and rendering of the Qur'an, an initiative supported by devout intellectuals and ultimately brought to fruition by a respected member of the late Ottoman ulema.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Qur'an 26:195.

<sup>2</sup>Muhammad Rashid Rida, "Tarjama al-Qur'an wa-Tahrif Tarjama lahu wa-l-Tashkik fihi," *Al-Manar* 25 (1924): 794.

<sup>3</sup>Although a few Turkish scholars have devoted considerable attention to the subject, Euro-American scholarship and mainstream Turkish historiography have neglected the topic. Turkish-language studies include Halil Altuntaş, *Kur'an'ın Tercümesi ve Tercüme ile Namaz Meselesi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2001); Düccane Cündioğlu, *Bir Kur'an Şairi*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Gelenek, 2004); idem, *Kur'an Çevirilerinin Dünyası* (Istanbul: Kaknüs, 2005); idem, *Türkçe'de İbadet* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1999); idem, *Türkçe Kur'an ve Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1998); Osman Nuri Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, vol. V (Istanbul: Osman Bey Matbaası, 1943), 1606–38. In English, no book-length study exists on Turkish-language translations in this period. For partial glimpses of the issue, see Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 486–90; John Kingsley Birge, "Turkish Translations of the Koran," *The Moslem World* 28 (1938): 394–99; F. Lyman MacCallum, "Turkey Discovers the Koran," *The Moslem World* 23 (1933): 24–28; S. M. Zwemer, "Translations of the Koran," *The Moslem World* 5 (1915): 244–61. Bernard Lewis briefly mentions the translation project, but, contrary to his account, the project was actually completed, albeit not by the initial translator: Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 415.

<sup>4</sup>Berkes, *Development*, 487; Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, *Atatürk İhtilali* (Istanbul: Burhaneddin Matbaası, 1940), 313; Charles H. Sherrill, *A Year's Embassy to Mustafa Kemal* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 193–96.

<sup>5</sup>Amit Bein, "A 'Young Turk' Islamic Intellectual: Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi and the Diverse Intellectual Legacies of the Late Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 607–25.

<sup>6</sup>See Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-Image* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3–53; also refer to the excellent collection of essays *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'an*, ed. Stephan Wild (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2006).

<sup>7</sup>Qur'an 12:2.

<sup>8</sup>Kevin Reinhart, "Jurisprudence," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippen (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 437.

<sup>9</sup>Qur'an 10:31, 17:88, 52:33–34.

<sup>10</sup>See this excellent article on the subject: Richard C. Martin, "Inimitability," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, [http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=q3\\_COM-00093](http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=q3_COM-00093) (accessed 23 March 2009).

<sup>11</sup>For a review of legal opinions, see Mahmoud Ayoub, "Translating the Meanings of the Qur'an: Traditional Opinions and Modern Debates," *Afkar/Inquiry* 3, no. 5 (1986): 34–39.

<sup>12</sup>İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, *Ma'ani-yi Kur'an: Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Türkçe Tercümesi* (Istanbul: Kitaphane-yi Hilmi Milli Matbaa, 1927), 3–4.

<sup>13</sup>Zeki Velidi Togan, "The Earliest Translation of the Qur'an into Turkish," in *İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* IV (1964): 1–19. Several Turkic translations have been published in transliteration, including Esra Karabacak, *Eski Anadolu Türkçesi Satır-Arası Kur'an Tercümesi: Giriş, Metin, Sözlük ve Tıpkıbasım* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1994), and Mehmet bin Hamza, *XV. Yüzyıl Başlarında Yapılmış Satır-Arası Kur'an Tercümesi*, ed. Ahmet Topaloğlu, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Devlet Kitapları, 1976).

<sup>14</sup>For example, Manuscript Yazma Başlıklar 4845, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.

<sup>15</sup>There are some interlinear translations with vowel markings, such as Manuscript Özel 123, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.

<sup>16</sup>Ahmet Midhat, *Beşair-i Sıdk-ı Nübüvet-i Muhammediye* (Istanbul: Kirk Anbar Matbaası, 1894), 97–98.

<sup>17</sup>Cüendioğlu, *Türkçe'de İbadet*, 27.

<sup>18</sup>İsmail Hakkı Bereketzade, "Necaib-i Kur'aniye," *Sırat-ı Müstakim* 1, no. 2 (1908): 23–26.

<sup>19</sup>Musa Bigiev, *Halk Nazarına bir Niçe Mesele* (Kazan: Mahmud 'Alim Efendi Maqsudov, 1912), 93.

<sup>20</sup>Kılıçzade İsmail Hakkı, "Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku," *İctihad* 4, no. 55 (1913): 1227; idem, "Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku," *İctihad* 4, no. 57 (1913): 1263. For an English translation of this text, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "Garbcılar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic: Appendix," *Studia Islamica* 86 (1997): 150–58.

<sup>21</sup>Ubeydullah Efgani, *Kavm-i Cedid* (Istanbul: Şems Matbaası, 1915), 15–16.

<sup>22</sup>Ömer Nasuhi, "Nasaih-i Kur'aniye" *Hayr'ül-Kelam* 1, no. 4 (1913): 27–29.

<sup>23</sup>Translation is my own. Ziya Gökalp, *Ziya Gökalp Külliyyatı: I. Şiirler Ve Halk Masalları*, ed. Fevziye Abdullah Tansel (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1952), 113.

<sup>24</sup>İsmail Hakkı Milaşlı, "Kur'an-ı Kerim Tercüme Olunabilir Mi?" (Can the Noble Qur'an Be Translated?), *Sebilürreşad* 15, no. 390 (1919): 447.

<sup>25</sup>İsmail Hakkı Bereketzade, *Tefsir-i Şerif Envar-ı Kur'an* (Istanbul: Selanik Matbaası, 1915); Musa Kazım, *Safvet'ül-Beyan fi Tefsir'ül-Kur'an* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1919).

<sup>26</sup>*Kur'an-ı Kerim Tercüme ve Tefsiri* (Istanbul: İbrahim Hilmi, 1914).

<sup>27</sup>Ahmet Şirani, "Kur'an-ı Kerim Tercümesi Hakkında," *Hayr'ül-Kelam* 1, no. 17 (1914): 136.

<sup>28</sup>Amit Bein, "The Ulema, Their Institutions, and Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1924)" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 282–85.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 222–23.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Eşref Edip, "Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Tercümesi," *Sebilürreşad* 23, no. 597 (1924): 386.

<sup>32</sup>Tevfik's translation was also released in the same year under the titles *Zübdet'ül-Beyan* and *Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Tercüme ve Tefsiri*.

<sup>33</sup>M. Sabri Koz, "Mehmed Tevfik ve Süleyman Tevfik," *Müteferrika* Kış, no. 4 (1994): 51.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 52–58, for a bibliography of Tevfik's works.

<sup>35</sup>Düccane Cüendioğlu, "Türkçe Kur'an Çevirilerinin Siyasî Bağlamında Bir Kur'an Mütercimi: Süleyman Tevfik," *Müteferrika* Yaz, no. 13 (1998): 22.

<sup>36</sup>Naci Kasım's advertisement appeared in several newspapers: *İleri*, 7 April 1924; *İkdam*, 7 April 1924; *İleri*, 10 April 1924. See Cüendioğlu, "Süleyman Tevfik," 33.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>39</sup>Eşref Edip, "Kur'an-ı Kerim Tercüme Hakkında," *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 599 (1924): 11.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>Eşref Edip, "Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Tercümesi," *Sebilürreşad* 23, no. 596 (1924): 377.

<sup>43</sup>İbrahim Hilmi, "Nur'ul-Beyan," *Vatan*, 17 Nisan 1924, 5 (advertisement).

<sup>44</sup>Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Hatıralarım*, ed. İsmail Kara (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), 7.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 12, n. 5.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 16–17.

<sup>50</sup>Hüseyin Kazım Kadri under the pen name Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani, *Nur<sup>3</sup>ul-Beyan: Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim'nin Türkçe Tercümesi* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1924), i–ii.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>The two most commonly cited Turkish language *tefsir* works of the period are Mehmet Debbagzade Antebi, *Tefsir-i Tıbyan* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1842) and Husayn b. ʿAli (Waʿiz) al-Kashifi, *Tefsir-i Mevakib Tercüme-i Tefsir-i Mevahib*, trans. İsmail Ferruh (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1865).

<sup>54</sup>Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani (Hüseyin Kazım Kadri), “Hazret Şeyh’in Sebil’e İlk ve Son Cevabı,” reprinted in “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim Tercümeleri Hakkında,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 599 (1924): 8.

<sup>55</sup>Edip, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim’in Tercümesi,” 386–89; idem, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim Tercümeleri Hakkında,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 599 (1924): 8–11; “Kur<sup>3</sup>an Tercümelerindeki Hatalar,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 601 (1924): 35–37.

<sup>56</sup>Rifat (Böreççi), “Beyan-ı Hakikat Müslümanlara,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 599 (1924): 7–8.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>58</sup>See his response to the Directorate of Religious Affairs: Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani, “Bazı İzahat-ı Mühimme,” in *Nur<sup>3</sup> ul-Beyan*, Appendix, 2–7.

<sup>59</sup>Cemil Sait (Dikel), “Bir Kur<sup>3</sup>an Mutercimi Cemil Said’in Kendi Kaleminden Özgeçmiş,” ed. Dücan Cündioğlu, *Dergah*, IX, no. 100 (1998): 46.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Cemil Sait (Dikel), *Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim Tercümesi* (İstanbul: n.p., 1924), 3.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>64</sup>Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, “Türkçe Kur<sup>3</sup>an Namındaki Kitabın Sahibi Cemil Said’e,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 624 (1924): 404.

<sup>65</sup>This popular French translation was Albert de Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Le Koran* (Paris: Charpentier, 1832). It was reprinted subsequently in sundry editions.

<sup>66</sup>Sait, “Bir Kur<sup>3</sup>an Mutercimi Cemil Said’in Kendi Kaleminden Özgeçmiş,” 47.

<sup>67</sup>Akseki, “Türkçe Kur<sup>3</sup>an,” 404.

<sup>68</sup>Rifat (Böreççi), “İkaz,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 620 (1924), 349.

<sup>69</sup>Şeref Kazım, “Yeni Neşriyat: Kur<sup>3</sup>an Tercümeleri,” *Mihrab* 1, no. 1 (1924): 352.

<sup>70</sup>“Yeni Tefsircilerden Müslümanların Ricası,” *Sebilürreşad* 24, no. 602 (1924): 64.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Böreççi, “İkaz,” 349.

<sup>73</sup>Böreççi, “Beyan-ı Hakikat,” 8.

<sup>74</sup>Edip, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim’in,” 599: 11.

<sup>75</sup>Böreççi, “Beyan-ı Hakikat,” 8.

<sup>76</sup>Edip, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim’in,” 599: 11.

<sup>77</sup>Edip, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim’in,” 597: 386.

<sup>78</sup>Edip, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an Tercümelerindeki,” 601: 37.

<sup>79</sup>“Yeni Tefsircilerden,” 64.

<sup>80</sup>Böreççi, “Beyan-ı Hakikat,” 7.

<sup>81</sup>Muhammad ʿAli, *The Holy Qur<sup>3</sup>an: Containing Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* (Woking, U.K.: Islamic Review Office, 1917).

<sup>82</sup>Edip, “Kur<sup>3</sup>an-ı Kerim’in,” 597: 387.

<sup>83</sup>Cündioğlu, *Bir Kur<sup>3</sup>an*, 107.

<sup>84</sup>*Türk Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, II. İntihab Devresi, İkinci İctima Celse, 2 February 1925 (Ankara: T.B.M.M. Matbaası), 210–27.



<sup>85</sup>Eşref Edip Fergan, *Mehmed Akif: Hayati-Eserleri ve 70 Muharririn Yazıları* (Istanbul: Asari İlmiye Kütüphanesi Neşriyatı, 1938), 187. Emphasis added.

<sup>86</sup>Ertuğrul Düzdağ and M. Orhan Okay, "Mehmed Akif Ersoy," in *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 432–34.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Fergan, *Mehmet Akif*, 190.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 201.

<sup>90</sup>Ruhi Naci Sağdıç, "Kur'an Tercemeleri Münasebetiyle Mehmed Akif Merhum Hakkında Hatıralar," *Sebilürreşad* 11, no. 2 (1958): 281–83.

<sup>91</sup>Cüendioğlu, *Akif*, 129–30.

<sup>92</sup>Düzdağ and Okay, "Mehmet Akif Ersoy," 434.

<sup>93</sup>Fergan, *Mehmet Akif*, 186–205. Cüendioğlu has compiled translations of verses that Akif published in various works, but these are not synonymous with the complete translation that was reportedly burned: Dücane Cüendioğlu, *Mehmed Akif'in Kur'an Tercümeleri* (Istanbul: Kaknüs, 2005).

<sup>94</sup>Bein, "The Ulema," 209.

<sup>95</sup>Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi," in *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 57–58. Very little has been written on Elmalılı in English. On Elmalılı's understanding of the concept "religion," see Ahmet Karamustafa, "Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır's Philosophy of Religion (1848–1946)," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 19 (2001): 273–79. Susan Gunasti's doctoral dissertation in progress (Princeton University) on Elmalılı's commentary will provide a much needed study of Elmalılı, his magnum opus, and late Ottoman *tefsir* works.

<sup>96</sup>Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili: Yeni Mealli Türkçe Tefsir* (Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Ebüzziya, 1935), 9. The translation is my own. I have altered the original format in order to accentuate the rhyme pattern.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Willis Barnstone, *Poetics of Translation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 16.

<sup>102</sup>Elmalılı, *Hak Dini*, 12.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>106</sup>Cüendioğlu's *Türkçe Kur'an ve Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi* describes this campaign in detail.

<sup>107</sup>Elmalılı, *Hak Dini*, 15; Cüendioğlu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 65.

<sup>108</sup>Elmalılı, *Hak Dini*, 16.

<sup>109</sup>Cüendioğlu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 65.

<sup>110</sup>Elmalılı, *Hak Dini*, 15.

<sup>111</sup>Nearly all recent printings of *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* translate the work into contemporary Turkish through the process of "simplification" (*sadeleştirme*) to facilitate the language for contemporary readers. For example, see Elmalılı M. Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili: Mealli*, ed. Sadık Kılıç and Lütfullah Cebeci (Ankara: Akçağ, 2006).