



MASTERARBEIT

Turkish encyclopedia

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Encyclopaedias as political instruments

In the framework of her master's thesis, Lale Diklitas student of the elite Master's program "Cultural Studies of the Middle East", Universities of Bamberg and Erlangen-Nuremberg, will examine how three encyclopaedias can provide new insights into policies regarding religion and historiography in the Republic of Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s. She will further elaborate how an encyclopaedia was used as a means of opposition to create a historiographical counter-narrative to the interpretation of history propagated by the state.

Research in religious policies and historiography

In this work, the decision of the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1939 to translate the trilingual Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden 1913-1936), which was written by European orientalists, into Turkish (İslâm Ansiklopedisi, Istanbul 1940-1987), is discussed in its socio-political and cultural context. This contextualization will allow the researchers to draw further conclusions about the religious policies in the early republic and the role ascribed to religion in the historiographical narratives propagated by the state. The significance of this translation of the Encyclopaedia of Islam is already shown by the fact that very soon opposition against it developed. The alternative İslâm-Türk Ansiklopedisi (Islamic-Turkish Encyclopaedia, Istanbul 1940-48) was issued by dissidents who criticized the statelty endeavour. They deemed it questionable that a European publication which reproduced biased views about 'Islam' and 'Muslims' was uncritically adopted into Turkish.

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