

CHAPTER 36

TRANSLATIONS OF THE
 QUR'AN: ISLAMICATE
 LANGUAGES

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FROM al-Azhar's burning of Ahmadiyya translations in 1925 and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's experiments with reciting Turkish translations in mosques in the 1930s to the Indonesian state's censorship of Hans Bague Jassin's versified *Bacaan Mulia* (1978), translations have constituted a site of public contestation over Islamic authority, the meaning of the Qur'an, and the proper practice of Islam. According to certain narratives of the early Muslim community, the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad were the first to translate the Qur'an. The most famous account describes how Salman al-Fārisī—the first Persian convert to Islam—translated the first chapter (*Sūrat al-Fātiha*) into the language of his people. Another story relates that in 628 CE the Prophet sent messengers to kings around the world to demand their embrace of Islam and to teach them about the Qur'an in their own languages (Zadeh 2012: 262). These accounts connect translation to the prophetic biography (*sīra*) and ostensibly seek to demonstrate the universal mission of the prophet and the revelation he conveyed.

Translating the Qur'an—whether in oral or written form—has been integral to the Muslim communities across Asia, Africa, and Europe who faced the task of communicating the Qur'an to a diverse variety of populations and linguistic groups over the past fifteen centuries. Contrary to the widespread idea that Muslims oppose all translation of the Qur'an, there is a robust history of rendering the text into the vernacular languages used by Muslim communities (languages that for the sake of simplicity we will refer to as 'Islamicate' languages). European and American studies of Qur'anic translation have focused largely on translations into European languages, often giving the impression that Muslim activity in the field was negligible in comparison with the efforts of Euro-American missionaries and scholars (Zwemer 1915; Bobzin 2014).

The challenge to effectively surveying the history of Islamicate translations is not only the relative paucity of available literature but also tied to an acute conceptual problem, namely how to define *translation*. The question of what qualifies as a translation of the Qur'an has posed difficulties for the field. In particular, the question of how to distinguish the genre of *tafsīr*—Qur'anic commentary and exegesis—from translations has been a thorny and persistent problem (Burman 1998). In both pre-modern and modern contexts, the dominant position among Muslim scholars has been that the Qur'an is truly *the* Qur'an only in Arabic, and most scholars argue alternately that either translation (*tarjama*) or perfect translation of the Qur'an is impossible. While there are significant exceptions and a diverse array of opinions on the matter, the strength of this view persists in the modern period among religious experts, the greater Muslim population, and academicians. Scholars often categorize translations as interpretive literature, in effect, denying them the possibility of replacing the original text. While early Muslim scholars discussed 'Qur'an translation'—its possibility, its desirability, and its permissibility—at length, it did not become a robust genre or field of knowledge in its own right. And since Qur'anic translations have usually not been considered a separate category from *tafsīr* in Islamicate literary taxonomies, they assumed an inconspicuous status and it has been more difficult for scholars to identify, categorize, and assess them. As a result, a large body of literature has been under-appreciated and understudied.

The emergence of translation as a distinct category of Islamic texts has been an incremental process that was observed in some regions during the eighteenth century, accelerated in the nineteenth century more broadly, and crystallized in the twentieth century on a global scale. Arguably, a milestone for the genre occurred during the eighteenth century with the Persian language work—*Fatḥ al-Raḥmān fī tarjamāt al-Qur'ān*—by the South Asian scholar Shah Wālī Allāh (1114–76/1703–62) of Delhi. Written by one of the most influential members of the ulama in the Subcontinent, the work openly proclaimed itself a translation (*tarjama*), not commentary (*tafsīr*), strove to address a broader audience of Persian literate readers, and inspired similar efforts in Urdu and Turkish. Though this work was not the first Persian translation to be published, it was by far the most frequently reprinted Persian version (Binark/Eren 1986: 356–64) and shaped the trajectory of South Asian and modern Persian translations. Regrettably, a full-length study of this important work has—to the author's knowledge—not been completed in a Western academic language.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European lexicography and oriental studies flourished and, Christian missions entered the Muslim world in force. European and American scholars and missionaries played an important role in carving out a space for considering renderings of the Qur'an an entity of their own and a subject for study. In particular, Protestant missionaries made translating the Qur'an an integral part of missionary work, using vernacular translations to encourage Muslims to compare the quality of the Bible to that of the Qur'an. It was assumed that translation would reveal the flaws and inconsistencies of the Qur'an and demonstrate the superiority of the

Christian scriptures (Jeffery 1924: 183–4). Parallel to their biblical translation work, missionary-scholars produced a number of original translations of the Qur'an in African and Asian languages (Lacunza-Balda 1997: 97). As will be examined below, Muslim missionary groups such as the Ahmadiyya also produced translations and shaped the development of a modern genre of Qur'anic renderings.

Since translations of the Qur'an were important for Christian missions and the emerging field of Oriental studies, missionaries and scholars began tracking the publication of translations and compiling bibliographies around the turn of the twentieth century. These represent some early attempts to survey existing works and provide bibliographies for 'translations' of the Qur'an. The Cairo-based missionary Samuel Zwemer's 1915 article 'Translations of the Qur'an' is noteworthy in this regard as it attempted to list all printed translations in the most widely used Islamicate languages (Zwemer 1915). The journal 'The Moslem World'—founded by Zwemer—assiduously tracked the publication of translations around the world, announcing new releases and highlighting the efforts of both Muslim and missionary translators to produce vernacular renderings for their target populations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (e.g. Birge 1938; Anon. 1935: 297–8). These efforts demarcated such works as a field of study of their own rather than as a subset of Qur'anic commentaries. Simultaneously with—and sometimes in response to—missionary engagements with the Qur'an, Muslims in British India, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt reignited debates about the permissibility and possibility of Qur'anic *tarjama* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Wilson 2014). These efforts accelerated over the course of the twentieth century, leading to the crystallization of Qur'anic translations as a genre and the prolific production of translations by Muslim and non-Muslim authors.

Following these early attempts at recording extant translations, the massive task of compiling comprehensive bibliographies has been carried forward, and it should be noted that the study of translations in many languages remains at the bibliographic stage. To date, *The World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an* (1986) is the most ambitious and comprehensive bibliographic project of its kind. Put together by scholars at the Istanbul-based Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), this work catalogues printed translations in 65 languages between the years 1515 and 1980, listing 551 complete and 883 partial translations. Including reprints, it records a total of 2,672 editions. Region-specific studies like Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan's *The Holy Qur'an in South Asia: A Bio-Bibliographic Study of Translations of the Holy Qur'an in 23 South Asian Languages* (2001) have refined and expanded the findings of the *World Bibliography*. Despite shortcomings in certain languages, the *World Bibliography* remains unsurpassed in terms of global coverage and stands as an indispensable reference work for research on Qur'anic translation. While the conception behind this volume is clearly that of translation, it is interesting that the very title of the work harks back to the dilemma of what to call a rendering of the Qur'an. In opting to call it a bibliography of 'Translations of the Meanings' rather than simply 'translations', the authors display uneasiness with the very category around which the entire project

is based. The cumbersome and somewhat perplexing moniker ‘Translations of the Meanings’ (Ar. *tarjamat ma‘ānī’l-Qur‘ān*) is a mode of referring to translations without violating the taboo surrounding ‘Qur’an translation.’ This phrase has been adapted and translated in several different languages for designating a category of texts that are neither commentaries nor translations.

Bibliographies chart out the extant terrain of translation, providing a rough map of the vast terrain that remains to be studied. And given the vast amount of literature that exists in a variety of languages, bibliographical studies continue in the present, both for understudied as well as for widely researched Islamicate languages. Following the *World Bibliography*, IRCICA embarked upon a series of projects to catalogue manuscript versions of translations held in collections around the world (Sefercioğlu 2000; Khan 2010). These volumes enable scholars to gain a sense of the scope of translations, their chronology, and their history of composition and publication. Nevertheless, scholarly coverage of translations in Islamicate languages is highly uneven. Some languages have been the subject of several studies (Persian and Turkish), but even for the widely used vernaculars and scholarly languages (e.g. Urdu), there is a relatively meagre coverage and lesser known languages (e.g. Uyghur) often remain completely neglected.

INTERLINEAR WORKS

Interlinear translations are the oldest type of translations and exist in many Islamicate languages, including Chagatay, Persian, Mandarin Chinese, and Turkish. These works come in a variety of formats and styles. Typically, the original Arabic text of the Qur’an stands in larger characters (and often in a different colour) above the translation. Frequently, these texts contain translations in more than one language—Persian and Turkish or Persian and Urdu works, for instance, were common. Some interlinear works simply list the definitions of Arabic words, acting as a kind of running glossary. Others paraphrase the text or provide cohesive translations, at times with stylistic flourishes such as rhyme.

Persian translations are the oldest and most numerous in this category and Persian interlinear translations—first produced in Central Asia—defined the genre for South Asian and the Turkic West Asian and later Ottoman domains. Most Persian translations were composed by anonymous authors and many of the early works lack dates (Zadeh 2012: 266–7). The oldest dated version is an interlinear translation with commentary likely composed during the reign of the Samanid ruler Abū Ṣāliḥ Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ (r. 350–65/961–76). Despite the fact that the work that accompanies the interlinear translation is titled *Tafsīr-i Ṭabarī*, it is not a translation of the famous commentary *Jāmi‘ al-bayān* by Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, but rather a Persian commentary that focuses on history drawing upon and reworking extensive passages from Ṭabarī’s universal history (*Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* also known as *Mukhtaṣar tāriḥ al-rusūl wa’l-mulūk wa’l-khulafā’*),

blending Persian mythology with Islamic history—an important observation made by Zadeh (2012: 305). However, evidence suggests that a vernacular translation culture existed even before the tenth century CE. It is likely that the important legal thinker Abū Ḥanīfa Nu‘mān ibn Thābit’s (d. 150/767) well-known opinion on the permissibility of obligatory prayer (*salat/namaz*) in Persian granted post-factum legitimacy to existing practices of vernacular ritual during the 700s (Zadeh 2006: 477–8). Persian interlinear works flourished from the 1000s to the 1800s, attesting to a vibrant vernacular-reading culture and leaving behind hundreds of manuscripts. A bibliographical work on Persian translations has been completed (Khorram-Shahi 2010), but modern translations into Persian remain in need of further study.

Turkish and Turkic translations followed the model laid out by Persian texts. In fact, Persian translations and commentaries can be found at the important Anatolian shrine complexes of both Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in Konya and Hacı Bektaş in central Anatolia (Zadeh 2012: 563). The Turkologist Zeki Velidi Togan theorized that the first Turkic translation was composed simultaneously with the Persian translation project commissioned by the Samanids in the tenth century (Togan 1964: 13–15). While oft repeated, this opinion was based on speculation, not textual or historical evidence, and appears unsound. Fuat Köprülü argued that the first Turkish translation was done based on a Persian translation in the eleventh century (Topaloğlu 1976: p. 2). Some of the earliest known translations were tri-lingual (Arabic-Persian-Turkish) with the Turkish text coming below the Persian, and, in some cases, actually translated from the Persian, rather than the Arabic. The fifteenth century Trilingual Qur’an (Arabic MS 38 [773]) held by the John Rylands University Library is an excellent early example of such works (Eckmann 1976). The oldest dated translation in Old Anatolian Turkish, the forerunner of Ottoman and modern Turkish, is dated 826/1422, and Topaloğlu produced a study of a manuscript dated 827/1424 (Topaloğlu and bin Hamza 1976), locating the beginning of an active translation culture in the post-Anatolian Selcuk period and continuing into the Ottoman reign. Though not as numerous as Persian works, several hundred manuscripts have been catalogued and attest to the widespread use of interlinear works in the madrasas and courts of Turkophone Anatolia.

Interlinear works exist in many languages including Mandarin Chinese, Urdu, Malay, and Hausa, and they continued to be printed and even composed in the twentieth century. In certain languages, interlinear renderings survived the rise of print (e.g. Urdu and Persian) while in others (e.g. Turkish) the genre was relegated to artefact status as paraphrastic commentaries and modern translations came into broad circulation. The full scope of interlinear works should be better understood as ongoing bibliographic projects come to fruition. Unfortunately, relatively few studies of this vast corpus have been completed. Studies on Turkish works, for instance, have an overriding concern with linguistic elements treating the translations as artefacts of language, with little concern for content or context (e.g. Eckmann 1976; Karabacak 1994). The large corpus of Urdu works—often called ‘Hindi’ by early translators—awaits a comprehensive study (Khan 1996: 212). Zadeh’s monograph *The Vernacular Qur’ān* (2012) is a seminal study

of Persian translations and, additionally, provides a blueprint for the kind of scholarship that can address this abundant literature in other languages.

COMMENTARY-TRANSLATIONS

The distinction between translation and commentary—*tarjama* and *tafsīr*—in Qur’anic literature is often hazy, and many renderings of the sacred book are embedded in a composite genre that blends paraphrase, exegesis, and translation proper. The translations of succinct commentaries such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, *Mavāhib-i ‘aliyya*, and *Anwār al-tanzīl* into vernacular languages across Asia and Africa played a key role in producing hybrid texts that not only translated, but also adapted important commentaries in ways that approximated and furthered the evolution of modern literary translations. Translations of these popular commentary works have confounded bibliographers and made the question of when the first ‘translations’ appeared difficult to answer. How should an adaptive Malay, Turkish, or Hausa translation of Bawḍawī’s *Anwār al-tanzīl* be considered in the history of vernacular Qur’anic translation? Pinpointing precisely when translation develops as a separate genre is an inexact science, and perhaps this approach is methodologically ill-advised. In any case, translation and commentary coexist in many works, often in the form of marginalia, and this is the case even after the widespread printing of commentary works during the nineteenth century. Whereas manuscript and lithographically printed works often paired an interlinear translation with a commentary in the margins, new works appeared that explicitly designated *tafsīr* and *tarjama* sections in moveable-type printed works (e.g. al-Dihlawī 1294/1877). In the main, these were not voluminous, erudite commentaries but rather succinct translations and paraphrases with occasional commentarial digressions.

Spanning Islamicate regions, such composite works were produced in South Asia, South-East Asia, Africa, as well as the Turkophone Middle East and Iran. This genre—widespread prior to the nineteenth century—became yet more prominent with the printing of vernacular *tafsīr*, many of which were translations of well-known Arabic and Persian language commentaries.

According to the *World Bibliography*, the first printed Turkish translation was Ayıntâbî Mehmet’s (d. 1111/1698–9) commentary *Tefsīr-i Tıbyan* (published in 1257/1841–2) which drew heavily upon *Anwār al-tanzīl*, and the second was İsmail Ferruh’s (d. 1840) *Mevakib* (1281/1864–5), an adaptive translation of *Mavāhib-i ‘aliyya*, a popular Persian language commentary. A mark of their popularity is that shortly after publication Ottoman madrasas incorporated them into their curriculum (Gunasti 2011: 52). Considering the nature of these works, the late Ottoman writer Ahmet Midhat (1844–1913) quipped that they were ‘so succinct that they can be seen more as translations than commentaries’ (Ahmet Midhat 1894–5: 99). Categorized as the first Malay translation by the *WB*, Abd al-Rauf al-Singkili’s (c.1615–93) Malay language *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* was a composite

work based largely upon *Jalālayn*, but was printed in Istanbul under a title indicating that it is a translation of *Anwār al-tanzīl* (Riddell, *EI*; Abd al-Raʿūf, 1324/1906). Additionally, *Jalālayn*, *Anwār*, and al-Qurṭubī's *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, shaped the trajectory of vernacularization in various African languages, including Old Kanembu and Hausa (Tamari/Bondarev 2013: 11–13; Brigaglia 2005: 428–9).

While such renderings were composite and mediated by popular *tafsīr* works, they pushed Qurʾanic commentary into increasingly succinct formats and, benefitting from print technology, they familiarized broader audiences with accessible paraphrases and renderings of the Qurʾan. In the early twentieth century, an influential segment of readers—the non-ulama intelligentsia and reformist ulama—argued that the Qurʾan should be translated directly, in clear and accessible language. In Russia and the Ottoman Empire, intellectuals called for translation because they held commentaries to be excessively scholastic and tied to traditional interpretations that stifled intellectual progress (e.g. Bigiyev 1912: 91–2).

MODERN TRANSLATION

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, translations of the Qurʾan achieved a new degree of independence from interlinear works and composite commentaries. Many authors openly proclaimed their works ‘translations’, defying the conventional taboo, and, gradually, modern-style renderings, which could be read independently from the Arabic original, came into widespread use. This break was not sudden and often times commentary-style translations persisted. Additionally, elements of *tafsīr* were incorporated in new forms (such as footnotes) and, in many cases, publishers have placed the Arabic text alongside the translation or maintained the interlinear format.

Several factors played a role in the evolution of a modern translation genre.

First, the spread of print technology and the florescence of print culture over the course of the nineteenth century redefined the shape of the modern book, made books more affordable, and spurred a push for more accessible works. Second, translations by Orientalists and Christian missionaries provided alternative models for Qurʾanic translation that were more accessible (e.g. Biberstein-Kazimirski 1841) and more in tune with the trends in modern book culture. The polemic nature of some such works (e.g. Goldsack 1908–20) inspired Muslim authors to rectify the image of Islam and its scripture by composing translations. Muslim missionary efforts, in turn, came to use translations as tools for education and proselytization. Additionally, the spread of nationalism across large swaths of the Muslim world contributed to the push for renderings that spoke the concerns of emergent nation states and their attendant ideologies. The rise of non-ulama intellectuals in the print-based public sphere brought new voices to Islamic debates, voices that challenged the authority of the ulama and made translating the Qurʾan a key part of Muslim reformist agendas. Finally, important Islamic institutions—including various ulama corps—began to produce and distribute translations on a large scale.

The impact of Western scholarship and Christian missionary work in establishing new models for translation should not be underestimated. In the late Ottoman Empire for instance, a generation of intellectuals read French translations of the Qur'an due to the absence of a similar text in Turkish. *Le Coran* (1841) by Albert Biberstein-Kazimirski was immensely popular among late Ottoman intellectuals (Wilson 2014). Moreover, prominent devout intellectuals viewed Muhammad Ali's English translation (1917), which combines an Arabic-English interlinear layout with footnotes, as a model for contemporary Turkish translations (Wilson 2009). In South Asia, the missionary influence was more direct than in Turkey. The first published Urdu translations were printed at the Hindustani Press by the British Orientalist John Wilkins in 1802–3 (Khan 1982: 132), and the American Presbyterian Mission sponsored an Urdu translation in 1844 (Uddin 2006: 77). Nevertheless, the impact of these works was dwarfed by the seminal Urdu work *Muḍīḥ al-Qur'ān* (1828–9) by a son of Shah Wali Allah—Shah Abdul Qadir (1735–1815). The book was usually published together with an interlinear Urdu translation by Abdul Qadir's brother Rafi' al-Dīn al-Dihlawī (1750–1818) and the Persian rendering of their father. *Muḍīḥ al-Qur'ān* was widely reproduced with at least seventy editions published by 1977 (Khan 1997: 43). The use of translations by missionaries in South Asian polemics—such as William Goldsack's Bengali rendering (1908–20)—motivated groups like the Ahmadiyya movement and a host of South Asian intellectuals to compose translations in response. In Sub-Saharan Africa and China as well, the presence of missionary groups played a pivotal role in sparking conversations over the need for Muslim translations of the holy book (Loimeier 2005: 410–11).

The interwar period (1919–39) witnessed a florescence of translations and seminal renderings were published in a variety of languages. The culmination of earlier debates, nationalist currents, and post-war political configurations, this period experienced unprecedented activity and enthusiasm in the realm of Qur'anic translations. While in most cases these were not the first translations in their respective languages, the translations of this period exhibited independence from the commentary tradition and its format. Concise, inexpensive translations became available in Turkey, the Russian Empire, and South and South-East Asia. In some instances—e.g. Swahili (1923), Turkish (1926/7), Serbo-Croatian (1937), Malay (1938)—the Arabic text of the Qur'an is omitted as well, creating 'freestanding' translations. These freestanding translations embodied the evolution of a modern genre of Qur'anic translation, a genre that reflects prevalent contemporary understandings of translation as a book that can be read independently, privately, and—preferably—in a concise format. Concision was prized as means of making the books accessible, cheap, and distancing them from the voluminous commentaries. However, most twentieth-century works include the Arabic text, and the interlinear format of pre-modern works was readopted in many languages.

Translations were part of the zeitgeist of the interwar period and wide-ranging efforts to argue for and compose translations occurred across the Muslim world. Seminal translations in a variety of languages were published or embarked upon. For instance in 1932, the Chinese Muslim scholar Ma Jian (1906–78), sponsored by the Academic Association of Chinese Islam, was sent in a group of students to study Arabic with the

aim of creating a modern Chinese translation. He produced one of the most influential Mandarin renderings which was published gradually over the course of several decades (1949–81) (Ma 2006: 55–8). In the 1930s, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936) and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872–1953) penned seminal English-language works and Yusuf Ali voiced his aspiration to make English an Islamic language (Ali 1934: iv). It was during the interwar years that the two traditional centres of Sunni authority in the Mediterranean weighed in on the issue. In 1925, the Turkish Parliament voted to sponsor a project to create a modern Turkish translation, commissioning the devout modernist poet Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873–1936) to compose what was hoped to be a masterpiece of Turkish literature. After six years, Ersoy withdrew from the commission, and the translation along with an expansive commentary was completed by the Islamic scholar Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır (1878–1942) and published between 1935 and 1939. On the southern Mediterranean, the Turkish and English translations of the era embroiled the Egyptian ulama and intelligentsia in a debate on the merits of translation for modern Islam during the 1930s. The Rector of al-Azhar University Mustāfa al-Marāghī (1881–1945) argued that translations were essential to the vitality and well-being of Islam in the modern world (al-Marāghī 1936: 12–14). While he and his supporters met substantial opposition, ultimately these debates opened the way to extensive liberalization of translation activities for the latter half of the twentieth century.

By mid-century, the translations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had begun to appear archaic in some languages and new efforts rose to modernize the language and style of such works. Meanwhile, a significant number of languages still lacked a printed translation or, at least, a suitably modern one. For instance, the Swahili translation (1953) by Mubarak Ahmad Ahmadi (1910–2001) sharply criticized earlier Christian missionary renderings and, unlike those works, his new translation included the Arabic text of the Qur'an—a common feature that maintained a tradition of emphasizing the subsidiary nature of the translated text. Mubarak Ahmad had come to East Africa in 1934 as a missionary of the Qadiani Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission and commenced his translation in the late 1930s. In this case as in many others, Ahmadiyya-affiliated authors played an important role in the composing translations for the twentieth century. They were among the first groups to implement an organized effort to translate and distribute the Qur'an in a variety of languages on a global scale. They not only produced texts but also ignited controversy and provoked responses. Supported by the Islamic Foundation of Nairobi, the ulama leader Shaykh Abdallah Saleh al-Farsy (1912–82) responded by composing a Swahili rendering that was initially published in newspapers in the 1950s and ultimately as a book in 1969. This work was intended to present a mainstream Sunni rebuttal to the Ahmadi interpretations contained in Mubarak Ahmad's translation (Lacunza-Balda 1997: 100–12).

Twentieth-century translations in Hausa produced similar polarization. A Nigerian activist named Abu Bakr Mahmud Gumi (1922–92) composed the first complete Hausa rendering (1979) with the support of Saudi Arabia. Gumi's translation—written in accessible, common Hausa—reflected his Salafi and anti-Sufi views. It departed from the heavily Jalālayn-influenced interpretive tradition in Nigeria and attacked Sufi practices

in footnotes. The book was widely distributed, and, given its polemic character, ignited substantial controversy. Sponsored by the Libyan Da'wa society, Nasiru Kabara (1925–96), a former teacher of Gumi and a major figure in the Qadiriyya order in Africa, responded with a poetic Hausa rendering that defended esoteric and Sufi-inflected interpretation (Brigaglia 2005: 428). Not only in Africa but across the Muslim world, translations increasingly became fora for polemics, Islamic outreach, and education during the twentieth century.

The adoption of translation by several important Islamic institutions—some with explicit state funding—paved the way for an explosion in publishing and distribution. And, increasingly, translations became a tool in the competition for Islamic authority in the late twentieth century. In South Asia, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and—most importantly—Saudi Arabia, various groups adopted the globally oriented missionary model that the Ahmadiyya pioneered in the 1910s and 1920s. Continuing this trajectory, the King Fahd Complex for Printing the Holy Qur'an in Medina has become the largest publisher of Qur'anic translations in the world and produces original translations in a wide variety of languages. Additionally, the centre publishes mushafs and is responsible for 'responding to false information and dispelling uncertainty' (JOQS 1999: 157). The translations it produces include footnotes supporting Saudi-ulama approved interpretations of the text. Unfortunately, little scholarly attention has been paid to this institution and its activities, which are rather significant for the current state of translations and the modern shape of the Qur'an in general.

Related to the mass production and distribution of translations is the question of impact. What effect have renderings of the Qur'an had in shaping the contours of Islam? There is no global response to this query and, inevitably, answering this question depends largely on context as translations have served diverse purposes. The formation of vernacular and/or national Islamic communities has been an issue of conversation for many scholars. Considering the formative period, Zadeh's research shows that Persian translations—oral and written—were pivotal in preaching, teaching, and spreading Islam during the eighth to thirteenth centuries. Moreover, they assisted in the cultivation of a vernacular, Persianate Islam that involved not only the production and use of vernacular texts, but also fostered and solidified a Persian communal identity within the umma (Zadeh 2012: 583–4). However, even in the same context opinions diverge. Lacunza-Balda, for instance, credits translations with the development of Swahili Islam, whereas Van de Bruinhorst doubts that translations had much impact beyond limited scholarly circles (Van de Bruinhorst 2013: 207).

In Turkey, certain intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp clearly hoped that translations would help form a nationally oriented 'Turkish Islam', in which the call to prayer, Qur'anic recitation and daily and communal rituals would be performed in Turkish, not Arabic. In the Turkish case, translations certainly contributed to a nationally oriented Islamic outlook, but their role should not be overstated. When the first translations in modern Turkey were published, they inspired not national devotion but rather widespread discontent due to the dubious credentials of the authors and the variable quality of the renderings (Wilson 2009). They were but one among several factors that helped cultivate nationalist

Islamic sentiments in Turkey. As in other contexts, Turkish translations have been marshalled for use in ongoing polemics and competition between Muslim groups in Turkey. The same holds true in South Asia, where—since the early nineteenth century—competing groups have published renderings that support their views, making translations an important vehicle of intra-Muslim polemics. At the same time, they—along with tracts written in simple Urdu—played a role in elaborating a more accessible textual tradition and cultivating Urdu as a language of Muslim elites across the Subcontinent (Metcalf 2002: 67, 208). Given the linguistic diversity of South Asian Muslim communities, two countervailing processes occurred simultaneously. Communities produced translations in their regional languages—Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, etc.—while scholars and elites in various locales composed Urdu translations with aspirations of a trans-regional audience. The role of translations in contributing to Muslim Indian national identity awaits further analysis.

Finally, the question of religious authority—in particular, the right to interpret the Qur'an—crops up in studies of translation in many contexts. In what ways—if any—do translations challenge traditional authorities and upset conventional modes of exegesis? Persianate and Turcophone translations from the tenth to sixteenth centuries appear not to have challenged traditional authority to a great extent as they were composed mainly by the ulama and often used in madrasa studies. The same appears to hold true in most pre-print Islamicate contexts when such translations circulated primarily in courtly and scholarly circles. In pre-modern South Asia, Central Asia, and Ottoman West Asia, interlinear translations were a largely uncontroversial genre—occasionally challenged but never suppressed.

On the other hand, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, translations were put to new uses in new formats often by reformist ulama and non-ulama intellectuals. They have been harnessed for promoting various agendas of Islamic reform, nationalism, sectarianism, and proselytization. Moreover, print-technology enabled the mass production and distribution of these texts, spreading them far beyond the scholarly, courtly networks of earlier centuries. As a result, printed translations over the past two centuries have occasioned substantial and ongoing controversy. From the tenth century to the present, Islamicate translations of the Qur'an have served a variety of purposes in Muslim communities and their availability and importance has only increased with time.

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