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FORMATION OF OTTOMAN PRINT CULTURE (1726-1746)

Some General Remarks

The grand vizierate of Damad İbrahim Pasha (1718-1730) was a remarkable period for the Ottoman Empire: the so-called Tulip Age (*Lale Devri*). The tulip left its imprint on the time because this flower became enormously popular among the Ottoman elite. A lot of tulip gardens were cultivated in different places of Istanbul and their fragrance replaced the smell of gunpowder that prevailed during the preceding wars. Besides, during those years there was a place in the then Ottoman capital where one's nose could for the first time sense another kind of smell: the heavy smell of oil-based ink used in the first Ottoman Turkish printing press. In fact, the Ottomans experienced this smell in earlier times because Jewish, Armenian and Greek-Orthodox printing houses had been established during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it was during the Tulip Age that printing technology with movable type was introduced to the Ottomans themselves.

The adoption of this technology was closely connected with the socio-cultural developments that took place during the Tulip Age, and this is why contextualization of the first Ottoman printing press within the framework of these developments is unavoidable. The major trend that started during the Tulip Age was the so-called Westernization of the Ottoman Empire, which to a large extent was the result of the first long-term Ottoman embassy in France. The almost year-long embassy, which took place in 1720-1721, gave birth among the Ottoman elite to a remarkable interest in western culture, luxurious lifestyles, and architectural styles such as rococo and baroque, and led to findings in the field of geography, astronomy, biology, and medicine.[1] The western influence, however, did not replace traditional Ottoman culture immediately and completely but was adapted, rather than merely adopted,[2] thus creating, in Fatma Müge Göçek's words, a "cultural dichotomy"[3] or, as Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj put it, a "cultural symbiosis."[4]

In this cultural atmosphere, which was much more open to its western counterpart than in previous times, the Ottoman elite, or at least a part of it that was inclined to make use of selected western achievements, supported the establishment of a typography to print books for the Turkish-speaking Muslim reading public.

Though they did not initiate it, the Ottoman authorities supported this printing enterprise, which was a completely private and personal undertaking. It was İbrahim Müteferrika, who, with the moral and financial support of Said Efendi, one of the officials to join the embassy in France, established the first Ottoman printing press. If we had been eighteenth-century citizens of Istanbul we would have experienced its heavy smell of ink somewhere near the grand mosque of Sultan Selim I (*Selimiye*), and, even more so, near the humble mosque (*mescid*) of *Mismari Şüca*, situated to the northwest of *Selimiye*. It was this *mescid*, which still exists today, which was at the heart of the neighborhood (*mahalle*), and where the house of İbrahim Müteferrika himself is situated. Presumably the printing presses were installed in the same house. In fact, the precise location of Müteferrika's lodgings and printing house on the eighteenth-century map of Istanbul was only possible due to his probate inventory, which I came across in 2002 in the Archive of the Istanbul Mufti. Although İbrahim Müteferrika was an Ottoman statesman and diplomat, the inventory, dated 20 Rebiü'l-evvel 1160/1 April 1747, presents him merely as a printer (*bāsmacı merhūm İbrāhīm Efendi*).[5] It was his pioneering printing activity that made him famous, not only within the Ottoman borders or the world of Islam, but also in western Europe. The West's keen interest in this person was mainly due to his non-Ottoman and non-Muslim origins.

Emergence of the first Ottoman printer

For the time being we have at out disposal a few narrative sources that provide some details of the pre-Ottoman phase in İbrahim Müteferrika's life. All, however, date from the period after his conversion to Islam. The most comprehensive, though possibly not the most faithful of these narratives is one of the letters from the Catholic Hungarian nobleman Czezarnak (César) de Saussure, who, as a companion of Ferenc Rákóczi during his exile in the Ottoman Empire (1717-1735), met the printer in 1732. According to this letter, İbrahim Müteferrika was an

18-20-year-old Hungarian, who studied to become a Calvinist minister, but in 1692 or 1693, during the revolt of Tököly Imre against the Austrian occupation of Transylvania since 1680, had the bad luck to be enslaved by the Turks (who supported Transylvanian independence). Then, according to Czezarnak de Saussure, because of the cruelty of his Ottoman master he chose to convert to Islam, taking the name İbrahim.[6]

However, according to a later narrative (1738) provided by the French Charles Peyssonnel, who was assigned to the Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha as a military observer during the Austro-Ottoman war of 1736-1739, İbrahim Müteferrika was formerly a Protestant who denied the Holy Trinity.[7] Thus Peyssonnel claims that İbrahim Müteferrika was an anti-Trinitarian or a Unitarian before he became an Ottoman subject and Muslim.

In fact, in 1710 İbrahim Müteferrika himself wrote a treatise in Ottoman Turkish. It had no title, but researchers usually call it the *Treatise on Islam* (*Risāle-i İslāmiye*). In it he relates that he was born in Kolozsvár (Cluj), Transylvania.[8] It is this treatise from which Niyazi Berkes concludes that Ýbrahim Müteferrika was not a Calvinist but a Unitarian. Unitarianism was a very popular denomination in Transylvania, in particular among the Hungarian burghers in Kolozsvár.[9] According to Berkes, although the treatise condemns the Catholic Church and claims that it will be defeated by Islam, it seems it had been written to suggest a direct link between İbrahim's previous Unitarianism and his conversion to Islam.[10] In the treatise İbrahim writes of how he had secretly studied anti-Trinitarian texts and as a result attained an insight into Muhammad's prophecy.[11]

On the basis of this treatise Niyazi Berkes concludes that Czezarnak de Saussure's account of İbrahim Müteferrika's enslavement and consequent conversion to Islam is not faithful. According to Niyazi Berkes, it is more probable that İbrahim Müteferrika fled from Habsburg rule in Transylvania and joined Tököly Imre as a liaison officer with the Ottomans.

Unfortunately, there is no contemporary evidence of the pre-Ottoman phase in İbrahim Müteferrika's life. His original name is unknown, although Niyazi Berkes suggests that it was probably Abraham.[12]

According to Czezarnak de Saussure's account, after his conversion, İbrahim acquired literacy in the Turkish language and in Muslim culture. His probate inventory provides some idea of his intellectual profile since it includes details of his personal collection of books. This information is

divided into two lists: the first listing books in the Arabic script, the second those in the Latin script (*Kütüb-i Lātīn*). Prior to his death he possessed around a hundred books in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Of these worth noting are titles of popular works in history, geography, astronomy, as well as treatises dealing with political ethics and social order. As for the Latin books (36 titles in total), most were related to geography (mainly atlases).[13] In fact, this collection of literature reflects Müteferrika's interests, not only as a reader, but also as an Ottoman diplomatic negotiator, publisher, and author.

In 1716 he was elevated to the position of permanent *müteferrika*, after which he was nicknamed Müteferrika. *Müteferrika* was the name of a corps at the Ottoman court whose members were especially attached to the person of the sultan and were used in various important public or political missions. In 1716 İbrahim served as an Ottoman commissioner with the Hungarians who had assembled in Belgrade to promote their struggle for independence, which had the support of the Ottomans. In 1720 he was appointed liaison officer to Prince Ferenc Rákóczi, whose revolt against the Habsburgs in 1703-1711 proved unsuccessful and who had come to Turkey in 1717 from France to continue his struggle against Austria. In 1737 İbrahim was dispatched to the Palatinus of Kiev to perform negotiations over the treaty between the Ottomans and the Poles; he was one of the promoters of a Turkish-French alliance against Austria and Russia during the years 1737-1739; in 1738 he conducted negotiations on behalf of the Ottoman government and the anti-Austrian Hungarians for the surrender of the fortress of Orsova to the Ottoman forces. Together with the Comte de Bonneval, who had converted and took the name Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha, he also played an active role in promoting Turkish-Swedish cooperation against Russia. Besides diplomatic missions İbrahim was also charged with a number of bureaucratic responsibilities: during the period 1738-1743 he was assigned scribe at the Ottoman artillery (*top arabacı*), in 1744-1745 he became scribe at the sultan's council (*divān-i hümāyūn*), and his last service seems to be the direction of what was presumably the first Ottoman paper mill at Yalova, near Istanbul, in the years 1744-1747.[14] İbrahim passed away at the end of January 1747.[15]

İbrahim Müteferrika became famous, however, due to his undertaking to establish an Ottoman Turkish printing press. His first attempts at printing were with maps, and he held a particular interest in maps due to his diplomatic career.[16] He printed maps of the Sea of Marmara (1719),[17]

the Black Sea (1724-25), Persia (1142/1729-30), and Egypt.[18] İbrahim was very confident in his printing enterprise, although it is unclear whether he was proficient in printing technology. He most likely became acquainted with the art of printing while still studying in Kolozsvár, where the famous Transylvanian printer Nicholas (Miklós) Kis (1650-1702) had revived in 1689 the Calvinist printing house after his return from Amsterdam.[19] İbrahim Müteferrika was an "educated border crosser,"[20] and, as Stefan Reichmuth states, not a typical renegade who changed his faith and citizenship for prosaic reasons such as career and wealth.[21] But it seems that in the case of İbrahim Müteferrika, conversion was not associated with a total replacement of a previous identity with a new one. Although Müteferrika claims in his treatise on Islam that he became a convinced Muslim even before his flight to the Ottoman domains, he apparently never forgot his Unitarianism – that is, his more or less non-Muslim cultural background. In a letter dated 1737, De Laria, an interpreter at the French Embassy in Istanbul, provides some noteworthy detail about İbrahim Müteferrika's habits. According to De Laria, although İbrahim converted to Islam, he was not a strict observant and conversations with him were made funnier through wine. Based on these accounts, regardless of whether or not they are faithful, we might assume that İbrahim was, in fact, a good example of a cultural dichotomy or symbiosis. In other words, he never stopped being a Christian, and never became a real Muslim. That is, he could never delete his background, in which he was more or less familiar with print culture, and never became a "traditional" Muslim who was satisfied with manuscripts. This was probably why İbrahim Müteferrika, who according to Sinan Kuneralp was one of the "extraordinary persons" (*personnages hors du commun*) who emerged in Ottoman history from time to time,[22] was quite venturesome in establishing the first Ottoman Turkish printing press.

Deux ex machina

Meanwhile, the Ottoman authorities had already been convinced of the permissibility of such an innovation. The Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha, Mehmed, known as Yirmisekiz Chelebi, who headed the embassy in France in 1720-1721, his son Said Efendi, and the Grand Mufti Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi all encouraged and supported İbrahim with the official opening of the press in 1727.

The official opening, however, appears to have been beset by obstacles set by the alleged opponents of printing, such as scribes, manuscript copyists and religious men. In order to convince the authorities of the benefit of his undertaking, in 1726 İbrahim wrote a treatise entitled *The Utility of Printing* (*Er-Risāletü'l-müsemmā bi-Vesīletü't-Tıbā'a*). In it İbrahim pleads the case of his printing enterprise by exposing its eventual benefits to the Muslims and the future of the Ottoman state.[23]

Besides this treatise, İbrahim also submitted to the Grand Vizier an application for an official permit to run his printing house.[24] In the application, probably also dating from 1726, he makes it clear that he intends to print dictionaries as well as books on astronomy, medicine, arithmetic, geometry, and geography. He writes that he has been attempting to print for eight years, while enjoying the support of the Istanbul-based Jewish printer and punch-cutter Jona and the facilities of his printing house. İbrahim adds that for two years he has enjoyed the financial support of Said Efendi and now is applying not only for an official permit, but also for financial aid to be granted by the state. Along with the application Müteferrika presents a few sample pages from the Arabic-Turkish dictionary of Vankulu, which was printed by him, and asks for a permit to print 500 copies.[25]

The Grand Vizier approved the application,[26] and the Grand Muftı then issued an official religious opinion (*fetvā*), permitting printing as a useful way of multiplying written materials.[27] Finally, the sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730) signed a special decree (*fermān*), dated Evasit-i Zilkade 1139/the beginning of July 1727, which gave İbrahim and Said Efendi an official permit to run the printing house. (In fact, Said Efendi effectively withdrew in the early 1730s leaving Müteferrika to run the enterprise alone). Four former high-level religious officials were appointed as proofreaders.[28]

Given these administrative procedures, we might conclude that the official chronology of the opening of the first Ottoman Turkish printing house was not the real chronology of its beginning. In other words, the first Ottoman Turkish printing press received an official permit *post factum*.[29] The authorities, however, reached a compromise solution whereby the printing house was only allowed to print books on secular matters, while the crowded army of manuscript copyists was left undisturbed to copy manuscripts predominantly on religious matters. Thus İbrahim Müteferrika received the necessary state support by means of *deux ex machina*, so to speak, as in an old-Greek drama.

Success or failure?

The first Ottoman Turkish printing enterprise would be meaningless if it could not prove successful in terms of commercial results and socio-cultural adoption. However, it is important to define clearly in what sense we understand the term "commercial success". In principle, it implies not only good sales figures, but also a good turnover on the investments made. If we are speaking about success in a broader sense, we need to consider the printing press as a cultural product to be adopted or rejected by society. Since it is difficult to assess to what extent the net proceeds of the sale covered the investment made by Müteferrika in his printing enterprise, for the time being it seems more reasonable to look at the sales figures, which reflect the printing process as a mutual process, in which both the printer/seller and the reading public/customers are involved. Until very recently the sales figures were unknown, and only the newly found probate inventory of İbrahim Müteferrika provided the number and prices of the unsold copies of the books printed by him.[30] Since the initial print number of thirteen out of his sixteen editions is known, an interpretation of the figures of unsold copies, and their juxtaposition with the total number of initial prints made, allows us to gauge the degree of success or failure of Müteferrika's printing project.

The first work, *Tercümetü's-Sihāh-i Cevheri*, the celebrated Arabic-Turkish dictionary of Vankulu in two volumes, was printed by Müteferrika in 1729 in 500 copies, of which only one appears in the probate inventory. Thus, in effect the whole edition had been sold, and it clearly was Müteferrika's bestseller.

He printed the second book, *Tuhfetü'l-kibār fī Esfāri'l-Bihār* (*Select Gift in Voyages*), by Katib Çelebi (1729), in 1,000 copies, and the third book, *Tārīh-i Seyyāh der Beyān-i Zuhūr-i Ağvāniyān ve Sebeb-i İndihām-i Binā-i Devlet-i Şāhān-i Safeviyān* (*Traveler's Accounts About Afghans' Appearance and the Reasons for the Decline of the State of the Safavi Shahs*), by Juda Tedeusz Krusiński (1729), in 1,200 copies.

The next three books, *Tārīhü'l-Hindi'l-Garbī el-Müsemmā bi-Hadīs-i Nev* (*History of West Indies Called the New World*), *Tārīh-i Tīmūr-i Gurkān* (*History of Tamerlan*), by Nazmizade Efendi, and *Tārīhü'l-Mısri'l-Cedīd; Tārīhü'l-Mısri'l-Kadīm* (*History of New Egypt; History of Ancient Egypt*), by Süheyli Efendi, appeared in 1730 in 500-copy editions.

The latter five titles are mentioned in the probate inventory together, probably because of their similar size in quarto. There were 1,114 unsold

copies of these five books. Thus, less than one third of the estimated initial print run of all five books – that is, 3,700 copies – remained unsold, and their commercial success was relatively good.

Of the seventh publication, *Gülşen-i Hulefā* (*Rosary of Caliphs*), by Nazmizade Efendi (1730), which was also printed in 500 copies, 235 copies remained unsold upon Müteferrika's death.

The next Müteferrika edition, *Grammaire turque ou Méthode courte & facile pour apprende la langue turque* (*Turkish Grammar or A Concise and Easy Method of Learning the Turkish Language*), by Holderman (1730), was printed in 1,000 copies, and the number of the unsold copies, appearing in the probate inventory, is 84. Thus, this book of Turkish grammar, which was designed to serve mainly as a textbook for students of French, followed the Dictionary of Vankulu in Müteferrika's bestsellers list.

Müteferrika's own treatise, *Usūlü'l-Hikem fī Nizāmi'l-Ümem* (*Reasonable Principles in Public Order*), was the ninth edition of his printing press (1732), with the tenth, *Füyūzāt-ý Mıknātısiyye* (*Features of Magnets*), a work on the magnetic features of the earth, compiled and translated by Müteferrika himself (1732). The total print volume of each was 500 copies. The probate inventory lists the latter two books along with the fifteenth edition of *Ahvāl-i Gazavāt der Diyār-i Bosna* (*The State of Religious Wars in the Province of Bosnia*), by Ömer Bosnavi (1741). A possible reason for such a grouping is the similar size of these editions, which were in quarto but smaller than the aforementioned group of five earlier editions. According to the probate inventory, 240 copies of these three books remained unsold. The total print volume of the third book is unknown, but on the assumption that it was also published in 500 copies, we might conclude that of 1,500 copies some 1,260 copies would have been sold, which would have been quite an impressive commercial success.

The next edition, *Kitāb-ı Cihānnümā* (*The Book Mirror of World*), by Katib Çelebi (1732), was also printed in 500 copies, and Müteferrika's probate inventory lists 249 unsold copies. That is, only half the edition was sold by early 1747.

Takvīmü't-Tevārīh (*Calendar of Histories*), by Katib Çelebi (1733), the thirteenth book to be printed at the first Ottoman printing press, was put out in an edition of 500 copies, albeit 226 remained unsold, as the probate inventory reveals.

The next edition, Tārīh (*History*), by Naʿima in two volumes, appeared in 1734 in 500 copies. The probate inventory lists a total of 112 unsold

and unbound copies. Thus almost four-fifths of that voluminous book had been sold.

The size of the total print volume of Müteferrika's fourteenth edition, *Tārīh* (*History*), by Raṣid Efendi, printed in three volumes (1741), as well as its appendix (*zeyl*), *Tārīh* (*History*), by Çelebizade Efendi (1741), is unknown. The latter, having been appended to Raṣid Efendi's *Tārīh*, does not appear as part of the probate inventory. The probate inventory indicates 306 (in the document itself the figure is incorrectly given as 311) unbound copies. On the assumption that the two titles were in 500-copy editions, it can be concluded that approximately one third had been sold.

The last, and sixteenth, edition of the first Ottoman printing house was, as the first, also a dictionary. The two volumes of the Persian-Turkish dictionary *Lisānü'l-'Acem* or *Ferheng-i Ṣu'ūrī* (1742) are the first of Müteferrika's printed books to be listed in his probate inventory. This is probably because the number of unsold copies exceeded the other editions. There were 409 unbound copies in total, and these remained in Müteferrika's inheritance. On the assumption that the total print run for the dictionary was 500 copies, it be estimated that only one fifth had been sold by the beginning of 1747.

As Müteferrika's probate inventory shows, the books he printed sold slowly and with some difficulty. *Omne principium difficile!* Logically, the unsold copies of the earlier editions are less in number than later ones, since they had been in the book market for a longer period of time. Also, at the time of the inventory, there seem to have been a number of books which were yet to be, or were in the process of being prepared for sale, such as in the case of *Kitāb-ı Cihānnümā*, *Tārīh*, by Na'ima, *Tārīh*, by Raṣid Efendi, and *Ferheng-i Ṣu'ūrī*. Most of these copies were unbound (*cildsiz*), unpolished (*mühresiz*), and with no margins around the pages (*cedvālsiz*). The unsold copies of *Gülṣen-i Hulefā*, *Tuhfetü'l-kibār*, *Tārīh-i Seyyāh*, *Tārīhü'l-Hindi'l-Garbī*, *Tārīh-i Tīmūr-i Gurkān*, *Tārīhü'l-Mısri'l-Cedīd; Tārīhü'l-Mısri'l-Kadīm* and *Takvīmü't-Tevārīh* were sewn (*dikilmiṣ*), cut (*kesilmiṣ*), and partly bound. Those books with a low number of unsold copies, such as *Grammaire turque*, *Usūlü'l-Hikem fī Nizâmi'l-Ümem*, *Füyûzât-ý Mýknâtýsiyye*, and *Ahvâl-i Gazavât der Diyār-i Bosna*, were completely bound (*tamām mücelled*). It seems there was some connection between the demand for some books, and the success of their sale, on the one hand, and the state of their readiness for sale, on the other.

By comparing the number of unsold copies with the volume of the initial print run for each of the Müteferrika editions, the degree of popularity each title enjoyed can be estimated. Among Müteferrika's bestsellers were the Arabic-Turkish dictionary of Vankulu and *Grammaire turque*, followed by titles such as *Usūlü'l-Hikem fī Nizāmi'l-Ümem*, *Füyūzāt-ı Mıknātısiyye*, and Ahvāl-i Gazavāt der Diyār-i Bosna, as well as *Tārīh* of Na'ima. There are five other titles on history and geography, suck as *Tuhfetü'l-kibār*, *Tārīh-i Seyyāh*, *Tārīhü'l-Hindi'l-Garbī*, *Tārīh-i Tīmūr-i Gurkān*, *Tārīhü'l-Mısri'l-Cedīd, and Tārīhü'l-Mısri'l-Kadīm*, which also seem to have sold well, but since they are inventoried in one group it is difficult to distinguish between them.

Books such as *Gülşen-i Hulefā*, *Takvīmü't-Tevārīh* and *Kitāb-ı Cihānnümā* seem to have enjoyed moderate commercial success. And only *Tārīh*, by Raşid Efendi, and *Ferheng-i Şu'ūrī*, which had been in the market for a good six years before the death of İbrahim Müteferrika, sold less than 50 percent of their number.

Having examined the number of unsold copies, and the degree of popularity of individual titles, let us now turn to total figures in order to get an overall picture of Müteferrika press results. Estimates vary as to the total number of the books Müteferrika printed, including: 12,000,[31] 12,500,[32] 12,700,[33] and 13,200 copies.[34] However, these figures may be overestimations. In my opinion, the safest way to reach a more accurate estimate is to turn to the *Tārīh* of Na'ima, which gives the total initial print of twelve Müteferrika press editions (*Grammaire turque* is missing). The figure for these twelve editions can be calculated at 7,200.[35] We know from the author of *Grammaire turque* (Holderman) that the total print figure for his grammar book was 1,000 copies.[36] Thus, the cumulative figure of initial prints whose number of copies is known (as opposed to estimated) is 8,200. As for the books whose initial print numbers are not known, as I suggested earlier an informed and conservative figure is 500 copies for each of the last three editions. If we add the estimated figure of 1,500 to the figure calculated for those books whose initial print numbers are known, the total number of copies of all the printed books would be 9,700. However, if we take a less conservative estimate of 1,000, instead of 500, for those editions whose initial print numbers is unknown, then the total print run of all Müteferrika's printed books comes to 11,200 copies. While a definitive answer is impossible, we can settle on an average between the conservative figure of 9,700 and the liberal figure of 11,200 and suggest that the total number of printed copies was in the

range of 10,000 to 11,000 copies. If we juxtapose this figure against the number of unsold copies left by Müteferrika upon his death (2,981 unsold copies), as mentioned in the probate inventory, we can infer that 69.3 percent of his editions were sold. These figures clearly show that İbrahim Müteferrika's printing enterprise was far from the fiasco presented by previous studies.

However, these figures need to be qualified and placed in a different context before we make a final judgment. First, not all of the printed books that circulated in the market were actually sold. Some of Müteferrika's copies were presented as gifts by the printer himself or by the Ottoman court to different royal libraries in European countries, such as Austria (1730),[37] Russia (1731),[38] Sweden (1735),[39] and France (1741-42).[40] However, the number of gifts can not have been so high as to force us to make adjustments to the sales figures already suggested.

It is not sufficient, however, to dwell only on how many copies Müteferrika appears to have sold during his lifetime. We also need to try to find a reasonable explanation and assessment for the sale figures that appear from the exploration of his probate inventory. Since the latter states the estimated prices of the Müteferrika editions after his death, another important issue relates to the observations made by previous scholars, and by Müteferrika's contemporary, De Saussure, about the book prices of the first Ottoman printing press. In any market, and in the book market in particular, price is an important issue with great implications for the success or failure of any commercial enterprise. Indeed, Osman Ersoy demonstrates that the first printed books were far more expensive than manuscripts and were unaffordable, even for most high level Ottoman functionaries.[41] This confirms De Saussure's remark that Müteferrika was unable to sell books due to the exorbitant prices, which prompted the first Ottoman printer to reduce initial prices, sometimes even by half, as Holderman (1730),[42] Müteferrika himself (1146/1733-34),[43] and Edvard Carleson (1735)[44] pointed out. The discounting of prices on Müteferrika's printed books is also confirmed by the probate inventories of the time.[45] It is worth noting that the prices of some Müteferrika editions, such as the Dictionary by Vankulu and *Tārīh* by Rașid Efendi, were halved before increasing again in the late 1740s. The discounted prices were probably a commercial policy implemented by Müteferrika in order to improve sales of his books, before later reverting to their initial prices. The relatively high prices of Müteferrika's printed books must have affected sales negatively.

But, besides sales quantities, we need to address another issue in our evaluation of the success of the printing press: the quantity of printed books relative to the market of the reading public. Osman Ersoy believes that İbrahim Müteferrika would not have been very hopeful of any commercial success because the total print volume for his editions was so insignificant – it was not even "a handful of sand thrown to the sea" or "a teaspoon of water given to a sick man dying of thirst."[46] To deal with this issue we need to consult the appropriate source documents and apply a reasonable methodology. To date, Turkish researchers of Ottoman printing history have been unreasonably critical. They point out that the total volume of printing of the first Ottoman printed books were much lower than those in Western Europe during the first half of the eighteenth century. Such a synchronic comparison, so to speak, is not very reliable because we are confronted with two identical processes but at different stages of development. We should not forget that Muterferrika's efforts represented *the very first* introduction of the printing press in Ottoman society, whereas, in other parts of Europe in the same period, the formation process of print culture was already centuries old. In my opinion, a correct and precise comparison would be between the initial stages of European and Ottoman printing, in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively. This would represent a diachronic comparison between two processes, which developed in different ages and contexts, but which were, in fact, sufficiently similar to warrant comparison. In applying this methodology, we could reach a more objective assessment of the real achievements and importance of the beginnings of Ottoman printing.

In this respect, by comparing average print numbers for Müteferrika's editions with average total print figures for European incunabula, we see that they are in fact identical. Early printing houses in Europe printed books in runs of 150-1,500 copies, and a considerable number of presses failed after printing only one or two books.[47] It is therefore not only unfair, but also incorrect to claim that Müteferrika's total print volumes were insufficient. After all, the total print run of a given book should be relative to the number of potential buyers and readers.

By exploring those probate inventories that include the titles of books we can gain some notion of the Ottoman Muslim reading public in terms of potential reader numbers and the demand for certain books. This approach, however, can also be problematic, for the following reasons. First, the documentary basis for this type of study is selective due to Islamic inheritance laws, which meant that registers did not include the

inventories of deceased persons who left behind minor children, whose eventual heirs applied to the judge to settle disputes over how to share the inheritance, and who left no heirs and whose property had been the subject of seizure by the state treasury (*beytülmāl*). Second, the inventories only reflect the situation at the time of death, so it is difficult to speculate whether the deceased had previously held more books than was left at the time of his or her death. The book owner might have sold or given a part of his or her books to another person or donated them to a pious foundation (*waqf*). Or the deceased, though there are no books mentioned in his or her probate inventory, might well have been a book owner while alive. Third, the number of book owners found in probate inventories does not account for the number of actual readers, since many potential readers may not themselves have owned books – for example, the students of the Muslim theological schools (*medrese*) who usually made use of the facilities of the public *waqf* libraries. Fourth, only a part of these registers is now preserved in the archives and available for research. Nonetheless, the number of registers available is quite considerable and would need to be explored by one person over the course of a normal lifetime.[48]

Given the peculiarities of this documentary basis, the best researchers can do is to limit the scope of their study in terms of chronology, territory, and studied items, on the one hand, and to gain a reasonable notion about their subject, on the other. With this in mind, I tried to look for book owners in probate inventories from the time of the first Ottoman printing press, limiting my search to citizens of Istanbul who enjoyed *askeri* status (the ruling class who were exempted from taxes) and who left more than three manuscripts or printed books among their possessions when they died. This approach enabled me to reveal the segment of the Ottoman Muslim reading public that was likely to have been the first to see and, eventually, to buy Müteferrika editions, for the following reasons: first, they were living in the same place where the press had been established; second, as *askeri* they were able to afford such relatively expensive books; and third, possessing more than three books, they were probably more interested in books than those with only one, two or three books mentioned in their probate inventories. In the *Askeriye* collection of the Mufti Archives of Istanbul, I was able to track down some 335 deceased with more than three books registered during the period 1137-38/1724-26 – 1160-61/1747-48 – that is, from the time Ottoman Turkish printing first began to the period in which its first stage came to an end.

Of course, this figure does not refer to the real number of persons, who had *askeri* status and who were book owners. Yet another caveat regarding this sample is that the book market was not limited to Istanbul; however, with it being the imperial capital, we would still expect it to have the largest concentration of reading public. That said, the figure of 335 book owners with more than three books found in Istanbul probate inventories implies that, as a whole, both in absolute and relative terms, the Ottoman reading public seems to have been quite limited. De Saussure said that "the literate Turks are not so many in numbers; they are not fond of reading and they do not enjoy reading."[49] Holderman made the same observation in 1730.[50] Even the total print volume for poetry collections, a favorite of the urbane Ottomans, and the textbooks printed in the 1840s and 1850s by the order of Istanbul booksellers (*sahhāf*), was usually only 1,200 copies.[51] It was very rare that total print runs of an edition would reach 2,000 copies.[52] In this respect, the allegation that Müteferrika's output was "a handful of sand thrown to the sea" seems incorrect. Given the limited nature of the Istanbul reading market in the eighteenth century, and the relatively low level of demand for books even in the middle of the nineteenth century, Müteferrika's output was in no way insignificant – in fact, if anything, it was slightly overambitious in view of the potential of the Ottoman book market.

Special attention should be paid to the social and professional profile of the persons who bought Müteferrika's printed books. A cursory glance at the same Istanbul probate inventories provide us with some insight into this issue, although I came across Müteferrika prints only in sixteen probate inventories. We see that the first printed Ottoman books appear in probate inventories soon after their printing, and clearly their higher initial price did not present a significant problem to all the potential buyers. The same is true also for the probate inventories held in the provinces.[53] It is remarkable that those who possessed these printed and expensive books were usually among Ottoman military and were bureaucratic as well as religious functionaries. The latter is significant, since it had been alleged that the religious functionaries were the traditional opponents of the printing press.

It is important, as a next step, to contextualize Müteferrika's print production in terms of the contemporary reading public's taste and preferences. The majority of the Istanbul book owners studied, which includes five booksellers, possessed predominantly religious literature, mainly in written Arabic, as well as samples of Oriental poetry in written

Persian, Arabic and Turkish. Of the religious books, the most popular were normally the Qur'an, a small collection of some of the most popular Qur'anic chapters (*sura*) entitled *En'ām-i Şerīf* after the sura *En'ām* (*The Camel*), the religious poem *Muhammediye*, written by Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed in 1444 which describes the life of the prophet Muhammad, as well as *Vasiyetnāme* of Mehmed Birgivi (sixteenth century), which presents a summary of the main dogmas of Islam and the religious practice it requires. The latter two writings were from Ottoman Turkish authors, and their popularity was largely due to the easily understandable vernacular language they used. As for books on history and geography, the most popular were again those related to religion, such as the *History* of al-Tabari, which relates the life of Muhammad and the emergence and development of Muslim statehood,[54] and travelogues written by pilgrims to Mecca.[55] Old Persian epics such as *Şāhnāme* and *Hamzanāme* also featured among the favorite books. In fact, dictionaries were very seldom listed in these inventories, even in those of the five booksellers I came across while exploring the archives. And the reading public itself comprised mainly religious men and students undergoing theological education, administrative and military officials, and sometimes traders and craftsmen, with men prevailing over women to a considerably degree.

Given this reading public and its taste, İbrahim Müteferrika clearly filled a niche by printing the first dictionaries, while Vankulu's Arabic-Turkish redaction of *Sihāh* unsurprisingly became a bestseller. But in his editing policy Müteferrika was much more inclined to print historical and geographical books: nine of the sixteen editions are related to history, a further two combine historical and geographical accounts (*Tuhfet* and *History of West Indies*), while the most eminent output of his printing house was Katib Çelebi's geographical work, *Mirror of World*. Müteferrika, however, printed texts that did not follow the traditional religious or epical trend of historical and geographical writing, but which addressed topics that related to the concerns of his contemporaries. By printing Ottoman maritime history or the political history of Persia, the Caliphate, and the Ottoman Empire in more recent times, as well as geographical books that significantly broadened the horizons of the Ottoman elite, Müteferrika was attempting not to be moralizing, in a religious sense, or entertaining, but, rather, to be useful to those involved in the government and didactic insofar as historical developments are full of lessons. Indeed, as William Watson said, İbrahim's printing philosophy seems to have been completely utilitarian.[56]

On the other hand, it is noteworthy how, except for one edition (*Calendar of Histories*, written in Persian), all the books printed by Müteferrika were written in Ottoman Turkish and were thus far more intelligible by their potential readers. These books could be read not only by Muslims but also by Turkish-speaking non-Muslims. This meant that the printer had in effect expanded the boundaries of the traditional Ottoman Muslim reading public. Moreover, he challenged the traditional Muslim concept of knowledge and learning, which placed emphasis on religious matters based on the belief that the earthly life was only a preparatory stage of the eternal post-mortal being. Accordingly, those branches of learning which provided secular and utilitarian knowledge were considered far more insignificant than religious learning and education.[57]

So, to repeat, was the first Ottoman printing press a success or failure? İbrahim Müteferrika's probate inventory leaves no impression that he failed in his undertaking, though the unsold copies of books printed by him constitute a large part of his assets: this is probably a normal situation for a tradesman and an enterprising person like him. By the end of his life İbrahim Müteferrika had succeeded in selling around 70 percent of the books he had printed: this was quite a satisfactory result for his enterprise. At any rate, his fate seems to have been luckier than that of Johann Gutenberg, who lost his printing house after falling into debt with his sponsor Johann Fust. As Sigfrid Steinberg remarked, most early European printers seem to have been better printers than businessmen. They did not enjoy significant commercial successes because they were unaware of the main problem in printing: printing requires significant investments to be made in advance, and the turnover is slow.[58] In fact, De Saussure appears to have been aware of this problem when he expressed his concerns that the Müteferrika enterprise would cease with the printer's death due to the impatience and lack of enthusiasm of "the Turks" for delayed, long-term returns.[59]

Print culture versus script culture: the long wait

Sigfrid Steinberg's remark in fact gives rise to the following question: if we accept that the first Ottoman Turkish printing enterprise was a success, rather than a commercial fiasco, why then did it cease immediately after Müteferrika's death, only being revived sporadically

for one edition in the mid-1750s, before returning to operate in 1784 in a more stable way? Are previous studies incorrect in claiming that the first Ottoman Turkish printing press was a failure rather than a success? The hitherto negative assessments of Müteferrika's printing enterprise were possibly due to the view that the printing innovation was a sweeping revolution that took place in a short period of time. It was Elizabeth Eisenstein, the prominent researcher in the field of book history, who put forth the idea that the printing press was an "agent of change" that resulted in a "communications revolution" and due to which the traditional script culture was replaced by the new print culture.[60] In another of her studies, published twice under different titles, she explains how her particular notion of "revolution" is inspired by Raymond Williams's oxymoronic expression "long revolution"[61] in a sense that it is not about fast change as a result of a single act, but about a continuous but irreversible process, whose effects become visible in the course of its development.[62] Not everyone, however, shares Eisenstein's "revolution" theory. Robert A. Houston, for example, agrees with Eisenstein that printing undoubtedly changed the way of thinking and played an indirect role in economic, social and political development in early modern Europe (1500-1800), but he qualifies Eisenstein's thesis by stating that the printing press's "impact was neither immediate, nor direct, nor certain." The changes, he continues, were slow and contingent, depending on various social, economic and political contexts, and printing "was arguably not fully developed until the eighteenth century."[63] Jacque le Goff also stresses how, upon its introduction in Europe, the printing press only met the needs of the literate elite, and it was not until the Counter-Reformation that this technology was used to educate the public.[64] And Brian Richardson concludes: "The transition from manuscript to printed book was in some respects, then, a process of evolution."[65] Indeed, the latest scholarship in book history is attempting to reevaluate Eisenstein's theory in radical[66] or moderate ways,[67] criticizing her non-contextualized approach, in which the advent of printing with movable type in itself created a print culture, and insisting that when studied within a given socio-cultural context it can be seen that manuscript copying and printing coexisted or were competing technologies until well into the eighteenth century.

In terms of printing in the world of Islam, most scholars are inclined to think that the same "print revolution" should have happened,[68] although there are exceptions in which the printing press gave rise to a cultural

"evolution" in the Ottoman Empire or, in broader terms, in the world of Islam.[69] So, was Müteferrika's printing enterprise an "agent of change" in the world of Islam? Previous scholarship has tended to answer this question in the negative, since he did not sell the entire number of copies he printed, and since his enterprise was suspended after his death. But, in my opinion, İbrahim Müteferrika was indeed an "agent of change", though not an "agent of *immediate* change".

The transition from scribal to print culture was a slow, gradual and arduous process. In Brian Richardson's words, old habits die hard.[70] But at what stage in the development of printing can we claim that a certain print culture has already formed? We need a definition of print culture in order to fix the time of its real domination over scribal culture. The traditional so-called "print-culture scholarship" is satisfied with pointing out that as soon printing technology with movable type was introduced the spread of printed books caused profound transformations in all social spheres. But is a printing press itself all that is required to speak about print culture? A significant sign of a developed and dominating print culture is probably the existence of a social conviction of the necessity of printed "agents" of knowledge and information. The establishment of a printing house, then, is certainly a starting point in the formation of print culture. And, within different social contexts the latter could overcome the strong traditional scribal culture in the shorter or longer term.

A good illustration of this is given by the case of Greek-Orthodox printing, which started in the sixteenth century thanks to a number of printing houses beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire, and one founded by the patriarch himself (Kyrillos Lukaris) and the priest Nikodimos Metaksas in Istanbul in 1627, which nonetheless stopped functioning at the beginning of 1628. However, until well into the nineteenth century, Greek monasteries, schools and other cultural institutions continued copying theological books by hand since the locals considered the books, printed in Western Europe, to be corrupted with Catholic interpretations.[71] At the turn of the nineteenth century, Greek intellectuals held controversial attitudes towards printing. In 1783, D. Katardzis (d. 1807) called on Greek calligraphers to "resurrect" and plead for the active use of manuscripts using the example of the Ottomans, who at the time had no printing house, while others, like Y. Misioadakas (d. c. 1800) and A. Korais (d. 1833), insisted on printed books.[72] So, given these conflicting opinions, can we claim that Greek print culture proved

itself towards the beginning of the nineteenth century? It seems a lot of patience is required when considering a positive answer. In other words, the formation of print culture must be considered a long-term process, which would take less or much more time in different socio-cultural contexts.

As for the transition from scribal to print culture within the Turkish-Muslim segment of Ottoman society, its long print revolution – or evolution – was preceded by a *long delay* or *wait*. Printing in Western Europe began in the mid-fifteenth century. Non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, such as Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Orthodox Slavs, Arabic-speaking and Turkic-speaking Christians, established their own printing presses to print predominantly religious texts during the late fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, but the first Ottoman-Muslim printing enterprise was launched only in the third decade of the eighteenth century.

How can we explain such a delay? Let us first turn to their contemporaries' accounts. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century western travelers believed that the Ottoman reluctance to adopt the printing technology was due to the strong manuscript tradition and the resistance of the Ottoman copyists and calligraphers.

Ogier Ghiselin Busbecq (1522-1592), the Austrian envoy to the Ottoman Empire, wrote in his account of his second stay in Istanbul during the period 1555-1562 that the Turks adopted from Europe neither the printing press nor the clock towers because of their firm conviction that the former would be considered offensive to the holy texts, while the latter would harm the service of the *müezzin*s in charge of calling the faithful to religious service by crying from the minaret.[73] Clearly it was unusual for any Muslim to see the Qur'an in printed form, although some western Qur'anic prints already existed in the sixteenth century, simply because the Qur'an was considered the ultimate divine revelation as fixed in manuscript form. Neither its sacred text nor its sacred form could be changed. For Muslims the Qur'an is eternal, and every word between its two covers is literally divine.[74] As Thomas Francis Carter said, it was clearly the conservative attitude that fed the Muslim bias against printing: since the Qur'an was written in manuscript form, it should be always reproduced by hand.[75]

This explanation might sound sensible. But what then of the late nineteenth-century findings in the Fayyum oasis in Egypt of fragments of block printed texts in Arabic, dating mostly from the late-thirteenth

century, the earliest of which dating to the tenth century and the rule of the Muslim dynasty Fatimi (909–1171)? Moreover, among these block prints there is also a printed example, containing Qur'anic verses.[76] Ibn al-Abar (1199–1260), on the other hand, recounts how, during the reign of the Muslim ruler of Andalusia (Muslim Spain), Abd ar-Rahman an-Nasir (912–961) official administrative documentation in printed form was sent to the provincial governors.[77] These findings imply that block printing was known and used to a certain extent in the Arabic Muslim states in Egypt and Andalusia from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, but did not develop later, probably due to a lack of efficiency.

As to printing with movable type, which was invented in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century, the first sixteenth-century examples of Arabic texts printed in Europe proved the imperfectness of the technology, rather than its utility, in terms of the many orthographical and grammatical errors in the western printed versions of the Qur'an and Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*.[78] The imperfectness of these examples was due to the lack of capable punch-cutters of Arabic characters as well as proficient proofreaders.[79] It appears that the poor quality of the layout of these editions was responsible for lower number of sales than expected. In his preface to Herbelot de Mollenville's *Oriental Library*, which was printed in France in 1697, Antoine Galland, who was in Istanbul in 1672-73,[80] relates how Rome-based Medici Press's late sixteenth-century editions of Arabic texts of Avicenna (medicine), Euclid (geometry) and al-Idrisi (geography) were printed with the intention of achieving full sales in the Middle East, but did not prove a commercial success because Muslims preferred manuscripts to printed books, despite the higher price.[81] Indeed, according to an eighteenth-century inventory of prints by the Medici Press, which are stored in wardrobes in the Palazzo Vecchio in Rome, 810 copies of the Avicenna, 1,967 of the Euclid, and 1,129 of the Idrisi still remained unsold.[82]

Any duplication of the Qur'an in particular was expected to be faithful to the adopted norm in terms of contents and orthography, not only because it was considered divine revelation, but also because, since the dawn of Islam, the Holy Book has been recommended for reading and learning off by heart by every Muslim, both men and women.[83] This shows that the copying of the Qur'an was of vital importance for its spreading among the whole Muslim community. By contrast, in Christendom the Church was opposed on principle to direct and unlimited widespread access to the Bible by the common people, the message of the Scriptures being

disseminated to them only through the learned ecclesiastical hierarchy. This is why the Church was highly concerned about the spread of vernacular Bibles, even before the invention of print in Europe, not to speak of the printed versions of the Bible, whose text was corrupted due to some disadvantages of the printing technology itself.[84] In this respect, duplication of the Qur'an required strict faithfulness to the norm, since it would be read and learned not only by educated Muslim religious functionaries, but also by the public. Moreover, according to the traditional Islamic concept, the education of children should start with the reading and learning of the Qur'an off by heart.[85] Accordingly, the main issue was the correctness of the text itself, and the mode of duplication was required to implement this irrevocable condition. Essentially, since the mid-fifteenth century, manuscript copying and printing with movable type had been competing modes of duplication, with the latter improving only over the course of time.

Other seventeenth-century Western travelers tended to be more subjective, claiming that the resistance of the copyists and calligraphers and the obstacles set by religious men and the authorities were the main reason for the delay of Ottoman printing. In his book on the Ottoman Empire, which was published in 1668, Paul Ricaut claims that printing was prohibited because it would aid learning and thus become a threat to the tyrannical Ottoman rule, as well as depriving numerous scribes from a means of living.[86] In his book on Turkish literature, printed in 1688, G. Donado claims that the Ottoman sultans banned printing in order to maintain the source of living for the manuscript copyists, and that the Turks considered printing to be a Christian invention and printed books heretic, albeit this negative attitude was never explicitly admitted.[87] On the other hand, Count de Marsigli, who spent eleven months in Istanbul in 1679-1680, visiting the Ottoman capital again in 1692, relates in a book on the military state of the empire, printed in 1732, that the Turks did not use printing because of a prohibition, but because of the concern for the livelihood of the numerous copyists and calligraphers.[88]

However, no documentary evidence has come to light so far to confirm the allegations that the Ottomans were negatively inclined toward printing. Some higher Muslim religious officials possessed copies of the western editions of Arabic texts. Zeynulabidin son of Halil, kadi of Galata, for example, possessed a Medici Press copy of Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* (1593), as a note in the margin (dated 1049/1639-40) on the title page reveals.[89] Two other identical notes in the margin on the same page

reveal that a certain El-hac Mehmed al-Garbi (a nickname implying a western origin) bought the copy in 1107/1695-96 from the inheritance of the late El-Hac Mahmud, who was mufti of Trabzon.[90]

Two prominent seventeenth-century Ottoman writers, İbrahim Peçevi (1574-before 1649) and Katib Çelebi (1609-1657), deal in brief with the printing technology. In his *History* the former relates the advent and development of European printing, emphasizing that printing of one thousand copies of a book was easier than copying a single manuscript.[91] In his famous *Mirror of World* the latter mentions how the Chinese had been acquainted with the art of printing since ancient times.[92] But, as Orhan Koloğlu points out, Katib Çelebi did not recommend the art to the Ottomans themselves.[93] İbrahim Peçevi, for his part, also remained silent.

The lack of any such recommendations leaves the impression that the Ottomans did not feel the need for printing. As Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu have pointed out, the Ottoman elite was in a permanent contact with Europe and no "iron curtain" existed to prevent the adoption of new ideas and cultural patterns from their European counterparts; adoption was made only when really needed.[94]

According to certain late eighteenth-century western authors of histories or memories of the Ottoman state, such as Abbot Mignon (1773),[95] Elias Abesci (1784),[96] and François de Tott (1786),[97] the guild of copyists and calligraphers and the theologians were responsible for the cessation of Ottoman printing after Müteferrika's death. Others, however, hold a different view. Giambatista Toderini, for example, who spent four and a half years in Istanbul during the period 1781-86 and wrote three volumes on Turkish literature and writing culture, denies that it was the opposition of the copyists that brought the first Ottoman printing enterprise to an end, and points out that it would not have been able to threaten their livelihood because it did not print religious books. According to Toderini, the only reason was the death of İbrahim Müteferrika himself.[98] As a contemporary of Toderini, Mouradgea D'Ohsson gives the same view in his *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman*:[99] the vitality of the first Ottoman printing press depended entirely on the efforts and activity of its founder. As Toderini stated metaphorically, Müteferrika was the "soul" of the press.[100] Or, in Gibb and Bowen's ingenious simile, the first Ottoman printing house was in a sense a "one-man show".[101]

Another late eighteenth-century western traveler, Carsten Niebuhr, claims, however, that neither the theologians, nor the copyists and scribes hindered the use of printing technology in the Arabic countries, as believed

in Europe. He believes İbrahim Müteferrika's printing house was closed down because manuscripts were still surpassing in their elegance the texts printed with Arabic letters.[102] Indeed, even towards the close of the nineteenth century, as Lucie Garnett explains, the Turks preferred elegant manuscripts to printed books, and the copying of manuscripts was still practiced.[103] Niebuhr's contemporary, François de Tott, also relates how Müteferrika's press could not achieve perfection in "liaisons", it was despised, and Ýbrahim closed the printing shop ("la Typographie ne pouvait atteindre à la perfection des liaisons; on la méprisa, İbrahim ferma boutique").[104] Under "liaisons" François de Tott must have meant the liaisons between the Arabic type, which had always been problematic in printing with movable type. Ubucini also draws attention to the same problem, particularly in terms of competition with the calligraphically executed manuscripts.[105]

Indeed, although Müteferrika succeeded in printing books with type face that was much more legible and pleasing than the previous western editions of texts in Arabic, the liaisons between the types in the books he printed are not always perfect and sometimes the linking is visually missing, possibly due to the uncontrollable movement of type during printing (see Figure 1). This is far more pronounced in later editions, where the type seem to be already spoiled. The problem is that printing with Arabic letters creates great difficulties, not found in printing the Latin, Greek, Armenian, Hebrew, and Cyrillic alphabets, or even Chinese hieroglyphs. In fact, in evaluating Müteferrika's enterprise, previous scholarship has paid less attention to this aspect of printing.[106] Arabic, and its Persian and Ottoman Turkish versions respectively, are cursive scripts – that is, most letters are linked to the preceding and following ones. As a result they have four different forms: one main and three other forms, depending on the position in the word. Thus, printing in Arabic is much more difficult and, in a sense, less practical: first, because it requires far more forms than the other scripts; and second, because these forms need to link perfectly.[107] This means the typesetting process takes far longer, and the result is not always satisfactory, leaving little room for claims that printing is a better way of duplicating texts than copying by hand. Calligraphy is a supreme Islamic art[108] that makes success for printing technology a hard task. When lithography was invented in the late eighteenth century, and later introduced to the world of Islam, it proved far more satisfying to the Muslim reading public on esthetic grounds.[109]

It appears, therefore, that technological difficulties made the world of Islam reluctant about any immediate or final adoption of printing technology with movable type, and it was only personal effort, as in the case of Müteferrika, and not clear socio-cultural demand, that called Muslim printing into being. It is probable that printing with movable type was the first European invention to be adopted by the Ottomans solely due to the personal aspirations of Müteferrika. In fact, unlike many other innovations of European origin – for example, cannons and firearms – the Ottomans apparently had no need or wish to adopt the printing press. However, once introduced, it did not fail to draw attention and left behind its traces in Ottoman cultural history.

İbrahim Müteferrika's printing enterprise was only possible because he was, as seems likely, well skilled in the art of European print culture and sufficiently motivated to undertake a similar venture in an Ottoman milieu, where calligraphy was adored and printing considered unsuited to the specifics of the Arabic alphabet. In fact, the Ottomans relied upon such agents of change, which came from beyond their borders, until well into the nineteenth century: for example, Topçu Urban, who made cannons for the Ottomans during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (1451–1481); İbrahim Müteferrika, who introduced printing technology; Clod de Bonneval, who converted and took the name of Ahmed Pasha and went on to train the Ottoman artillerists; all were educated border crossers who became "agents of change" in a state that was inward-looking except for its conquest aspirations. And it was during the Tulip Age (1718-1730) that for the first time long-term Ottoman embassies were sent to France and Persia, although permanent Ottoman embassies were established only in 1793.[110] From that time on, the Ottoman state gradually became more outward-looking, more interested in developments outside its borders, and its own representatives were charged to observe these developments and operate as "agents of change", enabling the adoption or adaptation of some of them in the Ottoman milieu. And it was not only diplomats, but also Ottoman students who were sent to Europe to acquire Western knowledge and apply it on their return in the homeland.[111]

Probably that is why the Ottomans waited too long for their Godot. As Samuel Beckett's famous play "Waiting for Godot" implies, chance is an underlying factor of human existence and, as a direct result of this, time is meaningless.[112] In this sense it was a matter of chance that İbrahim Müteferrika, who, to repeat Sinan Kuneralp's words, as one of the "extraordinary persons" who emerge in Ottoman history from time to

time, appeared during the first half of the eighteenth century (a period in Ottoman history when such "eccentric" enterprises such as a printing press seem to have been quite welcome) and took the first steps in the formation of Ottoman print culture.

These first steps, however, were uncertain and hesitant as far as the reading public was concerned. As in late fifteenth-century European practice,[113] during the second half of the eighteenth century some of the first Ottoman printed books were also copied by hand,[114] and missing pages from printed copies were recovered from their hand-written copies.[115]

In fact, the very act of copying a printed text by hand implies the need of duplication, and once introduced printing technology offered an alternative that was not disregarded, even though Ottoman printing ceased after Müteferrika's death at the beginning of 1747 and revived only for the second edition of the Vankulu dictionary in 1755-1756. For example, in his *Mecmua*, a treatise presented to the Sultan Abdulhamid I (1774-1789), a member of the Ottoman bureaucracy, Penah Süleyman Efendi, called for printing to be revived for administrative and educational purposes. However, it was not suggested that the printing house print religious texts, such as the Qur'an and the Hadiths.[116] Ottoman printing was finally revived in 1784, at the initiative of the sultan himself.

In his printing enterprise, İbrahim Müteferrika introduced some *ad hoc* layout changes, while paying tribute to the strong scribal culture. Early European printers, for example, strove to print books with a layout as similar to the manuscripts as possible. Müteferrika was no exception. Nonetheless, the first eight books he printed had no decoration (*unvan* or *serlevha*) on the introducing page, a page normally decorated in manuscripts.[117] But as soon as a book printed by Muteferika had been bought it was illuminated by hand, as a number of preserved copies clearly show (see Figure 2).[118] During these times, the book, whether in manuscript or printed form, was considered an organic combination of a text and a physical form – that is, the codex, which constituted the "body" or the "home" of the writing itself. Apart from the binding, the text on each page was framed by margins, and the introducing page was illuminated by ornamentation resembling the gates of monumental public buildings from the world of Islam (see Figure 3).[119] These ornamentations suggested that the reader, when entering a given book, was entering a building. Müteferrika apparently noticed that his customers tended to have their printed copies illuminated, and as of the ninth edition

(*Usūlü'l-Hikem fī Nizāmi'l-Ümem*, 1732) he began printing ornamentation on the introducing page (see Figure 4).[120] However, customers would have the ornamentation segments colored by hand, as we see in some of the preserved copies.[121] Another change – this time in a break with manuscript tradition – can be seen in the last three Muteferika editions in the inclusion of a quasi-title page. It was a quasi-title page, because its layout resembled a title page, but there was no title printed on it. Instead, it featured the honorable titles (*elkāb*) of the sultan, the Grand Vizier and the Grand Mufti of the time, as well as the place and year of printing (see Figure 5).

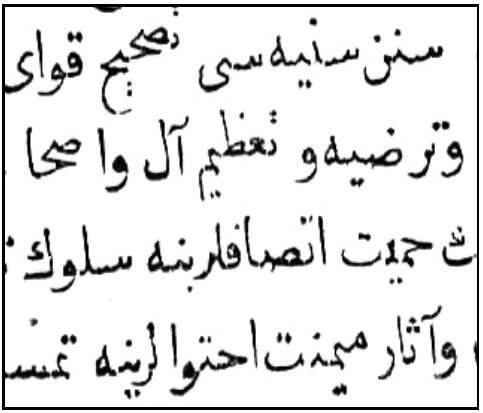
In fact, even later Ottoman printed books remained more or less faithful to the traditional manuscript layout, and it is for this reason that Meral Alpay considers all Ottoman books printed in Arabic script incunabular.[122]

So, at what time can we speak of a developed Ottoman print culture? Jale Baysal suggests that an important step was taken in 1803, when for the first time a religious book, Birgivi's *Vasiyetnāme*, was printed in Istanbul and the reading public could read this popular text in printed form.[123] Finally, she also claims that during the period 1869-1875, when the first Ottoman Turkish novels and plays were being written and printed, printing answered adequately to the expectations and tastes of the Muslim reading public, by then being "already accepted by the society".[124] Moreover, during the same period, another major step taken in Ottoman printing proved irreversible: the printing of the Qur'an itself. It was first printed lithographically in 1871, and then with movable type in 1874.[125] It was apparently only in the 1870s that the Muslim part of Ottoman society was prepared to see its holy text in printed form, having waited a long time to be persuaded of the advantages of printing technology. An insight into the motives behind the decision to print the Qur'an is given in *History*, written by the prominent nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectual Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1822-1895). In a historical discourse he points out that İbrahim Müteferrika and Said Efendi had obtained a permit to print books (excepting religious texts). He believes the printing of religious texts was considered a threat to their sacredness, as also believed by the aforementioned Busbecq in the sixteenth century, though this time because of the pressure applied to the sheets themselves. However, he adds, the bookbinders bind the Qur'an exactly in the same way, by pressing the codex, and place an ornamental stamp on the cover by striking the seal. And if that was not considered blasphemy (since the sacredness of the text remained well preserved), then it was decided that

printing of religious books was similarly not blasphemy. Thus the printing of religious texts began – first of all with the treatises for students of Muslim theology and jurisprudence.[126] It seems that during the 1870s Ottoman print culture was sufficiently developed and the Muslim reading public accepted the first Ottoman printed versions of the Qur'an as better than earlier West-European Qur'anic prints. At the very least, the 1878 probate inventory of a certain Hadice, the daughter of Hacı Ömer Ağa, from Salonica, which included two printed Qur'ans,[127] suggests that printing was no longer considered *advocatis diaboli* – as was still the case in 1844, for example, when Charles White noted that Istanbul booksellers believed manuscript copyists deserved to enter paradise while the printing press was made of the poisonous plant *zakkum*.[128]

However, there was another striking sign that showed that the 1870s were indeed a turning point in the development of Ottoman print culture. Intellectuals like Münif Pasha (1830-1910) and Celal Nuri were concerned that printing with movable type did not quite meet the specificities of the Arabic script.[129] But this did not mean that the Ottomans should desist from using movable type. In 1879, therefore, the Council of Public Education (*Meclis-i Maarif-i Umumiye*) appointed a special committee to revise the Arabic script by making it incursive in order to facilitate the printing process. However, the committee proved unsuccessful.[130] Later, in 1914, the so-called "Enver Pasha orthography" (*Enver Pāṣā imlāsı*) divided the Arabic characters and some print testing was performed.[131] Finally, however, the introduction in 1928 of Turkish version of the Latin script solved all these problems.[132]

In conclusion, by the 1870s the Ottomans appear to have been already quite accustomed to having their books printed, and clearly intended to solve the dilemma of the cursive Arabic script (generally in use from the seventh century onwards) and printing with movable type (which only began in the 1720s) in favor of the latter. Was this not a revolutionary intention, the result of an evolution of mind that lasted overall for a century and a half?



1. *Usūlü'l-Hikem fī Nizāmi'l-Ümem* (1732).
Courtesy of the National Library, Sofia.

2. *Tercümetü's-Sihāh-i Cevheri* (1729).
Courtesy of the National Library, Sofia.

تقويم التواريخ لكاتب چلبى

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وبه نستعين

حمد وثنا ومتكرى انتها اول مبدأ اولجل وعلى به كه فهرس غرايب كائنات
وفذلكه عجايب واقعات اولان اوراق پراثمار تواريخى مرور ادوار وتبدل
اوضاع واطوار ايله تقويم اصحاب نعيم كبى منسوخ العمل قليوب دائما
كارگاه دين ودولته دستور ايدى وتدبير امور جمهور مدسر مدى قدى
وصلوة وسلام اولنبى كريم جناب نخينه كه نص لاريب لايعلم الغيب ايله
برمقتضاى محائل واهيه امور آتيه يه اطلاع يابنى سدواحوال ماضيه دن
حدثو اولاحرج ترغيب مورث الفرجى ايله فن اخبارى منصور ومؤيد
وحكم مؤيدى اركانى مشيد ايدى وآل واصحاب نخامنه كه اخبار معجز
آثار نبويه دن ماكان وماسيكون دهر يو قلوفى روايت حكم نافذ ازليدن
واجب الدرايه اولان وقايعى نقل وحكايت ايلدبلر وبعد چون فن
جليل القدر تاريخده فضل وشرف مقرر ومفصلات وقايعى ضبط واماطه
غبر متصور دربر وفق مالايدرك كله لايترك كله استحضار معظم اخبار
وضبط اجمال حوادث ادوار ايچون بوفهرس قوم اسلوب تقويمه طرح
ونقسيم اولنوب پيش نهاد جهانيه ونقاد قلندى مكدرات عصر ومسامحه
كتبه حوادث دهر مراجع قصور دن امن عفو ايله مستور بيورله تقويم

مزبور

3. *Takvīmü kvīmü't-Tevārīh* (1733); *Süleymaniye* Mosque, Istanbul (16th century). Courtesy of the National Library, Sofia. Photo by Julian Dinkov.


اصول الحكم في نظام الامم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وبه نستعين

حمد وثنا وشكر بى انتها اول مالك الملك والملكوت
صاحب الكبرياء والجبروت تقدس وتعالى دركاهنه
سزاوار در كه تدبير نظام عالم وتنظيم امور بنى آدم انك ارادت
عليه سنه منوط وتعديل وتسويه احوال انام مشيت
ازليه سنه موقوف ومربوط در ودرود بى پايان اول بيغمبر
آخر زمان دولتپناه اهل ايمان جنابنه سزاوار در كه
قانون سياست شرع مبينى اصلاح مزاج دولته سند كافى
طب نبوى اولان سنن سنيه سى تصحيح قواى قواعد دين
وملته دواى وافيدر وترضيه و تعظيم آل واصحاب نصفت
فصلبه لايقدر كه مسالك حميت انصافلرينه سلوك تقويم كاركاه
ملكه دستور لبدى وآثار ميمنت احتوالرينه تمسك تمشيت

امور

4. *Usūlü'l-Hikem fī Nizāmi'l-Ümem* (1732). Courtesy of the National Library, Sofia.

5. *Tārīh-i Rāṣid Efendi* (1741).
Courtesy of the National Library, Sofia.

NOTES

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we calculate the figure of initial printed titles as opposed to printed volumes, the real total number of the printed copies of the editions decreases to 7200.

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