TRANSLATIONS OF LITERATURE AND WORKS ON SOCIAL SCIENCES FROM GREEK INTO TURKISH
(1990 – 2011)

In the framework of the mapping of translation in the Mediterranean, co-produced by the Anna Lindh Foundation and Transeuropéennes in 2011

Data collection, analysis and write-up
Hakan Özkan

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Preamble

The following study is conducted by Transeuropéennes in partnership with the Anna Lindh Foundation (Translating in the Mediterranean). It is a component of the first mapping of translation in the Mediterranean, led since 2010 by Transeuropéennes and the Anna Lindh Foundation (Euro-Mediterranean program for translation), in partnership with over fifteen organizations from all over the Union for the Mediterranean.

Sharing a common and wider vision of translation, of the central role that it must play in Euro-Mediterranean relationships, in the enrichment of languages, in the development of societies, in the production and circulation of knowledge and imaginaries, the partners gathered around this project shall use this inventory as a basis to formulate and take long term actions.

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Bibliography
Introduction

This study will provide a quantitative and qualitative survey of translated Greek books published in Turkey over the last 21 years (1990-2011). In the first instance, it comprises a purely quantitative inventory of translated works sorted by year (see appendix) and secondly it tries to find trends in translations and reasons for these trends if any. The translated works under study comprise the domains of literature and humanities (history, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy etc.). The term literature in this study shall be understood in a broader sense comprising all books and writings not only literature as art, belles lettres.

I excluded the countless translations of Ancient Greek works that are being reprinted or retranslated in Turkey since decades. More to Ancient Greek books translated into Turkish can be found in the next section on the history of translation of Greek works into Turkish. As opposed to this I included all books written during the Byzantine period.

This research draws on five main sources. The first is a thorough but study of Greek fiction translated into Turkish (1990-2006) written by Ekaterini Kayadelen, a graduate of Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Her study which was accepted as a Master's thesis in 2007 contains ample information about publishing, translators and the social, political, and cultural background of translation of Greek titles into Turkish.¹ The second source is an article on Greek literature translated into Turkish written by Damla Demirözü, assistant professor at Ankara University, and Alexandros Petsas, lecturer of Turkish language and researcher at the Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki.² The third source is an article on Greek literature translated into Turkish written by Aristotelis (Ari) Çokona for a Turkish journal for translation studies (Çevirmenin Notu).³ The fourth source is the translator Ari Çokona himself who on various occasions provided me with useful information on the status of translators from the Greek language into Turkish and the quantitative as well as qualitative evolution of translations from Greek into Turkish over the last 5 decades. The last but not least important source or better sources are the detailed databases of the Greek National Book Centre (EKEBI), Unesco’s Index Translationum, online databases of Turkish libraries, a list of Greek titles in Turkish

¹ Ekaterini Kayadelen, Greek Fiction Translated into Turkish 1990-2006, Boğaziçi University 2007. She published her work in 2010 with Lambert Academic Publishing, a books-on-demand publisher based in Germany. I used the printed thesis in the Boğaziçi University.
drawn up by the Sismanoglio Institute in Istanbul and the databases of online bookstores as well as the book market.

1. Historical survey of translated Greek books in Turkey (until 1989)

Interest in books translated from the Modern Greek language grew only gradually over the last decades.

Notable exceptions are philosophical, historical, political and literary works that have been translated from Ancient Greek into Turkish during a short period in the 1940s. It was the establishment of the official Tercüme Bürosu (Translation Agency) in 1940 that paved the way for extensive translation of World Classics and among those Ancient Greek works into Turkish. Between 1940 and 1946 the Tercüme Bürosu has translated 63 Ancient Greek titles into Turkish. Apart from that among the 698 translations that were published in the journal of the Tercüme Bürosu 99 translations were made from Ancient Greek texts. These texts have been reprinted many times over the last 7 decades.

In addition to the works translated by the Tercüme Bürosu a considerable number of new translations of Ancient Greek texts have been published over the last decades. To give an indicative example Platon’s Πολιτεία was published by different publishers 20 times over the last 11 years. In most instances these are not reprints but completely new translations.

Many times it is impossible to ascertain if and to which extent these translations were based on the original Ancient Greek version or on intermediary languages as English, French and German. The same is true for books written in Modern Greek that are the main subject of this study.

Let us now turn to books in Modern Greek. Intellectuals in Turkey discovered Greek literature at the beginning of the 20th century only when these works began to be appreciated and translated in the Western world. Poetry played a preponderant role in this respect. The initial moment was E.M. Forster’s essay written in 1919 where he introduces Konstantinos Kavafis and his work to the world. Further landmarks for the recognition of Greek literature in the world are the Nobel prizes for the poets Giorgos Seferis (1963) and Odysseas Elitis (1979) and the Lenin prizes for the poet

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4 See Çokona 2008.
5 A similar case is Socrates’ Apology which was published 22 times over the last 10 years.
Kostas Varnalis (1959) and the novelist Yannis Ritsos (1977).

In Turkey the first work translated into Turkish was not a collection of poems but sections of a novel by Stratis Mirvilis that have been published in number 9 of the literary magazine Varlık in 1933. Avram N. Papazoğlu who was the translator of this section translated also 20 other Greek texts in various Turkish literary magazines. The first complete book to be translated from Greek into Turkish was the novel Πάππας Ιωάννα by Emanuel Rhoidis in 1943. This novel was not translated from the original language but via its German translation. The first three translations made directly from the Greek original were all published in one year –1962. Curiously enough every single one of these works belongs to different literary genres: one of them is a novel, one a theatre play, and the third a collection of poems.

Behçet Necatigil, a poet and literary critic, notes that Greek literature of the 1960s made the impression of a dynamic movement that was capable of depicting the social and political events of that period and therefore interesting for the Turkish reading public. In spite of Necatigil’s evaluation the 1960s only produced 8 translations. In the 1970s translations totalled the number of 21 works of which 7 were books written by Nikos Kazantzakis. In the 1980s 24 works have been published most of them novels among others by Giannis Ritsos. During this period the first non-fiction books came on the market: Both were history books, one written by the former Greek Prime Minister, Andreas G. Papandreou, who gives an account of the military coup in Greece and the democratization process after the junta regime; themes that were of great interest in Turkey, too where the army seized power in 1980 and effectively ruled the country. The other book is a short history of Greece published in 1988.

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7 See Çokona 2008.
8 Emanuel Rhoidis, Kadın Papa Yoanna, translator: Asım Çalıkoglu, Istanbul 1943.
10 Aleksandros Matsas, Krezüs (Üç perdelik dram), (Κρεζύς), translator: Yorgi Horasanoğlu, Istanbul 1962.
12 Behçet Necatigil, Balkan Ulkeleri Edebiyatlanndan Türkçe Çeviriler, “Translations from the literatures of Balkan countries into Turkish”, In: Türk Dili, Çeviri Sorunları Özel Sayısı, TDK yayını, 1 Temmuz 1978, p. 150.

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2. Publishing

2.1 Published translations since 1990

Compared to the 53 translations that were published over 30 years from 1960 until 1989 the number of 239 translations in the 21 following years from 1990-2011 is overwhelmingly high. Of these 192 belong to fiction and 49 to non-fiction.

In the production of novels the Turkish market with 112 items surpassed the total number of novels translated from Greek in the German market by one title. The different genres of literature are represented as follows: Novels that form the biggest group with 112 titles, are followed by poetry with 31 titles, 24 children books, 10 collections of short stories, 10 theatre plays, four titles with different types of prose, two prose anthologies and one anthology of poetry.

Non-Fiction: the largest group of this domain is history where we find 27 titles. Five books belong to art history or art in general; five books to Byzantine literature (not about Byzantine history but the actual historiographical works of that period as for example the Alexiad by Anna Komnene); two books deal with socio-political issues; two are language-related: one grammar and one Greek-German-Turkish textbook; three works are related to archaeology; two titles deal with food and gastronomy; two are biographies, and one is a book on contemporary politics.

Why did the number of publications raise beginning with the nineties? The Nobel prices for the poets Seferis (1963) and Elitis (1979) were certainly no catalysts as I suggested in the case of Arab literature and Mahfuz in 1988 (Özkan, 2010:3). Opposed to my view of that time, I now seriously doubt that the reason for the rise of translations of Arab literature and other literatures in Turkey of the 1990s was that much related to international literary prizes – it seems that a general trend is at work here.

Returning to Greek translations, we see that only in the first three years of the 1990s the number of translated Greek books already exceeded the total number of publications in the 80s. It was very practical for the present study that Kayadelen, too, set the starting point of her study to 1990. This stands in contrast to this study where the time frame of 20 years (1990-2010) was set by default by Transeuropeennes in order to compare the translation activities in
different countries. Kayadelen instead explains her choice as follows: substantial changes in world politics and other major events following the end of the Cold War affected the Turkish-Greek relations. Three of these events led to a more conscious definition of bilateral relations between the two countries: the Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996, the Cyprus missile crisis in 1997/8 and the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 (Kayadelen 2007:5-6). I share her opinion as far as Turkish-Greek political relations are concerned, i.e. both countries tried to find their place and define themselves against the respective other in a Post-Cold-War environment.

Apart from the political events during the 1990s Kayadelen also mentions the rapprochement of the two countries that followed the earthquakes which ravaged Istanbul and Athens in 1999 and television serials after 2004 that involved Turkish and Greek individuals and were equally popular in both countries. The most important serial was Yabancı Damat (The Foreign Groom) or in Greek Ταζύνορα της αγάπης (The Borders of Love) which was aired in Turkey from 2004 to 2007 and in Greece from 2005 to 2008. These events which lie in the 2000s may indicate (against the view of Kayadelen) that the 2000s mark a more important point in breaking the dam for better relations between Greeks and Turks.

Despite these facts I doubt that the rapid evolution of translations from Greek into Turkish is a direct result of these developments in the sphere of politics and TV culture. Apart from the present study of translations from Greek and my recent study on Arabic, probes into the Turkish book market indicate that translations from other minor languages to Turkish rose altogether in the 1990s and even more in the 2000s. A look at the data presented by Pekünlülü (2010) on Turkish translations from German, French, Italian, and Spanish confirm this assumption. Now, to which extent catalysts as international literary prices or politic detente played a role in these developments is difficult to ascertain and even more difficult to quantify.

It would be interesting to conduct research into the direction of intrinsic factors within Turkey (political change, democratization process, EU membership talks, open discussion on minority questions) that sparked the interest of Turks in other literatures, other cultures, other views on history, ethnic identities, and other discourses.

A simple example is the growing interest in ethnic food, ethnic music, ethnic identity in Turkey that grew in the last 20 years. The label Kalan Müzik that is internationally famous for its collection of ethnic music of Turkey for example was founded in 1991.

Another probably even more important factor is the increasing competition between publishers and their ever higher degree of professionalization. Adnan Özer, who was the editor for Gendaş Kültür and Özgür confirms this supposition. Part of this professionalization was that publishers did not anymore rely on their own limited scope of the literatures of the world but employed
knowledgeable editors who helped them in choosing promising titles and following the translation process.

2.1.1 Literary Genres

It comes as no surprise that novels are the biggest group as they guarantee higher return than the other genres. The author with the highest number of published titles is Nikos Kazantzakis (12 titles) followed by Dido Sotiriou with five titles.

Another genre that attracts greater interest of the publishers are children books that become increasingly important. In the last six years (2005-2011), they published 19 of the 24 titles (1990-2011).

The translation of poetry virtually boils down to the following two poets, Konstantinos Kavafis (8 books) and Yannis Ritsos (13 books) whose poems are reprinted or retranslated and published, though not always from the original language.

Surprisingly the next important group are theatre plays which count 10 publications. Most of these were produced by one publisher, Mitos Boyut, who specializes in Turkish and international drama.

Short stories are the fourth group together with plays in terms of number of titles but not near that important as the three genres mentioned enumerated further up.

2.2 Publishers

In literature proper a total of 66 publishers printed translated Greek literature. Held against the 192 titles this nearly equals three books per publisher.

Ekaterini Kayadelen lists following biggest publishers of Greek Literature in her study: Belge (19 publications), Can (15), Doğan (8), Literatür (7), İletişim (5), İnkılap (5) , and Pencere (3), (Kayadelen 2007:34). Further down she lists other publishers that also published Greek books in translation although on a smaller scale: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları (3); Yapı Kredi Yayınları, Cem, Epsilon, Everest, Kitap, Arion, Albatros, Scala, Gendaş Kültür (2 each).

The present study confirms Kayadelen’s data and also the order of the largest publishers is nearly the same. However, as Kayadelen refers to fiction and the years 1990-2006 only, the
numbers of publications vary in this study which spans the years between 1990-2011 and covers all genres of literature as well as non-fiction:

Belge (20 literary titles and 9 titles in non-fiction), Can (18 literary), Doğan (10 literary), İletişim (5 literary, 5 non-fiction), Literatür (6 literary, 2 non-fiction), İnkılap (6 literary, 1 non-fiction), and Pencere (6 literary).

Kayadelen did not include Mitos Boyut (6 publications) into her list as this publisher only printed theatre plays. Furthermore she does of course not mention all the major publishers who published poetry as for example Adam (6 publications). Main publishers of children literature are Alfa Basım (5), Altun (8), Ayrıntı (7).

As Kayadelen points out the publisher Belge Yayınları has a dedicated programme to Greek literature (Kayadelen 2007:38). Belge brought also the series Marenostrum into life that “aims to represent the multicultural aspects of Turkey and create a feeling of unity between the peoples living in the Mediterranean region” (Kayadelen 2007:38-9). The series does not only include literary works but also non-fictional works, mainly monographs on history and art. Can Yayınları instead focuses on literature, and within literature only on prose titles. They do not publish Greek poetry or theatre plays. Can is the only publisher that first searches for books to translate and then commissions the translator. All the other publishers Kayadelen interviewed rely on the translators to recommend them books that are of interest (Kayadelen 2007:39). My research confirms this view, although in some cases (Gendaş for example) when the editors are specialized let us say in Hispanic literature they themselves choose the title to be translated and commission the translator afterwards.

As it is the case with many publishers who translate Arab literature into Turkish Greek titles are often translated because they were successful internationally, i.e. have been translated into the main Western languages (English, German, French). Can, Cem and other publishers often also have these works translated via intermediating languages. Especially famous books like the works of Kazantzakis are not translated from the Greek original but from English or French. Ender Gürol for example who works as a translator from English and French and not Greek translated two works of Kazantzakis for Cem Yayınları. Another very easy method of selecting books to translate is to reedit and retranslate works that have already been published before by other publishers. Almost all novels by Kazantzakis are being published in this way.

In Greek literature the impulse to translate a given book almost always comes from the translators who are knowledgeable about the Greek book market. These translators who fulfil the function of literary scouts are the principal innovators when it comes to discover and
suggest new books that have not yet been known internationally. Editors and publishers often rely on their expertise. Kayadelen states that some publishers are being proposed books by friends or discover themselves books in the Frankfurt Book Fair for example and take them home to have them read by friends who are bilingual Rum (Orthodox Greeks of Turkey) or by a translator. After that they assess if it is worth to publish it (Kayadelen 2007:43-44).

What makes a book interesting to the publishers? Or do they follow idealistic motives as Belge in their Marenosrum series?

A mere look at the genre with the highest number of titles already gives a first evident response to this question: Novels sell better than poetry. The sales argument is obviously decisive because all publishers are profit-oriented in the first instance and they look for titles with potential to sell well. Publishers claim that a book which has been promoted and advertised well will sell considerably better than other books. Even if the latter books be of very good quality and successful in other countries they will not sell without the appropriate marketing.

But what do publishers and editors think would sell well? As to novels many stress the importance of the plot. Kayadelen notes that some editors, as Abdullah Yılmaz of Literatür, deem it important that the characters in the novels include Turks and Greeks who "have lived together, who have fought, made peace and have a passion to understand each other" (Kayadelen 2007:45).

As is obvious from the bibliography of published translations, shared memories and places are of very high importance, too: Titles like the one of the novel Loksandra - Istanbul Düşü (Loksandra - Istanbul dream) by Maria Yordanidou are typical for this tendency to emphasize shared places. The mentioned novel by Yordanidou is especially interesting because the original title in Greek makes no mention of “Istanbul dream” but has only Λωξάνταρα. This mentioning of known places makes the novel at once interesting for the possible readership. Thus, it is believed that shared memories, shared places, a common past and similarities make these works interesting for the Turkish readership. The TV serial Yabançı Damat mentioned further above is an eloquent exemplification in the area of popular culture of this interest in what Turks and Greeks share and in which aspects they are different.

Kerem Ünüvar, editor for İletişim, sees the preference for works that refer to Turkey as a defect. He advocates a broader view of Greek literature and expresses his wish that Turks be interested by Greek literature and culture in its own right (Kayadelen 2007: 46).

In non-fiction this tendency is also palpable as most of the works translated into Turkish are history books that present the Greek view of history: Dimitris Kitsikis is a turcologist and
professor for geopolitics and international relations in Ottawa and the author of History of the Ottoman Empire (İletişim). He presents a well-pondered and balanced view of the Ottoman Empire which is not usual in Greek history books. It may be no surprise that Turkish publishers chose his take on the Ottoman history and not that of one of the nationalist historians who follow a political agenda behind their research. As conclusion: İletişim presents to the Turkish readership an account of Ottoman history that would rather please them and make think good of the Greeks in general and the Greek academic world in particular.

This does not mean that Turkish publishers shrink away from presenting bitter messages from Greek authors. Some books depict the hardships that Greeks endured in the last century of the Ottoman Empire. The book Hacıustalar: Akdağmadeni’nden Aridea’ya bir mübadele öyküsü (Hacıustalar: From Akdağmaden to Aridea, a population exchange story) by Argiris Petronotis (İstanbul, 2004) is one example for this.

3. Dissemination and availability

Greek literature is not as widely available as US American, English, French and Latin American literature. A spontaneous check in bookstores in downtown Istanbul shows that titles from the above literatures are easier to find than their Greek counterpart. Print runs usually amount to 1000 or 2000. Famous titles as Kazantzakis’ books are an exception to this rule. A surprise was the bestseller İzmir Büyücüleri –άγιας ης Σμήνης (The Witches of Izmir) which turned out to be a huge success with 50,000 sold copies although it contains passages that describe Turks as:

“snakes always eager to seize their opportunity to snatch away the readily available, your bread and everything that you earned arduously.”

“Türkler her zaman hazır olandan, senin emeğinden, kazancından yemek için bekleyen ve fırsat kollayan bir yılın gibi oradaydilar.” (Meimaridi 2006:18)\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) In July 2006 the publisher and the editor of the book were put to trial as per the article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code which makes it illegal to insult the Turkish Nation. Behind the trial for Meimaridi’s book, as for almost all the trials that are filed according to this article, is a ultra-nationalist Kemalist lawyers’ group lead by lawyer Kemal Kerinçsz. The AKP government submitted an amendment to the article which was approved by the Turkish parliament in April 2008 making it now impossible to file a trial without preceding consent by the Ministry of Justice. Additionally the new article is limited in its application and contains reduced punishments for convicts.
Prices usually range from 3 TL (1.5 €) as for example the anthology *Ege’nin karşı yakasından – Çağdaş Yunan Edebiyat Seçkisi* translated by Ari Çokona to 60 TL (30 €), the history book *Ürgüp-Prokopi* written by Evangelia Balta and published by Birzamanlar. Nowadays online bookstores in Turkey (idefix.com, kidap.com.tr, netkitap.com) with big and diversified stocks makes it a lot easier to get Greek literature than in the bookstore around the corner. Still, often you have to know what you are looking for because even booksellers on the Internet do not always provide advanced search methods where you can narrow down your search to Greek literature only. The reason for this is that booksellers do not catalogue books precisely enough. Even university libraries that hold up modern standards like the Boğaziçi University library lack the appropriate tools in their online and offline search routines to easily find Greek literature.

4. Media and critical reception

Turkey has a very lively and swift media and critical reception of new literary works that come out. Of course this includes Greek literature, too, but they rarely mention the quality of the translation and even less they appreciate the fact that a work has been translated from the original language.

A notable exception is Ali Kırkar’s review of a play written by Yakovos Kambanellis *Savaş Baba* (*Ο μπαμπάς o πόλεμος*) and translated by Panayot Abacı. Kırkar, who is also the director of the Turkish version of the play in Turkey, praises Abacı for giving life to the Turkish version and rendering the subtexts duly (Kırkar 2002: 66-67).

There are a number of literature magazines that publish reviews on literature. Apart from that some major newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* and *Radikal* have works of literature reviewed by critics on a weekly or daily basis. The national TV broadcaster TRT presents new titles in at least two weekly programs.

A website on literature with the name www.sabitfikir.com (obsession) has a big section reserved for book reviews that are written by writers and critics.

Some internet booksellers as www.kidap.com.tr publish reviews released by newspapers, magazines and other websites on the page of the corresponding book that they offer for sale.
5. Funding and Support

Greek-Turkish translations are eligible for EU funding (EU Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency)\(^\text{16}\). According to one of the most productive editors of Greek literature, translation of Greek works into Turkish did not receive financial support by any EU institution or by Greek governmental and non-governmental bodies.

6. Translators

The renowned translators that translate directly from Greek into Turkish can be classified into two groups. Firstly Orthodox Greeks with Turkish nationality (tr. Rum) that were raised in Turkey (Ari Çokona, Herkül Millas, İro Kaplangı, Kosta Sanoğlu, Kriton Dinçmen, Panayot Abaci) and secondly Muslim Greek speakers from Crete (Ahmet Yorulmaz, Müfide Pekin). Most of the first group went to Greek schools in the various districts of Istanbul (Beyoğlu, Fener, Arnavutköy, Büyükada, Karaköy) and are bilingual.

Finding a translator is easy for publishers who want to have books translated into Turkish. Either they know them for years and befriend them or they ask their entourage to be introduced to new translators (Kayadelen 2007:48). This “friendship” between translator and publisher is not necessarily a positive factor in terms of professionalism. Effectively these relations can turn against the interests of the translators when the latter become subject to paternalism by the publishers and work in a constant state of unawareness of what rights they have (Ergüden 2002). Even if they know their rights (the Translators’ Association Çevbir lists these rights on their website\(^\text{17}\)) their position is too weak to claim these rights against the publishers.

The situation of the established Greek translators, however, is not as bad as that for other translators who translate from other languages. The privileged Greek-to-Turkish translators benefit from the reputation that they built over the years and/or they manage to turn the “friendship” with the publisher to their benefit. Most of these established translators are not professionals in the sense that they do not live exclusively on the revenue that produces their translation activity. Most of them are high-school teachers for the Greek language.


Apart from these established translators that represent an older generation of Rum, a new generation of translators emerged in the last years: Turks who learned Greek in Greece or at university. One of them is Suat Baran, who translated three novels.

As Turkish publishers and their editors generally do not look at the source text they trust the translators that their translations are accurate. As far as the target language is concerned, however, they may interfere when they think the style does not comply with their perceptions of appropriate, literary or simply good Turkish. Zarakolu from Belge is the only publisher who stresses the importance of the source text and indicates that he has the translated books checked by other translators (Kayadelen 2007: 53).

7. Learning Greek in Turkey

As mentioned further above, Greek language alongside with Turkish is taught in the Greek primary and secondary schools in Istanbul. However, the number of pupils has decreased enormously over the last century. While in 1923 the number of pupils totalled 2,280 this number fell to 214 pupils in 2010.\(^{18}\)

At university level, two state universities, Ankara University and Istanbul University, instruct in Modern Greek language and literature without giving special training in translation. The Sismanogliou Center which is attached to the Greek consulate in Istanbul offers courses of Greek language throughout the year. The foreign language departments of some universities like Galatasaray University in Istanbul offer summer courses for students and externals. Apart from that, private schools that teach Greek rose in number over the last years.

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