Grafting a New Canon onto the Turkish Literary Field:
The First Turkish Publishing Congress and the Will to Translate

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Translation took centre stage in early Republican Turkey due to its entanglements with westernization and nation-building efforts, especially throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The talk focuses on the proceedings of the First Turkish Publishing Congress held in 1939 and explores the special emphasis placed on translated literature during the congress. The Congress was held under the auspices of Hasan-Ali Yücel, then Minister of Education, and attended by many leading politicians, publishers, academics, writers, and translators of the day who were all cultural agents in their own right. The discourse built in and around the congress on the topic of translation is indicative of the way early Republican intellectuals built a “need” for translation and identified a “gap” in the literary field, long before this gap started to be filled by a state institution, e.g., Tercüme Bürosu (Translation Bureau), established in 1940. Mapping the discourses of the participants, as well as newspaper articles written on the occasion of the congress, the talk will problematize the strong “will to translate” both as translation in the literal sense and translation as a process of cultural transformation.

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