

# Lives of others in Turkish: A bibliography of biography in Turkey (1800- 2020)

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This paper proposes an overview of an ongoing bibliography project funded by Boğaziçi University that lists biographies translated into Turkish and published in book form between the years 1800 and 2020. Here the term biography is used with reference to its modern Western connotation; it refers to works that focus on the life story of a single individual using a chronological and objective narrative (for a detailed discussion on modern biography, please see Maurois 1930). The Turkish literary system is assumed to have met the initial examples of this form of life-writing in the early 1800s, a few decades before the late-Ottoman reformation period known as Tanzimat (1839-1876) began. Until then, the receiving system was dominated by several local forms of life-writing, such as *tezkire* (collected biographies of Ottoman poets), *menakıbnâme* (biographies that compile the stories and legends about important historical figures) and *siyer* (prophet biographies), each of which departed from modern biography in various aspects (İpekten 2002; İsen 2010).

The presentation will first introduce the research questions that the project aims to shed light on. Some of these are: Are there any region(s), profession, ideology, publishing house, biographer, and translator that stand out? Are there any individuals whose life stories repetitively appeared in translated biography; if so, did these translations trigger the production of indigenous biographies of the same individuals? What is the position of the so-called uncommon forms of translation –such as indirect translation and intralingual translation- in the list? With these questions in mind, the presentation will pursue with the making of the bibliography, which currently includes up to 1000 titles. The method used during the selection, categorization, and documentation of the data will be introduced. Thirdly, a quantitative analysis of the bibliography will be offered. Here the current statistics about biography in the Turkish literary system will be proposed under several headings: 1) the period: the year of publication; 2) the naming: series titles; biography titles; the transcription of proper names; 3) the language: directness/indirectness of the translations; the language of the original biographies; intralingual translations and/or retranslations of the biographies that were published before the Turkish Language Reform, 4) the biography subjects: their epoch, region, and work field; 5) the target setting: the producers (publishing houses that publish biography and agents involved) and keepers (libraries/catalogues that include biographies). In line with these headings, the presentation will list several possible cases that the bibliography suggests for qualitative research. Some of these concern: a) the initial encounter(s) of the receiving system with biography; b) the periods during which biography was widely produced; c) the biography subjects that recurrently appear in the list; d) the position of intralingual translations in the list.

The paper concludes with the future implications of the bibliography project for research in life-writing, historiography, imagology, and transfer studies. It also highlights the potential benefits of bibliographies in translation research in general.

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