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Workshop

Da'wa and Qur'an Translation in the First Decades of the 20th Century

Programme Guide



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Oğuzhan Tan: Two Late-Ottoman Quasitranslations of the Qur’ān: Tibyān and Mawākib; Islamic Law, Printing Policies, and Readership:

The traditional standpoint opposing the translation and publication of the Qur’ān shifted as a result of the transformative impacts of Ottoman modernization. To begin, some hybrid translations were composed. They included Turkish translations of certain short commentaries written in Arabic or Persian, as well as quotations obtained from other tafsīr books. Ayntābī Mehmed Efendi (d. 1699) and İsmail Ferrūh Efendi (d. 1840) wrote the first examples of this genre under the titles Tefsīr-i Tibyān and Mawākib, respectively. These works were later published, under sponsorship of the state and with permission of the scholars, paving the path for contemporary Qur’ānic translations.

Oğuzhan Tan is an Associate Professor of Islamic Law and the Methodology of Islamic Jurisprudence at Ankara University's Faculty of Divinity.

Natana Delong-Bas: Bridging the Orient and the West: Tracing Translations of the Qur’ān into English through Arabia and the British Empire in India in the First Decades of the 20th Century:

An exploration of the intersection of religion, politics and academics through transregional travels between Britain, Arabia and India from the pre-WWI era through the end of the British Empire in India, finding a central locus in the Arabian court of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud. Qur’ān translators and translations into English are placed into historical perspective and analyzed through the lens of Orientalism, investigating the Orientalization of Europeans during their sojourns in Arabia and India through conversion to Islam and engagement with the “authentic” land and language of the Qur’ān, even as Indian Empire Muslims became Orientalized through sojourns in Britain.

Natana Delong-Bas is Associate Professor in the Theology Department at Boston College. She is an expert in Islamic Law and the history of Islamic reform movements, especially the Wahhabiyya.

Sohaib Saeed: The Translator and the Sheikh: Lessons from Pickthall’s Awkward Egyptian Encounter:

In a fascinating first-person account preserved in Anne Fremantle’s biography *Loyal Enemy*, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936) describes his arrival to Cairo with his completed translation of the Qur’ān. Having already received patronage from the Nizam of

Hyderabad, he now sought approval from the scholars of Egypt. He soon learned that, not only had Muhammad Ali's translation been publicly burnt in the Azhar Mosque, but "all translation of the Qur'ān, however faithful, was held to be unlawful by a powerful section of the 'Ulama." The present paper considers the dynamics between competing scholarly trends of the day; the issues raised with Pickthall and his reactions to them; and the abiding value of *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān*.

Sohaib Saeed was trained in Tafsīr at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and completed his PhD at SOAS, University of London. Until recently, he was a postdoctoral researcher with The Global Qur'ān project (Freiburg). He is presently working on translations of the Qur'an and several exegetical works, and his monograph *Explaining the Qur'ān Through the Qur'ān* is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press.

Charles Ramsey: 'To make English itself an Islamic Language': Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation, and Commentary*.

From among the English translations of the Qur'ān prepared from South Asia, none has gained such wide usage and lasting appeal in the practice of da'wa as that of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953). He succeeded in rendering a dynamic equivalence of the message within stylistic bounds that honored traditional Muslim expectations and yet was appealing to a modern audience. The secret of his was, as I argue, that Yusuf Ali sought not only to provide the meaning of the Qur'ān to a curious audience, but rather to bring the reader into the experience of the Qur'ān so as 'to make English itself an Islamic language'.

Charles Ramsey (PhD, Birmingham) is Lecturer in the Department of History at Baylor University and teaches courses on South Asia and Islamic Studies. Prior to this, he was Assistant Professor of Religion and Public Policy at Forman Christian College in Lahore, Pakistan.

Matthew J. Kuiper: Abdul Majid Daryabadi's *Tafsir ul-Qur'ān* and the Da'walogy of Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi:

Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi (d. 1913-1999) was among the 20th century's most prominent Sunni scholars and theologians of *da'wa* in his home country of India and the wider Muslim world. Tucked away in his vast literary corpus is a commendation of Abdul Majid Daryabadi's (1892-1977) *Tafsir ul-Qur'ān*, which Nadwi endorsed as the "most dependable" Qur'ān translation/commentary in English. This paper examines the thought and activism of Nadwi in tandem with the content of *Tafsir ul-Qur'ān* in order to explore why Nadwi arrived at this conclusion. It argues that Nadwi's experience, concerns, and what may be

called his “da‘walogy” corresponded in key ways to Daryabadi’s own. In studying this particular case, the paper illustrates broader linkages between da‘wa, Qur’ān translation, networks of like-minded scholars, and rising religious competition in the late-colonial and post-colonial periods.

Matthew J. Kuiper is Assistant Professor of Religion at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, and author of *“Da‘wa: A Global History of Islamic Missionary Thought and Practice”* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), and *“Da‘wa and Other Religions: Indian Muslims and the Modern Resurgence of Global Islamic Activism”* (Routledge, 2018).

Afsan Redwan: Rising out of Empire, Context Collapse and the Emergence of an English Qur’ānic Genre:

Analyses of Dr Abdul Hakim Khan (1905), Muhammad Ali (1917) and Yusuf Ali's (1934) Qur’ān translations work to provide the structural basis for creating a new distinct type of religious literature. This is especially so when compared to genre categories in historical English religious literature. English religious literature was primarily expressed through four genres: religious didactic poetry and prose, philosophical (mainly Biblical), political and new romanticism (drama and plays). These early English Qur’ān translations introduced a new ‘contextual da‘wah’ genre. Presentational forms and the semiotic text play a significant role in formulating the genre boundaries of these English Qur’ān translations.

Afsan Redwan is a current PhD research student at the Islam UK Centre of Cardiff University. He is researching Qur’ānic hermeneutics in English Qur’ān translations. His interests include theology, religion, ethics and science.

Musthafa Thanveer: Early Malayalam Translations of the Qur’ān:

The paper is an exploration of the texts and historical contexts of four major early/mid twentieth century translation attempts of Qur’ān in the South Indian language of Malayalam. The account showcases the situatedness of these translations in the colonial experiences of the region, as well as in the discursiveness of the then global Islamic trends of Da‘wah and Islah. The paper also looks at the theological controversies these translation projects evoked within the Malayali Muslim community.

Musthafa Thanveer P. M. is currently a doctoral student at the Department of History & Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi. His PhD research topic is “Islam and

Indian Nationalism: Mappila Leaders of the Congress, 1915-1950.” Thanveer did his post-graduation in modern Indian History at the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi.

Gulnaz Sibgatullina: Debating Translatability: The early 20th-century Tatar press on Qurʾān Translations:

Translatability of the Qurʾān into Turki-Tatar was one of the major topics discussed in the Tatar press in the early 20th century. This paper focuses on the arguments in favour of a translation given on the pages of the *Shūrā* journal, where theological reasoning was often intertwined with a presentation of the socio-political benefits of having the Qurʾān in the mother tongue. *Shūrā* contributors argued that a Qurʾān translation would be an instrument to shield against attacks from Christian missionaries and Russian Orientalists on Islam and enable daʿwa among Tatars who were illiterate in Arabic or previously converted to Christianity.

Gulnaz Sibgatullina is a postdoctoral fellow at Amsterdam School for Regional, Transnational, and European Studies at the University of Amsterdam and the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University. Her research interests focus on the history and presence of Islam in Europe, sociology of religion and religious language, and postcolonial studies.

Jajang A. Rohmana: Translation of the Qurʾān and Reformist Daʿwa in West Java: Ideology, Literacy and Modernity:

The translation of the Qurʾān in West Java in the early twentieth century could not be separated from the daʿwa activities of reformist Muslims. This can be seen from the publication of the Sundanese translation of A. Hassan’s *Tafsir Al-Foerqan*, and other translations of the Qurʾān by his friends. I argue that these Sundanese translations not only promote reformist ideology, but also shift the formation of translation and literacy culture, from interlinear word-for-word to verse-for-verse translation, from handwriting to print literacy, from both Jawi and Pegon to Latin script.

Jajang A. Rohmana currently lectures at the Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University in Bandung. He earned his doctorate in 2013 at the same university for his dissertation on Qurʾanic exegesis in West Java. He has published many articles on Sundanese translation and exegesis of the Qurʾān.

Ahmad Najib Burhani: The Ahmadiyya Translation of the Qur'ān in Indonesia: Reception and Controversy:

Despite the accusation of heresy, Ahmadiyya translations of the Qur'ān have been influential in the Indonesian community in the first half of the 20th century. Soedewo's translation, for instance, was widely used by intelligentsia as a main source to know about Islam. Why did Ahmadiyya translations of the Qur'ān have a significant place in the Indonesian Muslim intelligentsia of the early 20th century? What was the appeal of these translations? What is the contribution of these translations to the study of the Qur'ān in this country? This paper argues that the success of Ahmadiyya translation during the revolution era is based on three reasons: language (Dutch is the language of intelligentsia), content (it fit with the need of intelligentsia who seek a harmonious understanding between *religie* and *wetenschap*), and form (the only available rendering of the Qur'ān in modern form of publication). In the context of ideology, the reception of Muslim intelligentsia was mainly for their contribution in defending Islam against the penetration of Christian missions and the coming of secular and atheistic ideologies.

Ahmad Najib Burhani is researcher and chairman of the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities (ISSH) at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN). He received his PhD in Religious Studies from the University of California-Santa Barbara. His latest book is *"The New Santri: Fragmentation of Religious Authority in Indonesia"* (ISEAS 2020).

Zeyneb Hale Eroğlu: The Ahmadiyya and Reformist Thought in Republican China:

During the Republican period in China (1911-1949), Chinese Muslims established intellectual connections with global Muslim reformist movements. Many Chinese Muslims found the Ahmadiyya's reformist agenda particularly appealing in the context of China where Muslims have been a minority. The English language sources published and disseminated by the Ahmadiis facilitated the spread of their ideas in China, especially among intellectuals who had no access to Arabic sources. This presentation examines one of the first Qur'ān translation projects initiated by a group of Chinese Muslim intellectuals influenced by Ahmadi ideas.

Zeyneb Hale Eroğlu is an Assistant Professor of History and Asian Studies at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. She received her Ph.D. from the program of Inner Asian and Altaic Studies at Harvard University. She specializes in the history of Islam in China and she is currently working on a book project titled, *"Islam in Translation: Muslim Reform and Transnational Intellectual Networks in Modern China."*

Gerdien Jonker: On the Difficulty of Bridging East and West. Sadr-ud-Din's German Qur'ān of 1939:

In 1924, while in Berlin, scholars from a wide range of Muslim geographies, among them Tatars, Uzbeks, Persians, and Indians, sat down to discuss the necessity of European translations of the Qur'ān. The meetings were hosted by Sadr-ud-Din, Ahmadiyya missionary from Lahore and builder of the Berlin Mosque, who repeatedly received the gentlemen in his apartment. Hot topics were the need for a unified transliteration, explanations of Qur'ānic verses in the light of Christian and Jewish variants, as well as the historicity of the Qur'ān. Whereas most participants focused on the hermeneutics of single Qur'ānic verses with a view to biblical aberrations, others defended the Qur'ānic revelation as spiritual knowledge that was clothed in literary tropes Arabs were able to understand. The Bashkir historian Zeki Velidi Togan (who would later give a detailed account of the meetings) even held the view that, had the Qur'ān been sent down among the Turkic peoples, it would have made use of the narrative traditions of Central Asia.

Several translation projects emerged from these meetings. One is the German Qur'ān, which Sadr-ud-Din began in 1928, and to which a commentary was added in Berlin between 1937 and 1939. The book appeared with a Berlin printer in Summer 1939. The commentary compares single verses with their biblical variants, explaining to the readers why the Qur'ānic text holds the truer revelation. On a different note, the original Introduction also contained a section enumerating "Foreign Sources of the Qur'ān", explaining that the Qur'ān "owed" these sources and coining them as "historical raw material." When the book arrived in Lahore half a year later, this section caused an uproar in the Ahmadiyya community. Denying that he knew anything about it, Sadr-ud-Din forced his Berlin helpers to cut out the incriminated pages and replace them with others. Lahore headquarters even threatened the community with the withdrawal of financial support.

Taking this tension into focus, my contribution probes the thin line that separates a hermeneutics that stresses the added value of the Qur'ān as compared to biblical variants, from an historical approach that places the Qur'ān in its historical context. It is my suspicion that Ahmadiyya missionaries and German Muslims talked past each other in this respect. Whereas Sadr-ud-Din's commentary smoothed the way towards an "international religion", acceptable for seekers in both East and West, his German collaborators rather ventured into historical dependencies. Of the many attempts to bridge East and West through religion, it seems that this misunderstanding presents a key moment in the communication between the translator and his German supporters.

Gerdien Jonker is a historian of religion. She has carried out numerous research projects on the history of Islam in Europe. Since November 2011, Gerdien Jonker has been working as a research associate at the Erlangen Centre for Islam and Law in Europe at the University of

Erlangen-Nuremberg. In 2013 and 2016, the DFG honored two consecutive proposals on the exploration of the Ahmadiyya-Lahore in Europe. The resulting research was reflected in *The Ahmadiyya Quest for Religious Progress. Missionizing Europe 1990 – 1965*. Leiden: EJ Brill (MUMI 19), 2016, *On the Margins. Jews and Muslims in Interwar Berlin*. Leiden: EJ Brill (MUMI 34), 2020, as well as in *„Etwas hoffen muss das Herz“. Eine Familiengeschichte von Juden, Christen und Muslimen*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018.

Nora S. Eggen: The Scandinavian Qurʾān:

Abdus Salam (Svend Åge) Madsen's (1928– 2007) Danish translation published in 1967 is the first Scandinavian translation of the Qurʾān with an explicit theological commitment. It was approved by the Ahmadiyya movement as an important part of its missionary program and later followed by translations into Swedish (1988) and Norwegian (1996). Preceding and following Madsen, private, academic, and faith community initiatives have from 1843 to date produced a catalogue of almost twenty complete, published translations into Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian. I investigate Madsen's translation and its place in this translation history.

Nora S. Eggen, PhD Arabic and Islamic studies. Relevant articles: *“On the Periphery: Translations of the Qurʾān in Sweden, Denmark and Norway”* (2019); *“Universalised versus particularised conceptualisations of Islam in translations of the Qurʾān in Scandinavia”* (2016).

Philipp Bruckmayr: Qurʾān Translations in African American (post-)Muslim Movements:

This contribution will provide a brief overview of the usage of different English Qurʾān translations by African-American Muslim movements in the U.S. Subsequently it will focus on the translations produced by the leader of one such movement, Dwight York (ʿĪsā al-Hādī al-Mahdī, b. 1935 or 1945), the founder of the Ansaaru Allah Community (AAC, est. 1973 in Brooklyn). York first began to publish his own partial translations in 1977. In 1992, however, he suddenly renounced Islam. It was from this new post- Muslim perspective that he wrote a 1100+ pages full translation of the Qurʾān, entitled *El's Holy Qur'aan*.

Philipp Bruckmayr is lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Vienna. His research has focused inter alia on the history of Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia and the Americas as well as on the development of the Māturīdī school of Islamic theology.