



P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

26. März 2010

Vortrag Huseyin Yilmaz: The Rise of Turkish as Hegemonic Language in the Ottoman Empire

What accounts for the rise of Turkish as the principal language of Ottoman high culture and government? In his lecture, Huseyin Yilmaz asks whether the ascendancy of Turkish could simply be taken for granted because the Ottoman State was founded by and in the midst of a Turkic-speaking people.

If so, this does not explain the case of many other states, ranging from the Seljuks to the Moguls, that were founded in the context of similar demographic and linguistic settings but quickly adopted Persian or Arabic in administration, learning and literature. In pursuit of a plausible explanation for this historical development with far-reaching consequences, this presentation discusses one particular area: the translation movement of the fifteenth century and its aftermath, the reasons behind it, and its impact on Ottoman culture and society. Ottoman culture and learning of the time, in both oral and written forms, was truly translation-ridden. Prompted by the peculiar circumstances of the frontier society, most of what was written in Turkish was translated from Arabic and Persian. It was this culture of translation that led to the rise of Turkish from an oral vernacular to a literary language, which in turn became an indispensable part of Ottoman identity and empire building.

Huseyin Yilmaz

The Rise of Turkish as Hegemonic Language in the Ottoman Empire

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Publications (among others): *The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century*, in: A. Amanat, M. Bonine (eds.), *Where is the Middle East*, Stanford 2010 [forthcoming]; *Containing Sultanic Authority: Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire before Modernization*, in: Sohail Hashmi, Houchang Chehabi (eds.), *Islam and Constitutionalism*, Cambridge, MA 2010 [forthcoming]; *Imperial Ideology*, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, New York

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2008; Constitutional Developments in the Ottoman Empire before Westernization, in: Divan Disiplinlerarasi Çalismalar Dergisi, 13, 2008, pp. 1–30; Approaches to Pre-Tanzimat Political Thought in Ottoman Historiography, in: Türkiye Arastirmalari Literatür Dergisi, 1/2, 2003, pp. 231–298.