

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF TURKIC LANGUAGES

◆ NEWSLETTER, WINTER ISSUE 2022 ◆

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S NOTE

BY SAADET EBRU ERGÜL

Dear AATT Friends and Colleagues,

Happy 2022! Even as we grapple with the new normal, it has been a busy year for AATT. Living with the pandemic almost for two years has shaped our role as language professionals. The new normal has offered us opportunities for reflection and reassessment of our service for and presence in academia and our communities. Despite the long distances and time differences among us, virtual engagement was at its zenith in 2021 and provided more opportunities for participation and collaboration than ever. Despite the many advantages and attractiveness of living in virtual world, we never lost track of the importance of in-person connection. We do miss convening with our colleagues and friend in person. However, in 2021, we had many opportunities to connect with colleagues from Japan, Canada, Azerbaijan, Germany, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Israel, and many other parts of the world via virtual events. AATT helped us to connect with colleagues and stay updated through virtual events such as the 6th AATT Conference, titled "Teaching Turkish and Turkic Languages During the Pandemic: Past, Present and Future Directions", the 16th Annual Pre-Conference for Graduate Students in Turkish/Turkic Studies, the AATT Panel at MESA, titled "The Past, Present, and Future of Ottoman Turkish Language Pedagogy", and the AATT Roundtable at MESA, titled "Transition to Online Teaching: Reconstructing Language Teaching Pedagogies and Curricula". AATT is also proud to announce a new published volume that contains selected papers from the 5th AATT conference on "21st Century Language Learning Standards and Curriculum". Funda Güven (Nazarbayev University) and Emrah Şahin (University of Florida)

served as editors of this volume, titled *Pedagogies, Challenges and Cultural Intersections in The Turkic World*.

Please check our 2022 calendar for upcoming events, submission deadlines, award nomination procedures, membership renewal and other important dates. As AATT prepares to launch its new website, it will continue reflecting current pedagogical practices, adapting new approaches, and providing resources to meet the needs of the community. Likewise, it will continue to connect academia, society, and students; and create a stronger network and collaboration opportunities.

Despite the difficulties of the past, we are looking forward to a better year with much hope and strength. We thank all members of the AATT community, the President, the Executive Board, our supporters, colleagues, and friends; and we urge you to renew your memberships and to stay connected for another fruitful, collaborative year. Stay safe, healthy, and engaged. Happy 2022!

In 2021, AATT organized all its meetings, conferences, and events online. Both the 16th AATT Graduate Student Pre-Conference and the 6th AATT Conference took place online in October and November, 2021. The 16th Graduate Student Pre-Conference was organized by the AATT President with the support of Dr. Erika Gilson, Dr. Uli Schamiloglu, Dr. Sylvia Önder, and Dr. Hakan Karateke. We are grateful for their continued efforts to support this graduate student conference, which is designed to encourage students enrolled at academic institutions in North America to use sources in Turkish and Turkic languages for their academic research. The conference offers graduate students an opportunity to present their research, establish contact with other young scholars, and receive critical feedback from participating faculty discussants. The Pre-Conference also helps students progress towards more formal presentations at national conferences. This year the Pre-Conference took place virtually on November 28, 2021.

The 6th Annual AATT Conference was organized by Elif Sayar, professor at Istanbul Technical University and a Fulbright alumna of the University of Pennsylvania. We thank her and acknowledge her hard work for organizing this international virtual conference. I am also happy to announce that AATT's new website is under construction. We cannot thank our Communication coordinator and Media Director Esra Predolac (University of Kansas) enough for her selfless efforts and hard work. We also thank Jessica Tiregöl Mentesoğlu (UCLA) for her support and leadership for this project. I also owe a big thank you to all our board members, our treasurer, our executive secretary, and their institutions for all their great work and time spent working for AATT. They have shown great dedication and made priceless contributions. AATT is also thankful to its members, member institutions, and all our colleagues who support us.

We are full of energy, and we are optimistic about the future that lies ahead. We will continue to serve the field and our students in 2022.

All the best,

Feride Hatiboğlu



THE PRESIDENT'S NOTE

BY FERIDE
HATİBOĞLU

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to you all! After spending a long time apart, most of us started Fall Semester 2021 teaching virtually (again). Due to the Omicron surge, some institutions extended winter break or began Spring Semester online, but most of us are back to teaching in-person now. Although the online experience has changed the way we work, students are happy and grateful to be back on campus and in classrooms.

İLKNUR LİDER, WELCOME TO THE AATT EXECUTIVE BOARD!

BY BANU ÖZER-GRIFFEN

İlknur Lider has served as the Turkish Instructor & Program Coordinator at the University of Pittsburgh's Less Commonly Taught Languages Center since 2008. She is also the advisor for the Turkish Minor. She received her B.S. from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. She holds an MPIA degree from the University of Pittsburgh and she is fully certified by the ACTFL (American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages) as an OPI tester for the Turkish Language. In addition to language classes, she teaches a general education course on Turkish Culture & Society, and she has taught Intensive Turkish classes at Pitt's Summer Language Institute (2011-2018). She has been a fellow at the University Honors College (2018-2021), serving on scholarship

**NEW BOARD
MEMBER
İLKNUR LİDER**



committees and mentoring students for language related projects. Her areas of interests are language program development, communication strategies and language proficiency, developing instructional materials using authentic texts and the multiliteracies pedagogy in language teaching and learning. Currently, she is one of the curricula developers for CARLA (Center for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition) project on Social Justice Issues in Language Education (2020-2023). She also recently

represented the AATT at ACTFL's Emerging Leadership Initiative for Language Learning workshop. We are happy to welcome İlknur to AATT's Executive Board and look forward to benefitting from her ideas and future contributions!

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF TURKIC LANGUAGES

Williams Hall
255 S. 36th St. Room 847
Philadelphia PA 19104-6305
United States

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OUR NEW WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR, ESRA PREDOLAC

BY SAADET EBRU ERGÜL

We would like to thank Esra Predolac (University of Kansas) for her service to the AATT as an executive board member from 2018 to 2021. She will continue to serve the AATT in her new role as Website and Communications Director.

Esra joined the KU faculty in 2013, where she teaches Turkish language and Turkey-related content courses in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Languages and Literatures (SELL) as well as German language courses in the Department of German Studies. Between 2015 and 2021, she served as the coordinator of the Critical Languages Consortium at KU, and since Fall 2021 she is the Assistant Director at the Center of Russian, East European, & Eurasian Studies (CREES). She is also currently co-authoring a Turkish language textbook, *Konuşan Paragraflar*, with Saadet Ebru Ergül (Stanford University) through a grant from KU's Open Language Resource Center (OLRC). She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Cornell University, an M.A. in Linguistics from Syracuse University, and a B.A. in Language Teaching from Hacettepe University (Ankara, Turkey).

Despite having lived in multiple countries and having made Kansas her home, Esra considers herself Mediterranean through and through. She enjoys swimming, hiking, biking, traveling, playing and watching tennis.



**WEBSITE &
COMMUNICATIONS
DIRECTOR
ESRA PREDOLAC**

If you would like to contribute an article, news item, or share an announcement with AATT Newsletter, please contact editors Dr. [Esra Predolac](#) and Dr. [Jeannette Okur](#). For previous issues of our newsletter, click [here](#).

THE JAMES W. REDHOUSE STUDENT PRIZE FOR BEST PROGRESS IN TURKISH

The Redhouse Prize for Best Progress in Turkish was established by the Turkish Studies Association (now Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association) in 1991, and four such prizes continue to be available annually, two for each of two regions in North America, designated as East and West. Although the monetary value is not large (\$100), outstanding students deserve the public recognition that being a winner brings. The deadline for this prize is **June 27, 2022**. To learn more about this award, click [here](#).

To learn more about various awards and funding opportunities, visit our [website](#).

AATT - NORMAN ITZKOWITZ TURKISH SHORT STORY AWARD

AATT is pleased to announce the Norman Itzkowitz Turkish Short Story Award. Two prizes of \$250 each will be awarded to the two best short stories in Modern Turkish language written by graduate or undergraduate students whose works will compete in two categories: beginner/intermediate or advanced proficiency level.

The AATT Norman Itzkowitz Short Story Award Submission Deadline is **July 17, 2022**. For more information, please visit our website by clicking [here](#).

THE 6TH AATT CONFERENCE

BY ELİF SAYAR

The 6th AATT Conference entitled “Teaching Turkish and Turkic Languages during the Pandemic: Past, Present and Future Directions” took place virtually on October 31, 2021. The morning session of the conference opened with AATT President Feride Hatiboğlu’s welcoming remarks and Sylvia Önder’s remarkable keynote speech. This year, for the first time, Ted Geary, Inbound Advisor of IIE, joined us at the conference and emphasized the enduring value of the Fulbright FLTA Program in promoting Turkish language instruction across the U.S.A.

After the opening speeches, the first sessions were moderated by Gülden Tüm (Çukurova University), Funda Güven (Nazarbayev University) and Gulshen Sakhatova (University of Cyprus). It was a privilege to listen to a diverse group of people from different parts of the world presenting on various topics. After the coffee break, the second sessions were moderated by Suzan Özel (Independent Scholar & Author), Zeynep Elbasan (Independent Scholar), İlknur Lider (University of Pittsburgh) and Betül Czerkowski (University of Arizona). These sessions also offered informative and

enlightening presentations that contributed significantly to Turkic language pedagogy.

Delightful speeches by Timur Kocaoğlu (Michigan State University) and Uli Schamiloglu (Nazarbayev University), along with closing remarks by Saadet Ebru Ergül (Stanford University) concluded the conference. All the presentations, speeches, and even the small talks during coffee breaks touched upon so many critical areas of teaching Turkic languages across the globe. It was a very special occasion enabling us to catch up with our colleagues, learn from one another, and discuss future joint projects and collaborations.

Reflecting on this stimulating experience, I appreciate how being a member of AATT and of the Conference Organizing Committee has enriched my life. With the help of this precious community, I am learning and growing so much, both professionally and personally.

On behalf of the Conference Organizing Committee, I would like to extend my thanks to all the academic committee members, chairs, moderators, presenters and participants. We are grateful for the time and effort you expended sharing your studies and experiences with us. We hope to meet next year and to continue growing our community.



THE 16TH ANNUAL AATT GRADUATE STUDENT PRE-CONFERENCE

BY SYLVIA ÖNDER,
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

This year, the following graduate students participated in our virtual AATT Graduate Student Pre-Conference: Şaban Ağalar from the University of Maryland (History), Lars Boomsma from Princeton (Comparative Literature), Arianne Ekinci from the University of North Carolina (History), Thomas McDonald from Stanford (Literature, Culture and Languages), Irene Morse from the University of Michigan (Political Science), and Sophia Zervas from Harvard (Music). Opening Remarks were made from Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, by our past President Uli Schamiloglu, from the University of Pennsylvania, by our current President Feride Hatiboğlu, and from my living room in Maryland as host representing Georgetown University. Hakan Karateke of the University of Chicago chaired the first panel and also made insightful closing remarks. Virginia Aksan of McMaster University graciously took on the double task of being Discussant for both panels, making interesting comments and suggestions on individual papers and also on some themes regarding the state of the field.

The following papers were presented:

Panel 1

- Ağalar: *Conceptions of Millet in the Seventeenth Century Ottoman Empire: A Computational Textual Analysis*
- Zervas*: *"Dombra": A Microhistory of Migration*
- Ekinci: *Turk or Turkish? East Turkestani (Uyghur) Refugees and the obligations of Turkish citizenship, 1952-2021*

Panel 2

- Morse: *Motivating Voters to Vote Again: Twitter discourse during the 2019 Istanbul rerun election*

- McDonald: *The Films of Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Japanese Aesthetics*
- Boomsma: *The Existence of Nonexistent Objects in Modern Turkish*

*Sophia Zervas won the AATT Book Prize for her paper presentation.

The AATT Graduate Student "Pre-Conference" is named as it is because one of its aims is to provide travel funds to graduate students to attend a major academic conference, usually the Middle East Studies Association Annual Conference, where they can participate directly following their experience of presenting a paper to a small and supportive audience. Since the field of Turkish Studies is spread out across North America, this academic gathering is intended to foster comradery and network-building for young scholars. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic made in-person participation in conferences and shared meals impossible this year. Three of the participating graduate students had been awarded the ARIT-BU Summer Scholarships for Advanced Turkish for the virtual program in 2021. While this is a great source of participants for the AATT Graduate Student Pre-Conference, we need all faculty to encourage their graduate students to participate in the future. The Institute of Turkish Studies, which has supported each of the 16 years of this conference, has been disbanded, so ideas about future sources of support would be most welcome.



REPORT ON THE 2021 AATT ROUNDTABLE AT MESA

BY İLKNUR LİDER

The AATT Roundtable, titled “Transition to Online Teaching: Reconstructing Language Teaching Pedagogies & Curricula”, was held virtually on December 3, 2021, in conjunction with the Middle East Studies Association’s (MESA) Annual Meeting. With the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, language instructors and program coordinators have been asked to revise existing language curricula and teaching pedagogies, while simultaneously learning and integrating a wide range of new technologies and online tools into lesson design, content delivery, and assessment. Organized by İlknur Lider (University of Pittsburgh) and chaired by Esra Predolac (University of Kansas), the AATT Roundtable aimed to address emerging issues, challenges, and drawbacks; share best practices for successful transition to online teaching; and facilitate discussion on reconstructing language teaching pedagogies and curricula to accommodate learner needs in online environments. Five presenters shared their teaching experiences and invaluable insight into various aspects of the transition while addressing pedagogical issues that have emerged.

Züleyha Çolak (Columbia University) presented implementations of the IAPI model to create a ‘deep learning environment’ through online teaching using the pedagogy of Tochon’s Deep Approach. Questioning the pedagogies that inform traditional controlled classroom paradigm, she pointed out the benefits of the Deep Approach in creating an online learning environment that emphasizes the role of the instructor as a facilitator and the class as an identity building process for students to engage with authentic materials, carry out projects to find solutions for real life problems, and succeed on performance assessment.

Nilay Sevinç (University of Michigan) discussed the ways the rapid transition to online teaching and learning platforms have changed her perspectives on

virtual language instruction. Drawing on her experiences with a fully online intensive course and remote teaching, she presented lesson plans tailored to accommodate the transition as well as new teaching materials, activities, and assessments she has designed to help students develop linguistic competence while maintaining the personal and humanistic values of language teaching and learning in the virtual classroom.

Olivia Ceyda Steele (Ohio State University) highlighted possible lack of interaction in online classes as the biggest concern for students and presented various techniques for fostering peer collaboration among students and communication between students and the instructor. Drawing on her teaching experiences in elementary and intermediate level online Turkish classes, she provided various examples of personalized, small group oriented, multimodal language teaching strategies to address student concerns regarding lack of interaction.

Meryem Demir (Harvard University) discussed the merits of online tools and media to find or create texts in multiple modalities and genres as an alternate to traditional textbooks flawed with various pedagogical problems for language teaching and learning. Sharing lesson plans and sample texts her students created about a self-chosen photograph by Ara Güler using an online tool called Voicethread, she demonstrated that remote teaching offers possibilities for active student engagement and collaboration in selection or creation of texts for language teaching and learning via online technologies.

Emrah Şahin (University of Florida) provided a critical pedagogical discussion questioning commonly held assumptions about the nature of the transition to online teaching and emphasized the need for prudent thinking on the part of language instructors when integrating new technologies and tools into lesson design. To address the emerging challenges, especially in hybrid flexible classrooms, he presented a set of teaching strategies such as flipped lesson design, selected elements from deep learning tools to focus student attention on gist of content, interactive

speaking drills in place of rigid homework writing, and proactive use of texting and voice platforms.

Funda Güven (Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan) and Didem Havlioğlu (Duke University) participated as discussants offering invaluable feedback on the presentations and posing critical questions to reflect on the major issues facing the field of teaching Turkish during these unprecedented times.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

AATT would like to thank our institutional members for their generosity and support:

Diplomatic Language Services (D.C.)

Duke University

Georgetown University

Indiana University, Bloomington

Nazarbayev University

New York University

Princeton University

The Ohio State University

University of Arizona

University of California, Los Angeles

University of Chicago

University of Florida

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

University of Pennsylvania

University of Texas, Austin

University of Toronto

University of Washington, Seattle

Yale University

We would also like to thank Melike Yücel Koç for her generous contribution.

AATT PANEL AT THE 2021 MESA MEETING

BY BURCU KARAHAN

I was fortunate enough to be a part of a very informative and educational panel titled “The Past, Present, and Future of Ottoman Turkish Language Pedagogy” at MESA’s 55th annual meeting. The panel was sponsored by the AATT and organized by Beyza Lorenz (UCLA) and Nilüfer Hatemi (Princeton). The goal of the panel was to discuss the development of Ottoman Turkish language programs through the decades in institutions in the United States and Turkey by exploring topics such as the current state and future of Ottoman Turkish language programs, the latest pedagogical approaches, material selection, and curriculum design. The presenters were Burcu Karahan (Stanford), Selim Sirri Kuru (U of Washington), Beyza Lorenz (UCLA), and Hakan Karateke (U of Chicago), with Cornell Fleischer (U of Chicago) as the discussant.

Panel chair Erika Gilson started the panel by reminding us that the first panel on the instruction of Ottoman Turkish at MESA was held in 1997 at the Association’s San Francisco meeting and was titled “Teaching of Ottoman Turkish.” The presenters at this panel were none other than AATT’s former president Uli Schamiloglu, Robert Dankoff, Klaus Kreiser, and Şinasi Tekin, who talked about the then newly established Ottoman Summer Institute in Cunda, Turkey. To hear about Şinasi Tekin and the early days of the Ottoman Summer Institute was especially meaningful since both Selim Kuru and I referred to the importance of this summer program in our talks.

In my presentation, titled “Teaching Ottoman Turkish: Methods, Planning, and Strategies”, I discussed the challenges of offering Ottoman Turkish language classes with low enrollment numbers and institutions’ lack of commitment to hiring instructors, and the crucial role Ottoman summer programs play in the language learning path we plan for our students. I talked about how my Ottoman Turkish curriculum is designed to make our students eligible for these programs and prepare them to further their studies.

Selim Kuru, in his presentation titled “Old Language Young Again: An Active Knowledge of Ottoman Turkish”, talked about how reading Ottoman texts with Günay Kut and Şinasi Tekin in graduate school; teaching modern Turkish with Engin Sezer; and collaborating with Şinasi and Gönül Tekin to establish the Ottoman Summer Institute in Cunda, design its curricula and teach different levels of Ottoman Turkish there over the years formed his personal approach to Ottoman Turkish and his teaching philosophy which embraces Ottoman Turkish with all its complexities as a living language.

Beyza Lorenz, in her talk, “Teaching in Medias Res: Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching Intermediate Ottoman Turkish”, described the challenges and opportunities of working with learners from diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds and detailed strategies and collaborative activities she has designed to cater to the needs of these learners.

Hakan Karateke, in his presentation, “Teaching Ottoman Turkish: Experiences from the Field”, shared his experiences teaching different levels of Ottoman Turkish and organizing an advanced intensive summer school on Ottoman language and paleography.

At the end of the panel, the discussant Cornell Fleischer, talked about his experiences first in learning Ottoman Turkish as a graduate student and then teaching it as a professor. Like Kuru, Fleischer also pointed out the importance of the peculiarities of paleography, the formulae of many types of archival documents, the exciting range of expression of the

language, and the need for students to learn about Ottoman Turkish as a normal mode of communication. The lively discussion that followed among the participants and listeners indicated the need to hold more panels on teaching Ottoman Turkish.

ACTFL ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES, 18 NOVEMBER 2021: AFTERNOON SESSION FACILITATED BY ARLÈNE CASIMIR

BY SUZAN ÖZEL

Arlène Casimir’s work focuses on how educators can better respond to students’ specific traumatic experiences as well as to the reality of long-term experiences of trauma such as institutional racism or generational trauma. Casimir advocates a teaching approach that is culturally relevant and sensitive to students’ backgrounds and lives, an approach that places emphasis on “trauma-informed” teaching and also embraces the notion of slowing down or taking a “brain break” by allowing for classroom moments of responding to individual and social problems. Taking a break is meant here not to limit learning but serves instead as a means for acknowledging and trying to reduce various forms of pressure typically placed on educators and learners. Casimir also argues that to be complete and effective, the resulting “healing curriculum” should not only address student hardship but also be shaped by difficulties and pain experienced by their teachers. The learning and healing processes



AATT PANEL AT THE 2021 MESA MEETING

From left to right:
Nilüfer Hatemi, Selim Kuru, Erika Gilson,
Burcu Karahan, Feride Hatiboğlu, Hakan
Karateke, Beyza Lorenz, Gottfried Hagen,
Cornell Fleischer

are hereby enhanced when teachers exhibit a degree of openness with regard to their own vulnerability and humanity.

After the introduction of the concepts of trauma-informed teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy, the participants were invited to discuss their more recent experiences with trauma in the classroom. The ideas and points exchanged during these breakout sessions were later collected to be shared with all participants by means of chat notes. The contributions, while not exclusively connected with the Covid-19 pandemic, reflected heavily the sentiments of both educators and their students in regard to this ongoing private and public health crisis. The words teachers typed to describe their own and their student's mental and emotional state, may not entirely correspond to the choices one would expect teachers of Turkic languages at the college level to make. Nonetheless, many of the words and ideas listed here (a selection from those featured in the chat notes) express, in all likelihood, a considerable number of shared sentiments.

Loss of connection; absence; loss and anger; worry; sorrow; guilt; exhaustion and stress; isolation; uncertainty; constant change; painful awareness of inequity of resources; economic insecurity; fractured relationships; continued state and street violence; exhaustion; anxiety; cultural and race-related hatred; lack of safety at the workplace; fearful for the future; polarization; a general loss of civility; loss of what we used to know; losses feel amplified by the pandemic experiences; loss of daily experiences with friends; loss of family members.

Arlène Casimir recommends the following resources for teachers:

1. [Slowing Down for Ourselves and for Our Students](#)
2. [Lessons from Crisis: Trauma-Informed Tools for the Work Ahead](#)
3. [Spirited Teaching in Difficult Times](#)
4. [When Schools Cause Trauma](#)
5. [Mistakes We Make When it Comes to Trauma and How to Fix Them](#)
6. [Podcast: Teaching and Healing Trauma](#)
7. [Beyond Deep Breathing: A New Vision for Equitable, Culturally Responsive, and Trauma-Informed Mindfulness Practice](#)
8. [The Awakened Schools Institute at Teacher College, Columbia University by Arlene Elizabeth Casimir](#)

A REPORT ON THE ACTFL ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES, NOVEMBER 18, 2021 (SESSION I) IN ATTENDANCE FOR AATT:

BY ERIKA H. GILSON

Billed as a follow up to last year's Assembly of Delegates, in this year's on-line Assembly, we heard from representatives of various language organizations as they reflected on the work they have initiated in the areas of *equity, diversity, and inclusion*, referred to as EDI or DEI throughout the morning session. Not much else was presented during this session, called 'Reflections on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work at the State, Regional, and National Level.'

ACTFL was first in line reporting on the year's efforts, stressing its role as a leader in teaching languages in the US. Social justice, antiracism in world languages classrooms is the goal. ACTFL has been strongly advocating for the 'Seal of Biliteracy' for high school graduates. Mention was made of the founding of an ACTFL Foundation to help underserved teachers and students.

Next, a Chinese teachers organization representing pre-K-12 teachers made a presentation of their webinar series on teaching during Covid and on battling bias, and how they promote awareness of DEI in every class. They also endorse teaching certification for their field.

A CLASS Sharing Presentation followed. This appeared to be a company working to improve teacher-child

interactions. They presented resources which they make available for teachers, geared mainly to elementary level learners.

A presentation by SCOLT [Southern Conference on Language Teaching] followed, starting with a snapshot of their year-long activities, providing a list of resources, and links to leadership workshops.

This was followed by the presentation of the CT Council of Language Teachers. They stressed the importance and benefits of ad hoc committees and recommended making a list of stakeholders' information. They also made a strong case for encouraging student engagement, stressing the importance of having student voices heard.

At 12 noon, we were directed to work in breakout rooms to discuss our own progress regarding DEI work, and brainstorm about next steps. There were 67 breakout rooms; AATT was also assigned a room, and predictably, I was the only one present. I entered other rooms to get a sense of what others are accomplishing.

ACTFL called this session 'Directions for Organizational Work Time', instructing that the discussion should be about "What was the most impactful thing you did this year? (your greatest accomplishment)", "What is the thing you are most challenged by?" and "Lessons learned and next steps." ACTFL also provided various versions of a 'Graphic Organizer' to facilitate the discussions.

Perhaps now, outside of the breakout room, AATT could consider the guiding questions above utilizing their Graphic Organizer. Of course, in our case, we have many issues that the pre-K-12 teachers are not facing.

2021 REDHOUSE PRIZE FOR BEST PROGRESS IN TURKISH WINNERS

BY JEANNETTE OKUR

The Redhouse Prize for Best Progress in Turkish was established in 1991, and four such prizes continue to be available annually, two for each of two regions in North America, designated as East and West. This past year's Language Awards Committee consisted of Nilay Sevinç (University of Michigan) and Melike Yücel (University of Washington). This year, due to the pandemic, there were fewer applications than usual, and the committee selected only two winners.

The first winner is **Michael Barron**, who was Intermediate level Turkish in 2020-2021 at the University of Pennsylvania. His instructors, Feride Hatiboğlu and Altan Öztürk, wrote that his career goals motivated him to continually improve his Turkish and to put extra time and effort into his Turkish studies. Michael completed his MBA and graduated from the Wharton School at The University of Pennsylvania in May 2021. He is interested in bringing new forms of agricultural technology to Turkey and the Middle East to preempt the population boom and provide food security to at-risk populations. He is currently working at a consulting firm with a presence in Turkey to gain experience and establish business connections in the country before pursuing agricultural technology and farming development work there.

The second winner, **Sam Breazeale**, took first-year Turkish courses and achieved Intermediate Mid proficiency level in 2020-2021, going on to study with a summer 2021 Critical Language Scholarship. His instructor, Nilay Sevinç, wrote about his calm demeanor, sense of humor, extraordinary work ethic, and seamless adjustment to the new learning environment during the pandemic, online classes. Sam is pursuing his master's in International and Regional Studies with Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies specialization at the University of Michigan. He chose to study Turkish for several reasons: first, because was interested in Central Asia and Turkic

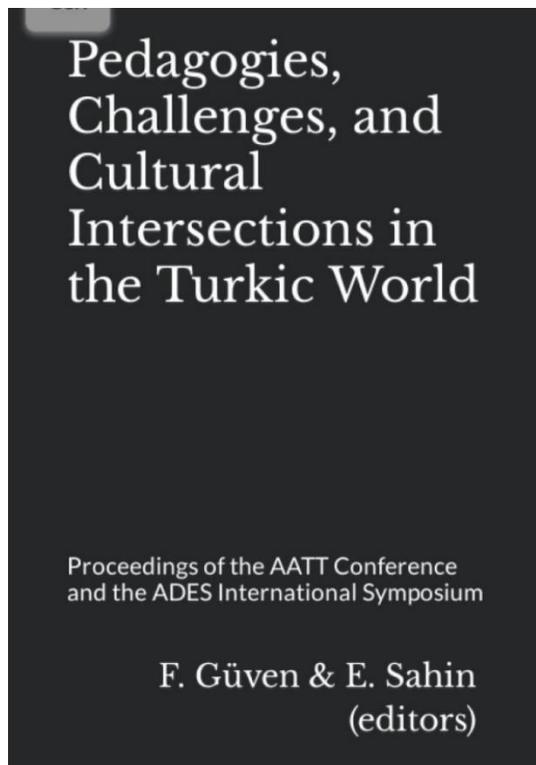


language-speaking peoples; second, because he fell in love with Orhan Pamuk's novels and memoir about Istanbul; and third, because he works for an organization that provides legal translation services to asylum seekers and he hopes to eventually join its Turkish language team. Sam is currently on leave, working as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The AATT congratulates this year's Redhouse Prize winners and thanks the Language Awards Committee members for their service!

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT BY EDITORS FUNDA GÜVEN AND EMRAH ŞAHİN

We proudly announce that several papers delivered at our first virtual conference (the 5th AATT Conference in 2020) appeared in a collective volume titled *Pedagogies, Challenges, and Exchanges in Turkish and the Turkic World: Proceedings of the AATT Conference and the ADES International Symposium*



(Turko-Tatar Press, Madison, WI, 2021). The first of its kind and focus, the book explores the various classroom-raised issues relating to pedagogies, curriculum designs, and language policies. In summary, Chapter 1 proposes a listening turn in language teaching; Chapter 2 presents an example of teaching Kazakh; Chapter 3 introduces the curriculum adopted at a Turkish heritage language school; Chapter 4 details with national policies in teaching foreign languages; Chapter 5 demonstrates the endangered Circassian language with examples obtained from field work; Chapter 6 examines the impact of national regulations on Kazakh; and Chapter 7 deals with the Assamese language operating under foreign influence. Taken together, this peer-reviewed volume serves as a source to appreciate linguo-cultural exchanges taking place beyond national borders as well as develop nuanced perspectives on language pedagogies at a crossroads. This book is available for sale at [a global vendor right here](#). Turko-Tatar Press plans to continue collaborating with the AATT Executive Board to publish papers from upcoming AATT conferences.

2021 AATT NORMAN ITZKOWITZ TURKISH SHORT STORY AWARD

BY *NİLÜFER HATEMİ*

It is a great pleasure for me to announce both, the newly established AATT Norman Itzkowitz Turkish Short Story Award, and its first year's winners: Gong Chen and Laurens P. Boomsma, both graduate students, respectively in Near Eastern Studies and Comparative Literature departments, at Princeton University.

The Norman Itzkowitz Turkish Short Story Award is an annual prize granted to the two best short stories written in Turkish by Turkish language students in North America, one at the advanced level and the other at the beginner/intermediate level. The award memorializes the contributions of Norman Hoca, whom we lost in January 2019.

This year's award selection committee consisted of internationally acclaimed authors, literary critics, and academicians: Ayten Alkan, Asuman Kafaoğlu-Büke, Sine Ergün, Burcu Karahan, Tülin Kozikoğlu, Esra Özdemir, and Mehmet Zaman Saçlıoğlu. I am deeply grateful for their generous support and hard work to painstakingly evaluate all the submissions in different language level categories. The criteria they used in the selection process, however, were not simply the language level, but a wide range of literary qualities like style, storyline, and character descriptions. Despite the major linguistic challenges in creating a piece of literature in a foreign language, the short stories were promising and engaging. After thorough reviews:

"Kanat ve Duvar" by Gong Chen, in advanced level, and "İtalya'da Yaşıyordum O Zaman" by Laurens P. Boomsma, in beginner/intermediate level received the highest points.

I would also like to thank Matthew Greene ("Keyn eyn hore"), Colin Vega ("Sineğin Gözlüğü"), Alexandra Veyne ("B-Tipi Kişilik"), and Lin Karman ("Dayanma Gücü") for their captivating short stories, and sincerely

hope that they will continue to write in Turkish and consider applying again. **Hepinizin ellerine sağlık!**

We congratulate this year's winners and encourage all Turkish language students to compete in in the 2022 AATT Norman Itzkowitz Turkish Short Story Award Competition. Please click [here](#) for more details.

**2021 AATT NORMAN
ITZKOWITZ TURKISH
SHORT STORY AWARD-
ADVANCED LEVEL
WINNER**

GONG CHEN



**2021 AATT NORMAN
ITZKOWITZ TURKISH
SHORT STORY AWARD-
BEGINNER/
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
WINNER**

LAURENS P. BOOMSMA

The short stories of both Gong and Laurens can be found at very end of this newsletter.



2021 AATT WALTER G. ANDREWS OTTOMAN TURKISH TRANSLATION AWARD WINNERS

BY BEYZA LORENZ

The AATT Walter G. Andrews Ottoman Turkish Translation Award is dedicated to awarding the best translations from an Ottoman Turkish archival/historical or literary work to English by graduate or undergraduate students. This year, for the AATT Walter G. Andrews Ottoman Turkish Translation Award, the committee evaluated submissions for two proficiency levels: A prize of \$250 was awarded to a student who has taken *one* or *two semesters* of Ottoman Turkish in 2020-2021 or participated in an Ottoman Turkish summer program and who has submitted the most successful portfolio. The second prize of \$250 was awarded to a student who has taken three or more semesters/summer programs of Ottoman Turkish and displayed an advanced proficiency level.

This year's committee chair was Nilüfer Hatemi from Princeton University, and the committee members were Şükrü Hanioglu (Princeton University), Benjamin Fortna (University of Arizona), Selim Kuru (University of Washington), Beyza Lorenz (UCLA), and Gregory Key (Binghamton University). The translations underwent a blind review based on the criteria of fidelity to the original, command of both Ottoman and English languages, and the importance of the work as a representative sample to be introduced to an English audience.

The winner of the Level 1 translation award is Gong Chen, a Ph.D. student in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. Gong translated three pieces on the 1911 Revolution in China published in the Ottoman Turkish newspaper *Tanin*. Gong's starting point for choosing these pieces was to better understand the interest of Ottoman print media in the Chinese revolution during the Young Turk era. The jury noted that Gong "deserves praise for his conscientious and largely successful efforts to read and translate the text."

The winner of the Level 2 translation award is Morgan Tufan, a Ph.D. student in History at Stanford University. The jury chose Morgan for a "translation that conveys the meaning very well and renders it in appropriate English syntax and vocabulary." Morgan submitted a translation of a firman issued to the Kurdish prince Sultan-Hussein Bey in 1552 AD containing instructions regarding the 1548-54 war of succession at Shahrizor (modern-day Sulaymaniyah, Iraq). Morgan chose this document as it underscores Sultan-Hussein's position as a trusted intermediary between the Ottomans and their allies in the empire's eastern borderlands. In Morgan's words, "this document also familiarizes us with early modern Ottoman letter-writing. The usage of formulas was designed to establish familiarity and authenticity of the document. Therefore, I have paid special attention to maintaining the formulaic articulation in my translation. This document reveals to us how trust was constructed through epistolary practices in the early modern world."

We would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the winners on behalf of the AATT Executive Board and the AATT Walter G. Andrews Ottoman Turkish Translation Award committee members.

Gong's translation can be found [here](#), and Morgan's [here](#).

AATT WALTER G. ANDREWS OTTOMAN TURKISH TRANSLATION AWARD

AATT is pleased to announce the Walter G. Andrews Ottoman Turkish Translation Award (OTTA) 2021 competition for the best translation of an Ottoman archival/historical or literary work into English. A prize of \$200 will be awarded to a graduate or undergraduate student who has taken one or two semesters of Ottoman Turkish in 2020-2021 or participated in an Ottoman Turkish program in Summer 2019-2020, and who has submitted the most successful portfolio. The submission deadline for the Walter G. Andrews OTTA prize is **Monday, June 27, 2022**. To find out more about this award, please click [here](#).

THE BU-TLCP PROGRAM ONLINE

*By ERIN KELLEHER,
PH.D. STUDENT IN MIDDLE EASTERN LANGUAGES AND
CULTURES, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN*

I participated in Boğaziçi University's Turkish Language and Culture Program twice: once in the summer of 2019 and again in the summer of 2021. Although the program was online this past summer, it was still an engaging and educational experience. The instructors and TAs put a lot of effort into creating a classroom atmosphere that was close knit, and despite the many challenges that the format presented, by the end of the summer I felt that I knew my classmates and instructors in a way that I hadn't felt in other online classes. During these summers, there were events like movie screenings, lectures, and group trips, which added cultural depth to the language learning we were doing in the classroom. Although last summer we were unable to spend our afternoons sitting on the lawn of Boğaziçi's campus chatting with our classmates and TAs like we did in the summer of 2019, we still managed to create a sense of community by watching movies together; meeting on Zoom to chat and study; and by having a lively group chat.



**BOUN participant
Erin Kelleher (UT-
Austin) with the
Boğaziçi Kampüs
Kedisi**

MEMORIES OF THE SUMMER 2021 ARIT- BOUN PROGRAM

*By SOPHIA AHMAD,
M.A. GLOBAL POLICY STUDIES & M.A. MIDDLE
EASTERN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN*

The Summer 2021 ARIT BOUN program was a wonderful experience for me and many of my peers! While the virtual format remains a significant challenge for all language courses, the amazing faculty at Boğaziçi went above and beyond to ensure we had as good an experience as possible. They were extremely warm, attentive, and focused. It's not every day you are able to develop strong connections with peers and professors in the virtual environment, but thanks to the environment cultivated by our professors, we really were able to do this! A few of us participated from Istanbul and were quite fortunate to be invited onto Boğaziçi's South campus by our professors and TAs. We spent nearly 8 hours wandering the beautiful south campus, admiring its history and stunning beauty.



**ARIT-BOUN participants, Sophia Ahmad (UT-
Austin) and Hannah Kim (U Chicago), at
Boğaziçi's South Campus**



Participating in the program from Istanbul allowed me to fully immerse myself in Turkish and was a priceless experience. A few of my ARIT BOUN peers also participated from Istanbul, and we were able to connect with each other and experience some wonderful adventures together! One such adventure was on the third day of Bayram, when former ARIT BOUN fellow Paul Osterlund took us on a walking tour of the neighborhoods and Byzantine ruins of Yedikule.

Sophia and friends on a walking tour near Yedikule

ARIT-BOUN participants, Alik Zangieva (Princeton U), Sophia Ahmad (UT-Austin) and Hannah Kim (U Chicago), with friends Blake and Ghada at the Eminönü Ferry Station



After a wonderful tour, several of us got stuck at the Eminönü ferry station due to the Bayram deluge over public transportation in the city. We were standing in the crowded station for 1.5 hours before we rushed onto the northbound ferry headed up to Sarıyer. It was a surreal experience, but we learned a great deal and bonded with each other through the tense moments! We made the most of this tumultuous summer and are so grateful for the memories and learning experiences - from the virtual classroom to Istanbul's ferry stations.



SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING TURKISH AND TURKIC LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN THE US SUMMARY OF THE 2021 AATT CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEECH

BY DR. SYLVIA ÖNDER

I wish I could report that the state of Turkish Studies in America is robust – but it is not. In other places, I have spoken about the crucial importance of the “Peace Corps Generation” of American scholars with fluency in Turkish – but when they retired, their positions were not kept as Turkish Studies positions, rather they reverted to open positions in large departments. More recently, important sources of funding from Turkey for the academic study of Turkish and Ottoman subjects, such as the Institute of Turkish Studies (ITS), which is sponsoring this conference sadly for the last time, have been shut down for distasteful political reasons. Organizations such as the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) that support students as they study the Turkish language and graduate level topics such as History, Political Science, Archaeology, Literature, Anthropology, and Women and Gender Studies, have to re-apply annually, through an increasingly bureaucratic process, for US federal support. Even the private funding of Turkish Studies has been tainted by vicious political struggles inside and outside of Turkey. And, looming over the entire situation is concern about the state of higher education in general – a concern that has been growing for a number of years, but which has really taken on crisis proportions during the pandemic. There are many in university administration who had already started to view higher education as “a business”. During the COVID-19 crisis, then, they were tempted to look for “efficiencies” which always puts small programs in danger. We have to keep reminding our administrations that education is a “calling” rather than a business, and that our rich offerings in a great diversity of topics, regions, and languages draw students to pursue intellectual projects that strengthen their minds, fortify our national and global expertise, and give us hope for the future of humanity.

Despite this negative context, students continue to come to us, eager to learn the language and hoping to be able to pursue graduate degrees and careers involving Turkish Studies. Are there ways to strengthen our programs?

For those of you teaching in Turkey, I hope this topic will not seem irrelevant. I will also bring up some possible ways that we might cooperate across the distance. Also, for those of you who teach Turkic languages, please excuse me if I continue to use the word Turkish – these strategies for supporting Turkish Programs should also be helpful for supporting the teaching of Turkic languages.

I proposed to list seven strategies, so let me get started.

The first strategy is to

1) Be aware of the state of the field and make your university administration aware, too.

This requires listening to those who have been in the field longer than yourself. For example, I have learned most of what I know about Turkish Studies in the USA from Erika Gilson and Uli Schamiloglu, and my AATT *ablalar ve abiler*, and I am deeply grateful for the advice and support they have provided over the years. One strategy that worked well with a recent Dean of Georgetown College was to explain to him that although enrollment figures in Turkish language and in our Turkish Minor are small compared to others, we are large on the national scale. For this argument, the enrollment figures that AATT collects each year are crucial – and I strongly encourage everyone to participate in that survey. The Dean, who was himself a specialist in medieval Italian literature – a field that used to be central to higher education in the Western tradition but is increasingly under threat by the Business model, was willing to grant that our Turkish program brought intellectual and interdisciplinary richness to our curriculum. And,

although I am often asked, “Don’t you know any rich Turks?”, I was able to explain to this dean that some potential donations come with so many strings attached that they are best left alone.

The second strategy is to

2) Strengthen your networks within your institution.

You can join with other language faculty and all non-tenure-line faculty to strengthen your collective position; find allies among tenured faculty, support graduate students and FLTAs when possible. I am glad that we will hear more about the FLTA program next from Ted Geary

For me, the best part of collaborating with our Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship – called “Candles” -- which focuses on technological applications to improve learning – was that, before the pandemic hit and we had to go online, we language faculty were far ahead of the curve and had creative ways to shape our online classrooms. We also had support systems already established to consult for help when we needed it. You can see some of our ideas at the [CNDLS webpage](#).

To tie in with the conference theme of teaching during a pandemic – my strategy over the years has been to attend many workshops about teaching, to pick up and also to demonstrate useful technological tools and practices, and become known as an innovative teacher who keeps up with the times. I know many of you will be proving today that our profession is filled with innovative teachers!

So, we can strengthen our networks within our institutions by showing that we are creative and generous with our ideas.

The third strategy is to

3) Explore funding options for your program and funding opportunities for your students.

Although the benefits that come from federal funding have become harder to get, I have been able to offer fourth-year Turkish about every other year by appealing to the Title VI Center that resides in the Master’s Program in Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown. Students at all institutions can apply for FLAS funding for language study through other institutions – but most of them do not know about this possibility. These funds do come with a citizenship requirement, which does not work for all. Everyone should make their students aware of the ARIT-BU Summer Scholarships for Advanced Turkish at Boğaziçi University funded by the US Department of Education, and the CLS Critical Language Scholarships through the State Department, and the various Fulbright Fellowships. Some funding for non-US citizen students is available in Turkey, and some study abroad programs accept students from any US university. Getting students to experience Turkey and an immersion environment is so important for their motivation to continue language study. If students are funded, they tell other students and potential students, and the program is strengthened.

A fourth strategy is to

4) Expand beyond your institution.

In Washington DC, as in some other parts of the country, consortium arrangements are already in place and can bring language students in from other universities. Some consortium students could attend more easily when the classes were online, so it may be worth exploring the option of continuing online or partially online classes, even as in person classes become the norm again. At Georgetown, we have always warmly welcomed upper-level students from American University, George Washington University, and George Mason – and we have a special arrangement with Johns Hopkins School of International Affairs for language classes only. Unfortunately for the breadth of Turkish language offerings in Washington DC, none of these other programs has survived – leaving Georgetown as the only

option. Our very early strategy when starting the Turkish Program more than 20 years ago, of offering three levels each year, no matter the enrollment, has gained for us a stability and longevity which has outlasted other programs. I have kept our administration aware of the draw that we have in the consortium and how students come to Georgetown for graduate programs, knowing they can take Turkish while here. The difficulty in this strategy is to make the Deans of one School see the benefit of drawing in students to a different school – there is some parochialism...

Expanding to international collaborations is also possible, and I want to give an example of working with a program in Turkey that I would love to revive. We had a successful language exchange through the Teletandem Initiative, which started at Georgetown in 2014 as a collaboration between the Portuguese language faculty and the founder of [Teletandem](#), Dr. Telles in Brazil. This program pairs language learners from two countries. When we did it, we paired Turkish language learners at Georgetown with university students in Alanya who wanted to improve their English. The system is set up professionally to give equal chances to both types of language learners, but requires a committed faculty partner at each university. The collaborative learning environment develops students' awareness of transcultural discourse. Our dear rahmetli Neşe Devrim was a fabulous partner in Alanya, and her efforts have so far been irreplaceable. If any of you are interested in starting up a Teletandem partnership with somewhere between 10 and 25 students, please contact me.

The fifth strategy is to

5) Uphold the profession, or, in other words: be professional!

This means valuing, supporting, and joining relevant academic organizations, like AATT, and trying to get your institution to pay for full membership. Have you asked your administration if there is support for an institutional membership? When something is in the budget, it tends to take on an importance and weight of its own; so even in a time of cost-cutting, institutions are still glad to be listed with other highly-ranked institutions in the member rolls of national organizations. Showing the list of other members can make a good impression when you are asking for money.

The sixth strategy is to

6) Keep your head down about politics, where possible...

And decide carefully which names/regions you can strategically join: Middle East? Silk Road? Security Languages? Islamic Studies? Asian Languages? European Languages? World Languages?

Of course, politics are everywhere, and concepts such as “Area Studies” are not permanent, so it is important to keep an eye out for new trends. One thing that harms all of us very much is the decline in quality of language instruction in K-12 education. Many students arrive at college intent on “getting out of the language requirement” as fast as possible, either because they never were taught the value of language study, or because they were convinced by bad teaching that they were “bad at languages”. If native speakers of Spanish are often failed in our K-12 Spanish classes, how can we expect students to consider new languages as worthy of exploration and effort? Perhaps it is time to collaborate more with K-12 language teachers.

And the final strategy, which I am personally struggling with currently is to

7) Imagine a transition to a future that does not include you...

In order to avoid the “Peace Corps Problem” that I mentioned at the start of this talk, we need to find ways to train and secure our own replacements. Since many of us are in non-tenure-line positions, it seems next to impossible to hire a new person before getting rid of the old person... and there is no guarantee, when administrators are faced with a new contract in Turkish or in some other discipline clamoring for a new hire, that Turkish would succeed.

KANAT VE DUVAR

BY GONG CHEN

(NEAR EASTERN STUDIES, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY)

WINNER OF THE 2021 NORMAN ITZKOWITZ TURKISH SHORT STORY AWARD-ADVANCED LEVEL

Eski hocalar ve arkadaşların şimdiki durumları, mezunların toplantılarında en popüler söz konusudur, değil mi? Salgından önce en son kış tatilinde ortaokuldaki arkadaşlarım ile akşam yemeği yerken, onlara üç yıl boyunca bizimle birlikte ders çalışan öğrenci Lin'in durumunu sordum. 'Lin şimdi nerede? Su buharı gibi gözlerimizden kayboldu' diye sordum. Ama arkadaşlarım de bilemediler. İç çekip bu konuyu kapattım.

Gerçekte, Lin ortaokulda ilk arkadaşım. Çin'deki en küçük eyaletlerden biri olan F Eyaletinin başkenti F şehrinde büyüdüm. 2006'da bu şehrin en güzel ortaokulu S Ortaokulu'na kabul edildim. Bu ortaokulun 1994'te kuruluşundan beri, her yıl onun öğrencileri liseye giriş sınavında en yüksek ortalama puanını aldılar. F şehrinde üç güzel lise var, Birinci Lise, Üçüncü Lise ve Eyalet Normal Üniversitesi'ne Bağlı Lise. Hatta bazı yıllar, S Ortaokulu'nun öğrencilerinin aldığı ortalama puanı bu üç lisenin kabul puanlarından daha yüksekti. Çoğumuz için, bu seçkin ortaokula kabul mektubu sadece bir mektup değildi, güzel liseler ve hatta güzel üniversitelere giriş bileti idi. Bu ortaokulun çevresini tahmin edebilirsiniz: bu seçkin okul seçkin sınıflardan gelen çocuklar ile doluydu, yani hükümet ve parti kadroları, zengin tüccarlar ve Eyalet Normal Üniversitesi'nde profesörlerin çocukları. Pierre Bourdieu bu adı sadece üniversiteye geldikten sonra öğrendim, ama S Ortaokulu'nda üç yıl Bourdieu'nun kitaplarındaki 'sınıfın yeniden yapılanması' denilen bu teoriyi öğrendiğim bir sosyoloji ders vardı. Bunun dışında, bu ortaokulda sınavlar savaşlar gibiydi, evet, hocalar sınavları savaşlarla karşılaştırırdı. Bu ortaokul, seçkin öğrencilerin bir harp meydanıydı. Streslerimiz yüksekti.

Lin, bu çevrede ilk tanıdığım öğrenci idi. Soyadı Lin ve adı Çince 'kanat' demektir. S Ortaokulu'ndayken, uniformalarımızı giymemiz lazımdı. Ama bu kural gerçek eşitlik getirmez, çünkü elbiselerin yerine ayakkabılar sınıfların sembolü oldular, örneğin yeni Air Jordan veya Kobe Mamba ayakkabılarını giyen erkekler ortaokula gelince odak oldular. Buna karşı, Lin'in ayakkabılarını ilk gördüğümde onun benim gibi İngilizcede 'salary-earning class' denilen sınıftan geldiğini öğrendim. Bundan başka, Lin ve ben sık sık kampüsteki küçük kütüphanede ilginç kitaplar bulmaya çalıştık. Bunun için, hızlı güzel arkadaş olduk. Lin, ben ve bazı başka öğrenciler küçük bir grup kurduk, birlikte sohbet ederek öğle yemeği yiyorduk. O zaman bu dostluğun sonsuza kadar devam edeceğini hayal ettim.

Ancak gerçeği hızlı öğrendim. S Ortaokulu bir yıl kabul edilen öğrencileri on bölüme böldü. Çin'de her bölümde birer hoca 'bölüm başkanı' olarak bölümde her şey düzenliyor. Bazı öğrenciler hocalara yardım ediyor ve o öğrencilere 'öğrenci kadroları' deniliyor. F Eyaleti'nde her yıl 'Eyaletteki Güzel Öğrenci Kadroları' ödülünü kazanan lise öğrencileri üniversiteye giriş sınavında on puanlık bir ikramiye alabilirler. Kısaca, bu ülkede her bölümde küçük bir hükümet var ve küçük hükümette öğrenci kadroları olmak teşvik edilen bir şeydir. Bölüm başkanımız D Hoca, istibdatçı bir bölüm başkanıydı. Onun emirlerini almalıydık, müzakerenin yeri yoktu. D, bize Çince dersi verdi. Her hafta bir yazma yazardık. Bir haftadaki yazmanın konusu, 'Hocam, niçin...?' Arkadaşımız Tong 'Hocam, niçin bu kadar istibdatçısın' başlıklı yazmayı yazdı. Gelecek haftada, D hepimizin önünde Tong'u şiddetli eleştirdi ve Tong'un anne ve babasını okula çağırırdı. Tabi ki, D Hocadan memnun olmadık. Tencent QQ'da¹ bir sohbet grubunu kurduk ve orada onundan şikâyet ettik. Bundan sonra bir gün, öfkeli D bize eleştirdi, onun sözlerinden bir şeyin farkındaydık: bizim QQ'daki söylediğimiz her şeyi öğrendi, yani, aramızda bir hain vardı! Kim? O hafta sürecinde şüphelenme havası bu bölüme hükmetti. Birbirimizden şüphelendik, güven ortadan kayboldu.

Cuma gününde, D 'kabinesi'ni değiştirdi. Sık sık sınavlarda en yüksek puan kazanan erkek CS vekil ('öğrenci kadroları'nın başı) tayin edildi, fakat hiçbirimiz beklemezdik ki, çabasına rağmen sınavlarda yüksek puan almayan ve

geçende D ile çok sohbet etmeyen Lin, vekil yardımcısına da tayin edildi. Ama hizmet ederek onlar D Hoca'dan ne aldı? Sadece 'disiplin' namına bize emir etmesi yetkisi idi, mesela, öğleden sonra bir saat boyunca kendi kendine çalışma döneminde biz masalarımızda kalmalıyız ve ödev yapma dışında hiçbir şey yapmamalıydık, 'öğrenci kadroları' bir polis gibi ders odasının önünde oturuyordu ve bizi gözlüyordular. Ne yaparsak onlar yaptığımız şeyleri hocaya rapor ediyordu. Bize kötü davranıyordu ve emir ediyordu, hatta bir kadro bir defa bana 'Emir ediyorum, sen...' diye dedi. Tabi ki, bu gerçek siyasi güç değildi, sadece bir güç alma duygusuydu, ama bu duygu, gücün tadını hiç almayan bir ortaokul öğrencisi için yeter idi! Bu duyguyu duyan Lin grubumuzdan ayrıldı.

Arkadaşımı bu duygudan kurtarmama karar verdim. Bir Cuma dersler bittikten sonra Lin'e önderlik ettim ve başka bir insan olmadığı bir yere geldik. Ona sordum,

'QQ'da konuştuğumuz şeyleri hocaya rapor ettin mi? Bana söyle.'

'Evet, yaptım.'

'Hain!' gözlerinin içine bakarak haykırdım. 'Niçin?'

'Buradan ayrılmak istiyorum.'

Bu kısa ve soyut cevabı anlamadım. Saniyelerden sonra 'Ne demek? Lütfen bana detaylı bir cevap ver.' diye sordum.

'Birinci Liseye kabul edilmek istiyorum. Umarım bundan sonra güzel bir üniversiteye kabul edilip büyük şehirde yaşayacağım. Bunun için yüksek puana ihtiyacım. Ama şimdi sınavlarda iyi yapamıyorum. Eğer D Hoca'ya hizmet edersem, o bana yardım edecek ve Birinci Liseye kabul edileceğim. Hocamız bana söz verdi! Bunun dışında hocamız benim CS ile daha çok birlikte çalışmamı önerdi.'

'Çünkü hocalarımız CS'in gelecekte Pekin Üniversitesi'ne veya Tsinghua Üniversitesi'ne kabul edileceğine inanıyorlar' yavaş yavaş söyledim, 'ama, başka yollar var, değil mi?'

'Başka yollar?' Güldü. 'Bu ortaokuldaki öğrencilerin hangi sınıflardan geldiklerini iyi biliyorsun. Ders kitaplarında anlamadıkları bir şey varsa, lisans veya doktor diploması alan anne ve babalarından yardım alabilir, piyana çalabilmek gibi sanat becerilerine sahipler, yaz tatillerinde Şanghai'da özel okullarda İngilizce dersleri alırlar. Nasıl onlarıyla yarışabiliriz? Seçkin liseye kabul edilmemizin püf noktası, D Hoca'dan yardım almaktır. Anlıyorum ki, siz onu sevmiyorsunuz. Ama ne de olsa güzel bir Çince öğretmenidir. O, CS ve başka hocalar bana yardım edecektir. En sonunda başarılı bir öğrenci olacağım!'

Sessiz kaldım. Sadece yarım dakikadan sonra cevap verdim, 'Ah, küçük eyaletimizin dışında dünyayı hiç görmedim ve görmek istiyorum. Ama bana göre şimdi yaptığın şey ahlaksızdır...'

'Mühim değil. Sınavlarda ahlak mühim değil! Ben, sınavlarda başarılı olmalıyım. Bir sebebim vardır.'

'Sebebin nedir?'

'Lütfen sorma.' Lin çıktı. Ben sadece yerde kalarak ne yapacağımı bilemedim.

Ama bu konuşma rahat olmasına rağmen yardımsız değildi. O günden sonra Lin daha çok bizim ile konuştu ve öğle yemeği toplantısına döndü. Haftalar geçti. Bence her şey güzel olacaktı. Ama gerçek bana başka bir ders verdi.

S Ortaokulu'nda her perşembe gününde bir 'bölüm toplantısı' vardı. 'Toplantı' denilen bu şey, bizim için sadece sıralarda oturmak ve D Hoca'nın emirlerini dinlemekten ibaretti. Bir bölüm toplantısında, D liseye giriş sınavının önünde kalan bizim duyduğumuz stresler hakkında konuştu, ama aniden bugüne kadar unutmadığım cümleleri söylemeye başladı.

'Streslerinizi iyi anlayabilirim. Ancak anla, dünyada daha büyük streslerin altında yaşayan insanlar var. Örneğin, bölümümüzde bir öğrenci kötü bir ailede büyümüş. Her zaman annesi ve babası takışmış. İlkokulunun dördüncü yılında, o, on yaşında bir erkek, annesi ve babasına boşamalarını önermiş. Mahkeme çocuk velayetini annesine göndermiş. İki yıl sonra bu seçkin ortaokuluna kabul edilip kasaba ve annesinden ayrılmış ve bu eyaletinin başkentine gelmiş. Şimdi bizimle çalışıyor...'

Hepimiz Lin'i baktık. D Lin'in adını söylemedi, ama Lin bölümümüzde ortaokulda öğrenci yurdunda yaşayan tek öğrenci idi. Lin ne ağladı ne de kafasını düşürdü. Sadece sırasında oturdu, hareket etmedi, bir duvar gibi. O günden sonra, Lin diğer öğrenciler ile çok konuşmadı, biz de onu birlikte öğle yemeği yemeye davet etmedik. O boşanan bir ailede büyüdü, ne tuhaftır! Eyaletimiz, küçük F Eyaleti yüzde doksan yerler dağlar kaplıdır. Bir kapalı memlektir. Çinliler bu eyaleti burada çay kadar muhafazakarlık havası ile de tanıyorlar. Aileler ve klanlar hayatımızın merkezidir, hatta şimdi büyük klanlar hala ataları için inşa edilen mabetlere sahiptir. Burada, çocuklar doğurmak, özellikle erkekler doğurmak mühim bir görevdir. 'Tek Çocuk Politikası' tatbik edildiği çağda çok aileler daha çok çocuklar doğurmak için hükümete yüksek ceza parası verirdi. Bu çevrede, boşanmak bir suçtur. Aynı bölümde bizimle birlikte ders çalışan Lin bir suçlu olmasa da kalbimizde tuhaf bir insan oldu. Duydum ki, o ve diğer öğrenciler arasında bir duvar inşa edildi.

Aylar hızlı geçti. Belki D Hoca'nın yardımı ile, Lin'in dersler ve sınavlarda performansı günden güne daha güzel oldu. 'Öğrenci kadrosu' işine devam etti. Derslerin dışında sadece hocalar ve CS gibi az öğrenciler ile konuşuyordu. Duvarlar arasında bir kalede yaşamak gibiydi. Bir gün, bir arkadaşım bana şarkıcı Jay Chou'nun bir şarkının güftesini sordu. Bunun için bir kâğıtta güfteyi yazdım. Ama arkadaşım odanın arkasında oturdu ve öğleden sonra kendi kendine çalışma döneminde sandalyelerimizden ayrılmamız yasaktı. Bunun için, ders odasının önünde oturan ve bizi gözleyen Lin'e talep ettim. Ama Lin bu kâğıdı alıp çöp kovasına attı.

'Ne yaptın! Bu sadece bir şarkının güftesidir!' diye bağırdım ve bu bağırma ders odasında sessizliği kırdı.

'Sus! Ödevini yap! Bana dinle!' Lin'in yüzünde bir yüz ifadesi yoktu.

'Bu cevap değildir!'

'Beni dinle! Bu kural, toplumun kuralıdır, anlayabilirsin.'

'Kural? Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'nin hangi kanununda bu kural var?'

'Ah? Benim bu şeyi D Hoca'ya rapor edeceğimi istiyor musun?' Beş saniyeden sonra, İngilizcede bir kelime söyledi, 'Loser!'

'Geçen haftadaki İngilizce sınavında doksandokuz puan aldım! *Son of bitch!*' Heyecana kapılarak ders odasından çıktım.

Bundan sonra lise giriş sınavına dek uzun süreçte aramızda bir konuşma yoktu. Liseye giriş sınavında Eyalet Normal Üniversitesi'ne Bağlı Lise'ye kabul edildim ve Lin şehrimizde en güzel Birinci Lise'ye kabul edildi. Bu sınavdan sonra, ders odasında koyduğum şeyleri almak için S Ortaoklu'na en son defa geldim. Lin'i gördüm. 'Birinci Lise'ye kabul edildim! Başarılı oluyorum!' diye genellikle daha yüksek ses ile bana söyledi.

'Tebrikler. Birinci Lise'nin öğrencisi. Güle güle.' Ona bakmayarak hızlı ortaokuldan çıktım.

Lisede hayatım daha güzel oldu ve yavaş yavaş ortaokuldaki kötü şeyleri unutmaya başladım. Ama bir gün, alışveriş merkezinde ortaokulda aynı bölümde ders çalışan ve Birinci Lise'ye kabul edilen H'yi gördüm. Onun durumunu sorup diğerlerin durumlarını sormaya başladım.

'Birinci Lise'de onlar nasıl? CS, Lin ve diğerler?' diye sordum.

'CS sınavlarda yüksek puan alır, tahmin edebilirsiniz. Ama Lin'in hayatı çok zordur.'

'Eyvah, ne oldu? Ama ortaokulun üç yılı sürecinde hepimiz onun gelişimlerini gördük.'

'Bu en büyük problemdir. Lin'in D ve başka hocalar tarafından aldığı eğitim kısa müddette sınavlarda yüksek puan almaya faydalıydı. Ama lisede dersler yeni bir dünyadır. Ah, bu yeni dünyada yolunu kaybediyor.'

'Eyvah, anlıyorum.' deyip söz konusunu değiştirdim.

Lisede üç yıl bir saniye gibi geçti. Milli üniversiteye giriş sınavının sonuçlarının duyurulmasından sonra eskiden aynı bölümde çalışan öğrencilerin bir toplantısı vardı. Birlikte akşam yemeği yedik. Elbette sınavın sonuçları en mühim söz konusuydu. Pekin Üniversite'ye kabul edilen ben bu akşam kahraman oldum. Başka bir öğrenci Lin'in geleceğini sordu, Lin sadece G Eyaleti'ne gideceğini dedi, bir üniversite veya kolejin adını söylemedi. Ona daha sorular sormadık, çünkü onun sınavının sonucunu iyi anladık. Kim, Çin'de en fakir eyaletlerinden biri ve eyaletimiz gibi sadece dağların olduğu G Eyaleti'ne gitmek ister? Marmara bölgesinde büyüyen bir Türk öğrenci Hakkari'de bir koleje gidecek mi? Belli oldu ki, Lin milli üniversiteye giriş sınavında başarılı sonuçlara ulaşamadı.

Akşam yemeğinden sonra, diğerler bara gitmeyi planladı. Fakat biraz yorgun oldum ve evime dönmeye karar verdim. Lin de bara gitmedi. Nitekim ikimiz lokantadan çıkıp dar ve kara sokakta yürüdük, bir kelime söylemedik. Dakikalardan sonra, 1 Haziran Caddesi'ne geldik. Veda etmenin vakti geldi.

'Tebrikler! Pekin Üniversitesi'nin öğrencisi. Güle güle' deyip Lin caddede insanlar arasında ortadan kayboldu.

Göz yaşım zemine düştü, kanatlardan mahrum edilen kuşlar gibiydi.

İTALYA'DA YAŞIYORDUM O ZAMAN

BY LAURENS P. BOOMSMA

(COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY)

WINNER OF THE 2021 NORMAN ITZKOWITZ TURKISH SHORT STORY AWARD-BEGINNER/INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Onunla Mayıs bir gününde tanıştım. Her zamanki gibi kahvaltılık yemek için 'Calcio d'Angolo'ya giderdim. İkinci kitabımı yayımlamaktan beri yazamamam vardı. Yarım verimsiz yıldan sonra yayıncım bana bir uzun ve ücretli izin önermişti: 'Sana yer değişikliği lazım. Dünyanın en büyükleri hepsi bir süre İtalya'da zaman geçirdiler. Verona'da fazlasıyla iyi bir otel biliyorum' dedi. Ne param vardı ne bu plandan özellikle umutluydum. Buna rağmen, bir hafta sonra uçakta Verona'yadım. Çok kararlılığım hiç yoktu.

Adımı birazdan öğrendiler, alışkanlıkların insanıyım. Her sabah saat tam sekizde otelimden çıkardım ve küçük bir yürüyüşten sonra meydanın ortasında bir sırada oturdum. Georges Perec'ten minik seyretmelerin değerini öğrenmişim, ancak bunları yaptığım çok başarılı hiç değildi. Çok geçmeden fikirlerimi başka yere temayül ederdiler, evliliğimin başarısızlığı ve babamın dairesinin satışı gibi. Dokuza çeyrek kala gibi genellikle biraz hüzünlü pes ederdim, ayağa kalkardım ve sıranın önündeki kahve dükkanına doğru yavaş yürürdüm. Her gün aynı şey.

Marco tezgahın arkasından bana selam verirdi, köşedeki küçük masaya yürürdüm ve kruvasan ve kapuçinoyu beklerdim. Sabah süresince birçok kişi kahve dükkanına girip çıkar giderdiler: İki sohbet söyleyen kadınlar, bir daima acele eden iş adamı, bir briç oynayan yaşlı kimseler grubu filan. Müşterilerin en çoğu sadece bazen bir dakika içeride

kaldılar, tek uzun zaman orada kalan kişiydim. Bu kahve dükkanı hiçbir şekilde özeldi, ama orada kendimi evimde gibi hissederdim. Hayat ertelemek ve kendime Calcio d'Angolo'nun sıkıcılığıyla sarmak istedim.

Benim ayrılmamdan önceki (şimdiye kadar daha iki haftalar israf ettim) Salı sabahı başka sabahlara hiç benzemedi. Benim hala hiç ilhamım yoktu ve yavaş yavaş kapuçinomu hayal ediyordum. Ancak, Calcio d'Angolo'nun kapısını açarken gözümün köşesinden benim masamda oturan bir adam gördüm. Başka bir masada oturmak için hazırlanıyordum ama o adam onun yanında oturmak jesti yaptı. Böyle yaptım. Masanın üstünde Beckett kitabı vardı. Başlangıçta ikimiz sessiz kahvelerimizi içiyorduk, ama yakında kendisi ağzını açtı ve şöyle söyledi: Vietnam'da ünlü bir aktörüm, bildin mi? Üç Oskar benim rolüm için 'Starry Nights in Hanoi'dan kazandım, dedi. Daha sonra birden ayağa kalktı ve baş eğerekli hoşça kal dedi. Onun gitmesinden sonra hemen Marco'ya çevrildim ve ona bu garip adamın hakkında soru sordum, ama bana onun hakkında hiç bilgi veremedi. Yalnız kahve dükkanından içeri gitmiş ve köşede oturmuş, kimseyi beklemeyen görünürde.

Ertesi gün, yarından sonraki gün ve haftanın kalanı aynı bir şey. Her gün tam aynı adamı benim köşedeki küçük masamda oturuyor bulurdum, her gün bana işaret ederdi. Sadece bir şey değişirdi: onun öyküsü. Geçmişte bir gün Avrupa'da bir krallığın kralı olduğunu iddia ederdi, başka bir gün çok başarılı yeni kurulan işin kurucusu olduğunu söyledi. Bana ne onun adını ne de onun Verona'da kalması için gerekçesini vermezdi. Ayrılmamın gününde (çok açıkça hazırlanıyorum) bana yüzmede Olimpiyat madalyaları kazandığını söyledi. Alışıldığı gibi, o zaman ayağa kalkardı ve sözsüz yola çıkardı.

Benim altı ay sonraki yayımladığım kitabım pek övgü verdi. Eleştirmenler yaratıcılığımın çok etkilenmişti. Özellikle ana karakteri beğendiler, bir her gün kalkarken yeni bir kimlikli adam. O yaz bir kere deha İtalya'ya döndüm. Calcio d'Angolo'ya giderken o orada değildi. Marco bana onun Temmuz'da bir gün kahve dükkanına gitmemeye durduğunu anlattı. Görünüşe göre o kahveleri için hiç ödemedi.



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AATT NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Esra Predolac
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Middle Eastern Studies
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jeannette.okur@austin.utexas.edu

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Esra Predolac
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