

**Translations from Turkish in Slovakia, 1990-2010**  
a study by the Next Page Foundation

conducted by **Dr Gabriel Pirický**  
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## Introduction

Translating from Turkish, both Ottoman and modern, into Slovak language gained speed mainly after World War II. But in historical retrospective local populations had experiences of massive interaction with the Ottoman Muslims in course of the sixteenth and seventeenth century when the Ottomans invaded the Kingdom of Hungary and incorporated parts of it into their empire including Slovakia's southern borderland. The legacy of this period is preserved in manuscripts and other archival sources that are to be found in Slovakia too.

The Slovak capital Bratislava has a remarkable place also on the cultural map of the Ottoman Studies. This arises from the fact that the University Library in Bratislava holds a precious collection of Islamic manuscripts that are included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register since 1997. Their collector and famous poet Safvet Beg Basagic (1870 – 1934) brought them to Central Europe from Bosnia after World War I in order to find a safer place for their preservation. Bratislava library bought the collection in 1924 and after the destruction of National library in Sarajevo during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990's it represents the solitary preserved corpus of high value. Basagic's collection of unique Islamic manuscripts contains 284 volumes from twelfth to nineteenth century and 365 printed volumes in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Serbian and Croatian languages. The Ottoman part of this collection was translated by Professor Jozef Blaškovič (1910-1990) and published in German in 1961. But Blaškovič himself kept on translating Ottoman documents especially from the archives of Rimavská Sobota that have been subsequently published in Slovak too. During 1950's and 1960's Blaškovič published translations of Sabahattin Ali's works while famous Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet was translated mostly from Russian. Historically speaking it is equally noteworthy that the founder of Europe's first Department of Turcology at the university of Budapest, Ármin Vámbéry, was born and grown up in today's Slovakia (Svätý Jur and Dunajská Streda).

With seventies and eighties starts the most fruitful period of translations from Turkish (altogether 13 titles). Vojtech Kopčan (1940-2000), an internationally respected Ottomanist, was also active as translator, publishing works of Evliya Çelebi, Orhan Kemal, Necati Zekeriya and Aziz Nesin. At the same time Xénia Celnarová started to publish translations from Turkish in books, collective works and Slovak periodicals such as the Review of World Literature.

The decrease of translations from Turkish into Slovak is clearly observable after the fall of communism in 1989. When we compare the period between 1980-1990 with two decades (1990-2010) that have passed since the introduction of liberal democracy and market economy, the difference proves to be clearly visible (see also the annex). **During the eighties altogether nine book titles have been published whereas between 1990-2010 only three titles have been translated and published directly from Turkish.** At the end of this report I include for illustration the list of translations from Turkish during the 1980's. One of the reasons of such a decline since 1990 may be attributed also to the fact that unlike neighbouring post-communist countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, Slovakia **still does not have a Department of Turcology** at any of the local universities.

### Direct Turkish book translations into Slovak between 1960 – 2010.

1960 – 1964	1
1965 – 1969	2
1970 – 1974	1
1975 – 1979	3
1980 – 1984	6
1985 – 1989	3
1990 – 1999	1
2000 – 2010	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: Gabriel Pirický

This paper has been prepared in consultation with the Comenius University Library in Bratislava and the Slovak National Library in Martin. I would like to express my gratitude to two prominent translators, Xénia Celnarová and Otakar Kořínek, who provided me with valuable insight and information on their translation activities.

## **Publishing and translation market in Slovakia – an overview**

Slovak publishing industry which serves a nation of 5.3 million inhabitants is relatively small. After the fall of Iron Curtain state monopoly and regulation of the publishing activities came to end. Such important publishers of Turkish titles as Mladé letá, Pravda, Smena, Tatran have disappeared, only the Slovak Writer (Slovenský spisovateľ) still exists, but no more publishes translations from Turkish. Most of the publishing houses went through transformation from state owned agencies into private enterprises.

During the last 20 years only three publishers, Slovart, Q 111 and Mladé letá (in 2003 it merged with the State Pedagogical Press) came up with translations from Turkish into Slovak language with three titles translated directly from Turkish. Another three Turkish novels were translated from English. These publishers have their seat in the capital Bratislava. As both published only one book translated from Turkish it is almost useless to speak about the percentage of all Turkish language translations vis-a-vis the total book production in Slovakia. The overall proportion of books translated from Turkish into Slovak during the last two decades is so insignificant that one can only be pleased with the observation that at least something appeared at all.

## **Translations of Turkish authors via Turkish and other languages (1980 – 2010)**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>All artistic translations in Slovakia</b>	<b>Artistic translations of Turkish belles lettres</b>	<b>% from all translations</b>
1980	359	1	0,28%
1981	354	3	0,85%
1982	325	2	0,62%
1983	311	0	0,00%
1984	304	1	0,33%
1985	290	1	0,34%
1986	285	0	0,00%

1987	267	0	0,00%
1988	295	0	0,00%
1989	283	2	0,71%
1990	242	1	0,41%
1991	275	0	0,00%
1992	331	0	0,00%
1993	373	1	0,27%
1994	459	0	0,00%
1995	654	0	0,00%
1996	844	0	0,00%
1997	605	0	0,00%
1998	393	0	0,00%
1999	430	0	0,00%
2000	413	1	0,24%
2001	437	0	0,00%
2002	429	1	0,23%
2003	398	1	0,25%
2004	117	0	0,00%
2005	77	0	0,00%
2006	299	0	0,00%
2007	554	2	0,36%
2008	577	0	0,00%
2009	420	1	0,24%
2010	63	0	0,00%

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11463</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0,16%</b>
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Source: Department of Services, Slovak National Library, Martin

Books translated into Slovak from Turkish during last forty years are mostly falling into the category of contemporary prose, either novels or short stories. Among the more classical belles-lettres one finds folk literature, Ottoman prose, proverbs or travellers memoirs.

## **Translations from Turkish into Slovak between 1990–2010**

### **1. General Statistics and genre division**

Our task here is quite simple as between 1990–2010 only three books translated directly from Turkish into Slovak have been published, two novels and an anthology of Turkish proverbs and sayings (see the annex of this report where I included also publications in literary periodicals).

### **2. Book publications by genre**

In the past the genres of Turkish translations ranged from classical traveller accounts through late Ottoman fiction and finally modern prosaic literature. Between 1990–2010 we can find following genres:

Contemporary fiction: two books published in 1990 and 2002, one from a contemporary author, the other one from a writer who lived in the first half of the 20th century.

Anthologies: one title published in 2000, anthology of Turkish proverbs and sayings.

Until 1989 titles were generally distributed to all major libraries and bookshops. Since 1990 the situation is more complex as libraries have less financial resources to buy new titles and not all publishers dispose of a good distribution network.

### **3. Other publications**

After 1990 two renowned literary periodicals published translations from Turkish. First we have to mention the Review of World Literature (*Revue svetovej literatúry*) that is published quarterly by the Slovak Society of belles lettres' translators with the support of the Ministry of Culture. Second is the Literary Weekly (*Literárny týždenník*) published fortnightly as the official journal of the Association of Slovak writers since 1988. The genres, especially as the Review of World

Literature is concerned, range from folk lyric and short stories to Turkish lullabies. An important part of the Turkish translations in literary periodicals comes from Xénia Celnarová who used to publish in the Review of World Literature in abundance (see annex).

The Slovak internet sites offer only sketchy information on Turkish literature, but surprisingly a fan of Güntekin's novel *Çalikuşu* (Krutá láska) created a special and interesting website accessible on [www.krutalaska.estranky.sk](http://www.krutalaska.estranky.sk)

#### **4. Translation in the other direction (from Slovak into Turkish)**

The translation flow in the opposite direction is still more of a surprise and all three books that appeared in Turkish during the last two decades were translated from Slovak via English language. The publishing of these three titles listed hereafter has been supported by SLOLIA (Slovak Literature Abroad) Agency of the Literary Information Center in Bratislava.

JARUNKOVÁ, Klára: *Bir Tanem* (Jediná, The only). Istanbul: Yordam Kitapları, 1998. Translated from English by Gülşah Özer.

PIŠŤANEK, Peter: *Babil'in nehirleri* (Rivers of Babylon). Istanbul: Pupa Yayınları, 2009. Translated from English by Derya Öztürk.

KAPITÁŇOVÁ, Daniela: *Samko Tále: Kniha o cintoríne* (Samko Tále: The book about cemetery). Istanbul: Bizim Kitaplar, 2010. Translated from English by Tuma Alemdar (in print).

#### **Translations of Turkish authors via other languages**

It is symptomatic that for the period of our interest more has been translated from Turkish to Slovak via English than actually from the original language itself. As the publisher of Pamuk's novels wanted the translations to be quicker and cheaper, after 2006 it opted for having the work done from the authorized English translation. Some say that in this case, fortunately, it has not been at the cost of the quality of those novels, Turcologists are however more sceptical.

PAMUK, Orhan: *Moje meno je Červená* (Benim Adım Kırmızı, My Name is Red). Bratislava: Slovart, 2007 (translated from English by Otakar Kořínek).

ATALAY, Bülent: *Matematika a Mona Lisa* (Mathematics and Mona Lisa). Bratislava: Slovart, 2007 (translated from English by Roman Kečka).

PAMUK, Orhan: *Čierna kniha* (Kara Kitap, Black Book). Bratislava: Slovart, 2009 (translated from English by Otakar Kořínek). This book was published with the support of T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü.

PAMUK, Orhan: *Múzeum nevinnosti* (Masumiyet Müzesi, The Museum of Innocence). Bratislava: Slovart, 2010. (translated from English by Otakar Kořínek, in print).

Another specific and important feature of the Slovak book market is connected with the fact that translations of Turkish literature into Czech language are also widely read by Slovaks and available for purchase in most Slovak bookshops. And so recent translations of Orhan Pamuk's *My name is Red* (Jmenuji se červená), *Snow* (Sníh) or *White Fortress* (Bílá pevnost), all translated by Petr Kučera, as well as Pamuk's novel *Istanbul* (Istanbul: vzpomínky na město, translated from English by Klára Kolínská) are all at readers disposal in Slovakia. In the period of our interest further Czech titles appeared in Slovak bookshops as well: *Osman Aga z Temešváru: In the shadow of cross* (Ve stínu kříže). Praha, Brody 2001 (translated by Petr Štěpánek); Pamuk, Orhan: *New Life* (Nový život). Praha 2008 (by Olga Prahlová); *Livaneli, Zülfü: Happiness* (Šťěstí). Brandýs nad Labem 2008 (translated by Tomáš Laně); *Gürsel, Nedim: Daughters of Allah* (Alláhovy dcery) Host 2010 (translated by Tomáš Laně). For more detailed information readers of this report are also advised to consult similar report on translations from Turkish into Czech language.

### **Translators from Slovakia – working conditions and training**

Among active translators from Turkish only Dr Xénia Celnarová can be mentioned so that considering the age there is nobody from the middle-aged or younger generation. Until her recent retirement Dr Celnarová worked at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava. She was equally very active as a translator of Turkish literature published in Slovak periodicals, e.g. the *Review of World Literature*, or in edited collections of essays and short stories. Since both Celnarová and the late Vojtech Kopčan were well-skilled Turcologists the artistic level of their translations from Turkish was preserved as well. Otakar Kořínek, a freelance translator who translated three Pamuk's novels via English stands among the most prominent translators of English literature in Slovakia.

The remuneration of translators in Slovakia is calculated according to the so called „author's sheet” - that means 20 pages of text each with 30 lines and 60 keystrokes per line. Single page has to have 1 800 characters including spaces so that one sheet has 36 000 characters. In course of the last five to ten years translators received for one author's sheet on average between 120-150 Euros, but small publishers pay even less. Unfortunately some publishers quite often pay the translators overdue. It is somewhat paradoxical that translators from so called Oriental languages were much better paid under the communist regime than today and

publishers at that time took into consideration the complexities of a translation work from non-Indoeuropean languages or those using non-Roman scripts. Usually the translator is given two to ten copies of the book and can buy more copies for reduced price.

Translating Turkish literature is not a profitable business for translators, majority of whom think their work is not properly financially appreciated. The Slovak Literary Fund supports partially the work of translators, but under the condition that translator has to have at least three translated books published. Unlike translators from English who have a comparative advantage because they are constantly in great demand, the possibilities to publish from Turkish are very rare so that pure mastery of the source language is not sufficient..

There is a lack of sufficient funds either to cover printing costs or paying the translator whilst the Ministry of Culture remains the main donor. Cultural cooperation in this field with Turkey starts to pick up. For instance, the Translation Subvention Project TEDA of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Turism subsidized three translations in Slovakia: in 2005, 2008 and 2010. In August 2005 the Slovart Publishing House has been awarded a TEDA subsidy for the translation of Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* from Turkish, however, this translation finally did not materialize and the book was later translated into Slovak from the authorized English translation.

## **Mediators**

Whereas before 1990 it was usually the translator who chose the titles to be translated, after the collapse of communism the translations were initiated exclusively by publishers. This was the case with two existing publishers of our interest.

The Slovart Publishing House has been established in 1991 in Bratislava, since 1994 it has a sister publisher Nakladatelství Slovart in the Czech Republic and since 1995 it publishes also in Polish. Slovart, which belongs to the biggest publishing houses in the country publishes high quality books mostly in hardcover. It specializes in publishing Slovak writers and translations of fiction from various languages, but also artists' monographs and encyclopedias for children. The publishing house also "exports" Slovak authors to Germany, Russia or France.

On the other side Q 111 falls into the ranks of smallest publishers and concentrates on publishing books for children as well as high-quality poetry and fiction written mostly by the women authors. Q 111 was established in October 1990 by Kveta Dašková. In a series called "All people (may) know everything" she publishes proverbs of various ethnic and national groups.

From time to time Turkish books have been displayed although not on sale at the Bratislava book-fair "Bibliotéka" which takes place regularly in November. Among libraries not even the

library of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava is in possession of all titles due to financial reasons.

## **Reception**

Until recently the Turkish literature was despite many successful translations little known to the wider public in Slovakia. This situation, however, changed after Orhan Pamuk has been awarded the Nobel Prize 2006 and several of his books appeared in bookshops. Pamuk's novels were well received by wider audience as well as media and reviewers. Average print of his translations into Slovak run around 2 000-2 500 copies, e.g. "New Life" 2 000 copies, "My name is Red" 2 500 copies, "Black Book" 2 000 copies. The readers' interest can be supported also by the relatively significant sales dynamics of Pamuk's novels. Moreover, the City Library of Bratislava together with the Slovak Society of belles lettres' translators and the Slovart publisher organized presentation of these books. Would it not be that translation has been done through the second language, the Slovak version of „My name is Red“ could be awarded the prestigious Ján Hollý literary prize.

## **Evaluative assessment and recommendations**

Translations from Turkish into Slovak have been in the past decades mostly done by erudite and professional translators from the academia or literary circles. They were often accompanied with glossaries, commentaries and footnotes, published in hardcover, and even from the printing and aesthetic point of view they represented the best of what was possible to find at the time. This trend was maintained until today. For example, all Pamuk's books appeared in hardcover, have high printing quality and elegant design, and are provided mostly with sound prefaces or epilogues.

Most publishers in Slovakia are unwilling to publish translations not only from Turkish but from most languages of the Middle East, Africa or Asia. Also, extremely limited number of translators from Turkish made it very difficult in Slovakia to produce more than just a very modest output. More disturbing is the fact that a new generation of younger translators from Turkish is nowhere to be seen. The only hope then rests on the opening of the full-functioning Department of Turkish Studies at the Comenius University in Bratislava that could bring about new winds in the field of Turkish literary translations. Nevertheless, even in case when the aforementioned conditions would be fulfilled, the lack of coherent translation policy and insufficient financial resources would still create great obstacles for translators.

## Appendix

### The bibliography of translations from Turkish to Slovak in the period 1989 – 2010

#### Books:

**ERTEM, Sadri:** *Zastavené kolovraty* (Çikriklar Durunca, Stopped spinning wheels). Bratislava: Tatran, 1980. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**Šľachetný zbojník Köroğlu. Turecký epos** (Köroğlu Destanı, Noble brigand Köroğlu. Turkish epic). Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1981. (compiled and translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**JAŠAR, Kemal:** *Zbojník Indže Memed* (İnce Memed, Brigand Ince Mehmed). Bratislava: Pravda, 1981. (translated by Milan Odran).

**BILBAŞAR, Kemal:** *Džemo* (Cemo, Jemo). Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1982. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**SAIT Faik:** *Žena v lastovičom hniezde* (Kırlangıç Yuvasında Kadın, Woman in a swallow nest). Bratislava: Tatran, 1982. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**ORHAN Veli:** *Ked' náš vlak príde na konečnú* (When our train arrives at terminal). Bratislava: Tatran, 1984. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**AĞAOĞLUOVÁ Adalet:** *Svadobná hostina* (Bir Düğün Gecesi, Marriage feast). Bratislava: Smena, 1985. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**KARAOSMANOĞLU, Yakup Kadri:** *Derviş a dáma* (Nur Baba, Dervish and Lady). Bratislava: Tatran, 1989. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**NESIN, Aziz:** *Blázon na streche* (Madman on the roof). Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1989. (translated by Vojtech Kopčan). Published also in braille script for blind people in Levoča: SKN, 1993.

### Articles and journals:

**Pozvanie na svadbu do Erzurumu** (Marriage invitation to Erzurum. Turkish wedding songs), In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 16, Bratislava 1980, pp. 155–164. (compiled and translated by Xénia Celnarová)

**YILDIZ, Bekir:** *Nevesta v čiernom závoji* (Kara Çarşafılı Gelin, Bride in black veil). *Jazdcova smrť* (Rider's death). *Motorizovaní otroci* (Motorized slaves). In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 17, Bratislava 1981, pp. 73–92. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**Smútok a hrdosť Kemala Özera** (Grief and Pride of Kemal Özer). In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 19, Bratislava 1983, pp. 4–14. (compiled and translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**MUHTEREMOĞLUOVÁ, Afet:** *V ústrety samote* (Towards loneliness). In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 20, Bratislava 1984, pp. 102–110. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**KÜROVÁ, Pınar:** *Posledná črta* (Son Çizgi, The last feature). In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 21, Bratislava 1985, pp. 128–135. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**ALI, Sabahattin:** *Komik Rahmi* (Comedian Rahmi). In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 24, Bratislava 1987, pp. 88–97. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**HIKMET, Nazim:** Naše ženy. Epos o šejkovi Bedrettinovi (Kadınlarımız, Simavna Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedrettin Destanı, Our women. Sheikh Bedrettin's epic). In: *Revue svetovej literatúry* (Review of World Literature), Vol. 25, No. 5, Bratislava 1988, pp. 85–86. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

Following two books contain long quotations from manuscripts and archival material in Ottoman Turkish:

**KOPČAN, Vojtech** – KRAJČOVIČOVÁ, Klára: *Slovensko v tieni polmesiaca* (Slovakia in the shadow of crescent). Martin: Osveta, 1983.

**KOPČAN, Vojtech:** *Turecké nebezpečenstvo a Slovensko* (Turkish danger and Slovakia). Bratislava: Veda, 1986.

### **Translations of Turkish titles between 1990 – 2010.**

#### **Books:**

**GÜNTEKİN, Reşat Nuri:** *Krutá láska* (Çalikuşu, Cruel Love). Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1990. (translated by Milan Odran, first published in 1976).

**Dva razy rozmýšľaj, raz sadaj na koňa, alebo turecké príslovia a porekadlá** (Think twice, once mount a horse, or Turkish proverbs and sayings). Bratislava: Q 111, 2000. (compiled and translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**PAMUK, Orhan:** *Nový život* (Yeni Hayat, New Life). Bratislava: Slovart, 2002. (translated by Xénia Celnarová). Published also in braille script for blind people in Levoča: SKN, 2003.

#### **Articles and journals:**

**SAIT, Faik:** Socha, ktorú som ukradol z Louvru (The statue stolen from Louvres). In: *Päťdesiat perfektných príbehov* (Fifty perfect stories). Bratislava: Mladé letá , 1992, pp. 67–69. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**YILDIZ, Bekir:** Nevesta v čiernom závoji (Bride in black veil). In: *Päťdesiat perfektných príbehov* (Fifty perfect stories). Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1992, pp. 156–160. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).

**AĞAOĞLUOVÁ, Adalet:** Prvý hlas ticha (Sessizliğin İlk Sesi, The first voice of silence). *Literárny týždenník* (Literary Weekly), No. 22, Bratislava 1992, pp. 8–9. (translated by Xénia Celnarová).