

STRANGERS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

WRITINGS ON ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN TURKISH EXILE

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‘Sir Nikolaus Pevsner starb 1983. Er konnte die Übertragung dieses 1940 im englischen Exil erschienenen Werkes in seine Muttersprache, in der er es zwischen 1930 und 1933 verfasst hatte, nicht mehr autorisieren.’

German edition of Nikolaus Pevsner’s
*Academies of Art, Past and Present*¹

Being a stranger in a language is described by the exiled writer Jean Améry as an essential characteristic of emigration in the period of National Socialism:

‘In the years of exile our relationship to our homeland was akin to that toward our mother tongue. In a very specific sense we have lost it too and cannot initiate proceedings for restitution. [...] Not to the same degree, however, that our mother tongue proved to be hostile, did the foreign one become a real friend. It behaved and still behaves in a reserved manner and receives us only for brief formal visits. One calls on it, *comme on visite des amis*, which is not the same as dropping in on friends. *La table* will never be the table; at best one can eat one’s fill at it. Even individual vowels, and though they had the same physical qualities as our native ones, were alien and have remained so.’²

Just as the native language threatens to become foreign with the passage of time, so the communication in the target countries of exile often presents an insurmountable challenge. For the theatre critic Alfred Kerr or actor Fritz Kortner the emigration to Britain and the US and into a new language environment was even a threat to the very basis of their livelihood.

But what was the fate of those emigrants who would go on to contribute to the creation of academic subjects, were to give lectures and write seminal works in their countries of exile? Numerous German-speaking scholars and architects responded to the invitation of the Turkish government before and during the period of National Socia-

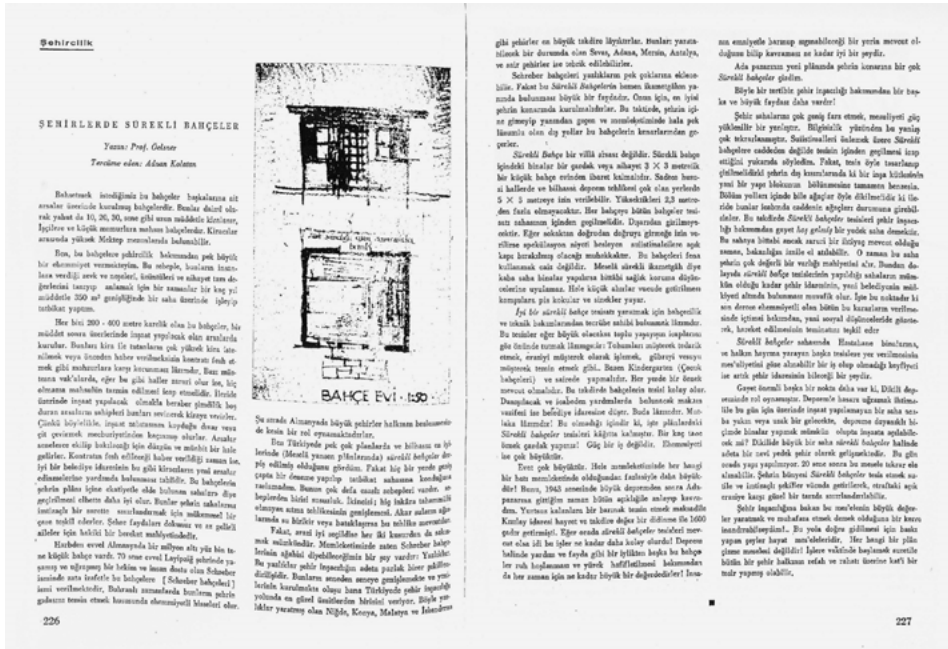
lism to work and teach at the newly established and reformed universities and academies of the Turkish Republic. After 1933, the 'racial', political and cultural persecution and alienation that immediately followed Adolf Hitler's assumption of power led to a continuous stream of emigration out of Germany. Among these emigrants were also public figures, such as politicians, university professors, artists, writers and actors.³ Emigration meant leaving behind the home in which one was no longer welcome and in which one no longer saw any opportunities, and travelling to foreign countries, often with uncertain prospects for the future. Turkey, quantitatively speaking, was not one of the preferred countries of destination for German-speaking emigrants under National Socialism, considering that 'only' one thousand refugees were granted asylum there. What is astonishing, however, is the number of highly qualified people among them; 300 academics came to Turkey, making it a country of destination for elite emigrants. One could only enter the country by official invitation. The founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 had heralded the beginning of a period of radical changes in society, politics and religion and the targeted invitation of these foreign experts was meant to boost its progress. The successor state to the Ottoman Empire wanted to catch up with Western Europe in the areas of the economy, legal systems, education, and culture.⁴ The Turkish government had already been inviting foreign specialists since 1927 and, after 1933, their number included many emigrants from Germany.⁵ Prerequisite for obtaining a post was the assurance of the immigrants and emigrants to make a visible contribution to teaching and research, publication and committee work within a few years of their arrival.

Using scholars and architects who migrated to Turkey as an example, this essay will examine various strategies of lecturing and publishing in a country of exile: as one noteworthy example one might mention Ernst Reuter who, as a professor of Municipal Science in Ankara, quickly learned the Turkish language, held his lectures in Turkish and was able to closely supervise the translations of his books and essays. As the architect Ernst Egli before him, Reuter also translated scientific terms used in his field from English and German into Turkish. In this way he contributed significantly to the establishment of a Turkish technical terminology for his discipline. By contrast, the work of the art historian Ernst Diez in Turkey shows that processes of writing, translation and reception could also be prone to misapprehension and dissonance. While Josef Strzygowski – one of Diez's teachers – was widely recognised across Turkey, Ernst Diez provoked controversy with similar theoretical concepts which would, ultimately, cost him his position.

ORAL TRANSLATIONS

Foreign professors who were invited to Turkey were expected to learn the Turkish language within the contract period. In the first years of their stay, lessons and exams were given and set in German with Turkish translators. Translators were often students or assistants with a knowledge of German, usually because they had grown up or studied in Germany. For the sculptor Rudolf Belling, for example, lessons and lectures were translated by Nijat Sirel and Kenan Yontu who had been trained in Germany.⁶ A few – such as Ernst Reuter and before him the architect Ernst Egli – learned the Turkish language and were able, by mastering a number of idioms, to connect much more closely with their students. Barriers between foreign professors, their Turkish colleagues and students were undoubtedly frequently caused by language problems or inadequate translation services of an interpreter.⁷ What had been said and written was mediated through a third party who frequently changed or shortened parts of the original material during translation. This was reported, for example, by Wolfgang Gleissberg, the assistant to Erwin Finlay-Freundlich, the Chair of Astronomy at Istanbul University. In his memories, he reflected on the problems of the translation of lectures and claimed that this not only wasted precious time, but also that the desirable immediate contact to the audience could not be made: ‘Remarkable was also that as soon as the students noticed that a German professor started to learn the Turkish language, they asked him to give lectures in Turkish; they kept explaining that it was easier for them to listen to a lecture which was given in bad Turkish than to a translated one.’⁸

The work of German and Austrian experts in Turkey is an ideal case to think about the range of possibilities of transfer and translation and the shifts in meaning they entail. Cases like the lectures by Clemens Holzmeister on the history of European architecture can serve as prime examples to demonstrate the number of protagonists involved. Holzmeister had been giving them at the University of Istanbul in German since 1946; they were subsequently translated by his female assistant Necribe akırođlu. However, these lectures have not survived in the original manuscript but only in the written records of one of his students, Behruz inici, who published them forty years later in the form of a book.⁹ Holzmeister focused on certain architectural periods selected according to his personal preferences. Thus, the detailed appraisal of Romanesque and Gothic art can be deduced from Holzmeister’s own field of interest as a trained church architect. Either intentionally or because of a lack of interest on his part he disregarded important developments in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century as the turning point of architecture.¹⁰ Holzmeister’s statements and remarks in the form of inici’s records in Turkish therefore contain numerous omissions which on the one hand were due to the subjective view of the architect on architectural history, but on the other may indicate losses during the translation process: from Holzmeister through his assistant akırođlu to his student inici.



20 Gustav Oelsner: *Şehirlerde süreklî bahçeler*, translated by Adnan Kolatan, in: *Arkitekt*, 9-10/1946, pp. 226-227

COINING TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGIES

Translators often faced the challenge that there was no equivalent in Turkish for some German terms. In the texts of the urban planner Gustav Oelsner terms like ‘Heimstätte’ or ‘Siedlung’ (‘homestead’; ‘settlement’) were simply adopted into Turkish as loan-words.¹⁴ Sometimes, however, neologisms were produced, such as the transformation of the ‘Schreibergarten’ (‘allotment gardens’) into the term ‘Süreklî Bahçeler’ (permanent gardens) (ill. 20). Thus, in dealing with the published articles and books one always has to take into account a substantive loss of meaning between original manuscript and translation; unless, as in the case of Ernst Reuter, the original manuscripts are available for comparison.

Furthermore, German-speaking experts in Turkey were also members of language commissions and were supposed to contribute to the establishment of technical terms. The astronomer Wolfgang Gleissberg, jointly with Turkish colleagues, formulated a number of terms for the subject of astronomy such as height, orbit, revolution, or sidereal time. On the one hand, use was made of the Turkish vocabulary, on the other, the scientists had to form new words from existing Turkish word stems:

-arrêt	f.	kararname	Chlorung	a.	kler ile dezenfeksiyon
Arbeitslosenversicherung	a.	işsizlik sigortası	chomage	f.	işsizlik
arrondissement	f.	kaza	Citybildung	a.	şehir iş merkezi teşkilî (bak s. 6)
audit	i.	murakabe	city manager	i.	Amerikada belediye reisi vazifesi yapan bir teknisyen (bak s. 68)
Auftragsangelegenheit	a.	navale işleri (bak s. 43)			
B			civic centre	i.	şehirlerde resmî dairelerin toplandığı yer
Bauherr	a.	inşa ettiren	cimiterie	f.	mezarlık
Baupolizei	a.	inşa kontrolü teşkilâtı	committee	i.	encümen
Beanstandung	a.	müdahale (salâhiyettar devlet makamı tarafından komünün her hangi bir kararına karşı)	committee (statutory)	i.	mecburi encümen
Bedürfnisanstalt	a.	hala	committee (standing)	i.	daimî encümen
Beratungsstelle	a.	tavsiye bürosu	commodités publiques	f.	halâlar
board	i.	encümen (İngilterede, «board of-unvanile vekâletler gibi merkezî makamlara denir)	common law	i.	yazılmamış amma efkârı umumiye tarafından kabul edilen hükûmler
board of education	i.	maarif vekâleti	commune	f.	komün (nufus nazarı itibara alınmıyarak her mahallî idare)
board of trade	i.	ticaret vekâleti	council	i.	meclis (küçük büyük her komün için)
Bodenreform	a.	arazi ispekülasyonuna karşı mücadele	councillor	f.	meclis azası
borough	i.	şehir (kasaba)	conseil	f.	meclis
Bücherei	a.	kütüphane (ödünç, kiralık kitap alınabilen yer)	conseil municipal	f.	komün meclisi
Bürgermeister	a.	belediye reisi (küçük ve orta şehirlerde)	conseiller municipal	f.	komün meclisi azası
by-law	i.	mahallî nizamname (kanun kuvvetine hatz)	county	i.	İngilterede kaza gibi bir kaç boroughs ve parishes ihtiva eden bir hususî idare
by-pass	i.	geçit yolu (bak s. 165)	county council	i.	county meclisi
			county borough	i.	bizzat county hakları sahibi olan bir büyük yahut orta şehir (60 000 den fazla nüfuslu)
C			non county borough	i.	bizzat county hakları sahibi olmayan bir küçük yahut orta şehir (60 000 den aşağı nüfuslu)
cahier de charge	f.	şartname			
caisse populaire	f.	halk sandığı			
chairman	i.	riyaset eden			

21 Ernst Reuter: *Komün Bilgisi*, Ankara 1940, Appendix

‘When I read the astronomy literature that has appeared in Turkey since then, I can state with satisfaction that the terms I introduced have naturalized and have become an integral part of the Turkish technical language. They were used for the first time in a textbook on astronomy published in 1937 in Istanbul, written by Prof. Freundlich and me [...]’.¹⁵

Ernst Reuter translated technical terms for municipal science from English and German into Turkish. For example, the term ‘Mali Tevzin’ (‘financial compensation’) was first introduced into the Turkish literature by him, and was later on even used in the Turkish Constitution. The Article 116 of the Turkish Constitution in 1961 included a provision on financial compensation between the state and city government – ‘the municipalities are assigned revenue in accordance with their duties’ – which goes back directly to Reuter’s considerations. He had dealt with financial compensation in several essays and in his book *Belediye Maliyesi*. Ruşen Keleş recalls that Reuter’s students and assistants had contributed to the introduction of Article 116, which was

also included as Article 127 in the Constitution of 1982.¹⁶ In the appendix to his textbook *Komün Bilgisi*, there is a collection of 200 English, German and French terms with their Turkish counterparts (ill. 21): there are basic terms like ‘kütüphane’ (‘library’) or ‘belediye reisi’ (‘mayor’) but also technical terminology like ‘işsizlik sigortası’ (‘unemployment insurance’) or ‘murakabe’ (‘audit’). And there are some notions which could obviously not be translated very easily: for a single word like ‘Bodenreform’ (‘land reform’) Reuter suggests a more complex translation, ‘arazi ispekûlasyonuna karşı mücadele’, in order to explain the meaning as clearly as possible.¹⁷

The architect Ernst Egli was appointed chairman of a commission whose goal was to address the Europeanization and reform of architectural terminology. The purpose was to establish a universal terminology that would transfer old terms into present context and also coin new ones. Egli reported:

‘We were busy, among other things, inventing an official technical term for the rope to which workers repairing the minaret roof were attached. [...] This kind of rope is now referred to among the people as “can-îpi”, which means “thread of life”. “Can” means life and soul at the same time, “îpi” means rope, string or yarn. One can see just in this term, which is now included in the official terminology, how skillfully and descriptively the people take their expressions and terms from their own environment.’¹⁸

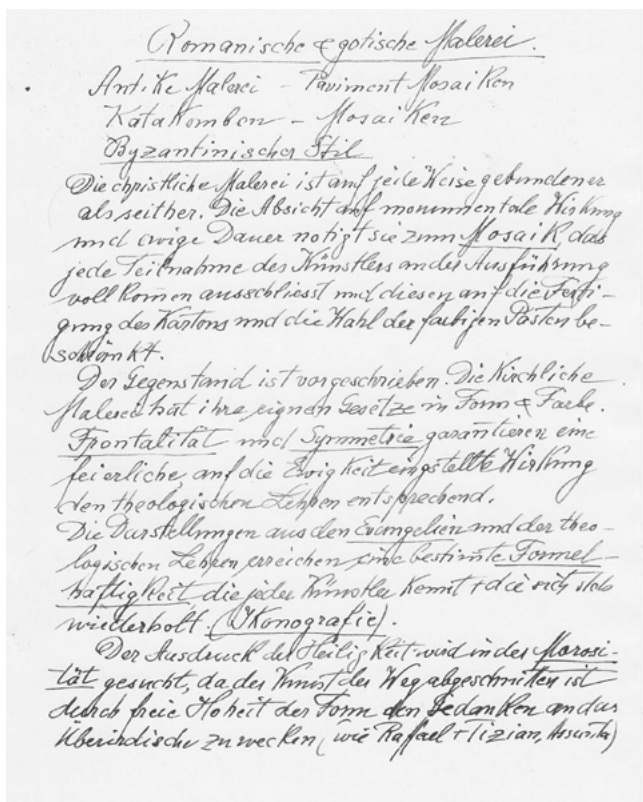
Egli’s terms have long since entered the Turkish vocabulary.

UNDERSTANDING AND MISUNDERSTANDING ART HISTORY

The work of this commission coining a new technical language is an expression of the overall cultural, social and linguistic change that took place in Turkey within a few years.¹⁹ This included a new historiography, which relativized the importance of Ottoman history in favour of a genuinely Turkish history. Previously, religion had served as the main determination of identity. However, under the slogan of ‘Turkism’, a return to genuine Turkish traditions was demanded. All the people that had ever settled on the Anatolian territory were considered ancestors of the Turks, and Turkish elements were sought in their languages and cultural products. Institutional foundations like the Society for the Study of Turkish History and the Faculty of Language, History and Geography at Ankara University were tasked with the exploration of Turkish traces in history. After 1923, Turkish academics such as Mehmet Fuat Köprülü committed themselves to the exploration of Turkish cultural history with the goal of constructing a national identity. In 1924 Köprülü founded the *Türkiyat Institute*, which examined Turkish history, literature and culture across time and space: from Antiquity to the present day,

from Mongolia to Hungary.²⁰ It was also the historian Köprülü who popularized Josef Strzygowski's writings in Turkey. The Austrian art historian, the subject of controversy in his native country, maintained close relationships with colleagues in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1932, Strzygowski was invited to speak at the First Turkish History Congress under the aegis of Atatürk.²¹ Strzygowski's writings were read in Republican Turkey with great interest, chiefly because they emphasized the dominance of the nation and 'race' over the cultural-historical influence of religion. This ethnic argument was in harmony with the national feelings of the Kemalists and their desire to overcome an Islamic cultural history.²² In particular, the inclusion of pre-Islamic cultures corresponded to the search for the identity of the young republic under Atatürk, who propagated the view that Greek art was influenced by Turkish art. It was precisely this weakening of the influence of Hellenistic and Romano-Christian art that could be found in Strzygowski's works: in a Turkish essay published in the 1930s, Strzygowski tried to demonstrate Islamic influences in Athens and to prove the adaptation of Ottoman motifs in the works of the Italian Baroque artist Bernini.²³ The arguments of the art historian were embraced as 'making propaganda for Turkishness and the majesty of our culture' as it was described in a 1975 publication.²⁴ At the first congress of Turkish history in 1932, Strzygowski denounced the defamation of Turkish art by 'humanists' as 'the work of barbarians' and called for a reassessment of this artistic tradition reaching into the depths of history.²⁵ With this he met with broad approval in Turkey and with just as much enthusiasm in Croatia or Hungary, where his writings also contributed to the construction of national histories of art.²⁶ In Turkey, Strzygowski is appreciated by Turkish historians to the present day for having extended the European view of the history of Turkish art and its geography. The art historian Oktay Aslanapa emphasizes in particular Strzygowski's groundbreaking research on Turkish art in the publications *Amida* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1910) and *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1917) as pioneering works.²⁷

The reputation that Josef Strzygowski enjoyed in Turkey paved the way for other researchers from the Viennese Institute of Art History and its former students. In addition to Heinrich Glück one must mention here one of Strzygowski's students, Katharina Otto-Dorn and, above all, Ernst Diez. In 1943 Strzygowski's former assistant Diez, after working at the American Bryn Mawr College and in Vienna, arrived in Turkey to build an art history institute at the University of Istanbul. In his book *Die Kunst der islamischen Völker* ('The art of the Islamic Peoples') which first appeared in 1915 and of which three subsequent editions were published before 1925, Diez extensively discussed pre-Islamic and Ottoman Turkish art, architecture and ornaments. With only limited financial and technical resources, Ernst Diez tried to set up an institute in Istanbul. He wrote his manuscripts in German (ill. 22), unlike his lectures in the U.S. that were written in English. The translation in the classroom was then done by his assistant. Diez's contract also required him to write a textbook for his subject. Excursions into rural Turkey, the



22 Ernst Diez: Lectures at the University of Istanbul, 1946/1947, manuscript, Istanbul, Papers of Oktay Aslanapa

search for unknown historical buildings and their photographic records served as preparation for the required textbook.

Turkey's entering the war in 1944 led to the internment of nearly all the Germans in three Anatolian localities: Kırşehir, Yozgat and Nevşehir. Far from interrupting his work, Diez used his internment of over one year to write the textbook. At the beginning of 1946, back in Istanbul, Ernst Diez resumed teaching and, within a few months, completed the work on his textbook *Türk Sanatı. Başlangıcından Günümüze Kadar* ('Turkish art. From the beginnings to the present'). It was published in 1946 in the translation of his assistant Oktay Aslanapa. Diez wanted his book to be a pioneering text about the history and genesis of Turkish art. This hitherto little explored territory was now to be examined and evaluated extensively as a national phenomenon: 'The book we have now published is intended to show the roots of the national monumental artistic creation, on the basis of selected works of architecture and art. It has been written with the inten-

tion of extracting the Turkish element within the art complex commonly referred to as Islamic art.²⁸

In his book, Diez expressed views favouring a comparative art history ('Vergleichende Kunstwissenschaft').²⁹ This method, developed by Josef Strzygowski, pursued the emergence of national styles and influences that resulted from the examination of the individual edifices. Following Strzygowski's views, Diez understood the individual work of art as part of the great history of mankind.³⁰ Diez tried to prove the existence of an exchange between religiously and philosophically-culturally delineated geographic zones. In doing so, he not only resorted to the idea formulated by Strzygowski of valuing the object above the written source – Diez called this an 'empirical basis'.³¹ Closely following Strzygowski's investigative parameters of knowledge, nature and development, he ultimately saw Turkish art to be part of the global art history. In his textbook *Türk Sanatı* the art historian attempted to trace back the origins of architectural motifs and decorative elements of Seljuk and Ottoman art over countries, nations and centuries. Thus Diez saw the windows of the Green Mosque in Bursa framed with Muquarnas designs as being derived from Armenian architecture. The dome as the main element of Ottoman roof architecture was traced back to Iranian architecture.³² He argued that migrations of peoples contributed to the migration of forms and styles.³³ Diez attached particular importance to Armenian culture: religious constructions like the mausoleum towers in the vicinity of Lake Van in Anatolia were attributed by Diez to formative Armenian influences.³⁴ With these comparisons, Diez followed the tradition of Strzygowski who had contributed to the re-evaluation of Armenian architecture.³⁵

The Austrian expressed a particularly far-reaching view on Ottoman mosques. Diez was of the opinion that the mosques built on the orders of the Sultan resulted from a competition with the Hagia Sophia. Only after Sinan had reached the spatial effect of the Hagia Sophia in the Şehzade Mosque, could he set a standard for Islamic religious buildings.³⁶ This argument demonstrates the problems of comparative art science which always performs an assessment of things old and new, and of what is innovation or imitation through comparisons.

It was particularly the attributing of the origins of Turkish art to Christian and non-Turkish cultures that caused lively protests on an unprecedented scale. Numerous important daily newspapers of the Republic, such as *Ulus*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Vatan*, as well as the architecture magazine *Mimarlık* published articles by Turkish architects and historians who expressed scathing criticism of the author and his work. The most outspoken critics in the campaign against Ernst Diez, the architect Sedat Çetintaş and the rector of the Topkapi Museum, Tahsin Öz, described the textbook as a slanderous 'attack on Turkishness'.³⁷ They denounced the comparison between the Hagia Sophia and an Ottoman mosque, and criticized the relationship between Turkish and Armenian art articulated in the book. Öz writes: 'If the architectural masterpieces actually originate from Armenian models, if Armenian masters worked on them, if the outlines of the most important

mosques and mausoleums are taken from churches, where is actually the Turkish architecture? Why does he call his book “Turkish Art” then? And, with all due respect, where is there a need for a Chair in Turkish Art History?³⁸

Diez tried to defend himself in the daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* and in the specialist magazine *Felsefe Arkivi*. His arguments were based on the ‘law of endosmosis’, or the ‘cultural penetration’ from which no ‘province of art’ was excluded: ‘There is no art historian who would deny the high degree of originality of the architectural ornaments of the Seldjuks but primarily it is the task of the art historian to explore the origins of construction and ornamental forms.’³⁹ In order to substantiate the links between the Turkish and non-Turkish architecture over the centuries, Diez provided some images he was requested to supply for comparison. At the same time he did not move away from his views on the connections between Turkish and Christian architecture, conspicuously avoiding the term ‘Armenian’ and instead speaking of Transcaucasian references.⁴⁰ In defense of his reputation as a scholar, Diez referred to the fact that he was Strzygowski’s student, indicating the many years of his teaching experience in Europe, the USA and Turkey.

However, Ernst Diez’s reputation as an art historian was ruined by the public attacks.⁴¹ They ultimately led to his dismissal. In 1950, he left Turkey and his still young institute with 110 students. Although Diez had only spent seven years in Turkey and polarized his contemporaries, his impact on the development of the subject was still great. His assistant Oktay Aslanapa became an influential personality in the research into Turkish art history in the second half of the 20th century. Aslanapa expanded the institute founded by Diez and was head of its Turkish-Islamic branch for many years. The Turkish art historian developed the institutional founding of the subject at the University of Istanbul, which was to become the model for many other Turkish institutes. He also initiated the expansion of the Institute and in 1963 he contributed to the establishment of three chairs – European art history, Byzantine studies and Islamic-Turkish art history. This corresponded to the objectives pursued by Ernst Diez, whose ideal was a globally oriented discipline. Oktay Aslanapa established archaeological excavations as an instrument of research and made them a required course for the students of the Istanbul Art History Institute. In this way Aslanapa passed on the professional expertise that had once been called for by Josef Strzygowski in the late 19th century in his teaching in Graz: the unity of classical archeology and modern history of art.⁴² In his writings, Aslanapa repeatedly referred to the tradition within which he saw his own work. He wrote in 1993: ‘With Ernst Diez, who worked with such success at the world famous Strzygowski-Institute in Vienna, a scientific and systematic research into the history of art started in Istanbul and in the whole country. At the same time I started my career as his assistant and in this way the art historical research in this country is connected to the Strzygowski-School in Vienna.’⁴³

Yet the debate surrounding Ernst Diez shows quite clearly that the application of supposedly established theoretical models does not always succeed. What may have led to the rejection of Diez's book was the selection of examples and comparisons perceived as inappropriate, on the one hand, and arguments, terminology as well as translation problems on the other. An accurate translation of a text does not always necessarily result in a successful transmission of ideas. Thus the book *Türk Sanatı* may have been indeed translated true to the meaning of the original text, but nevertheless, the translation probably bypassed the cultural prerequisites and idiomatic practices, especially when the formulations were perceived as brusque, comparisons as insensitive, or even political, and arguments as arrogant. Translation theory assumes that texts in a culturally sensitive translation can be context-oriented or not.⁴⁴ However, for Turkey, the case of Diez's and other translated, written and spoken texts, it is difficult to measure the quality and equivalence of the translations, since the German original manuscripts are in many cases missing, or the Turkish translation was made orally. In this context one can speak of self-translation rather in a figurative sense when terms and concepts were transferred into the language body of the country of exile – and, as is evidenced by the example of such terms as 'Heimstätte' or 'Siedlung' ('homestead' or 'settlement'), the use of the German revealed their apparent untranslatability. The author Gustav Oelsner left those words in his native language. The untranslated and untranslatable terms stayed on one hand foreign while on the other hand could not be misunderstood. It seemed that even migrants that stayed in Turkey for many years (like Oelsner did) were not confident about their abilities to find the right words for all the things they had to say.

