MÜTEFERRİKA'S PRINTING PRESS: SOME OBSERVATIONS

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\textbf{J}t would not be an exaggeration to describe the technique of printing, i.e. multiplication of copies of figures on flat surfaces by means of molds and dyes, and its utilization in producing books, as one of man's most important inventions after the alphabet. On basis of some evidence, it can be suggested that it is the Far East which first had the honour of using this technique. It is generally accepted in the West that the beginning of the technique of movable letters, which consisted of ordering individual letters into combinations one after the other as needed, which was a decisive development in the history of printing and continued progressively until our time, was first applied by Johann Gutenberg in 1440, in today's city of Mainz, Germany, to print his well-known copy of the New Testament in 42 lines per page. Printing activity was a historical advancement for the Renaissance and the reform movements in Europe. It quickly spread all over Europe. Many printing presses were set up, and manuscripts started to be replaced by printed books, so much so that from the 16th century onwards books were intended for printing only, and the term "manuscript" was used to mean the draft of a book, and not a manuscript book.

We observe that in the 15th century, this important invention had already reached some Ottoman cities. It is known that the Jewish emigrants from Spain had established a forum from Sultan Bayezid II and established printing presses in Istanbul in 1486 or 1493. Within a short period, Jewish subjects also established printing presses in Salonica, Izmir and Aleppo.

It is also observed that while Jews set up printing presses in Ottoman lands to publish books for their community, works of Islamic culture were printed in their original languages in some European cities. Following the printing of such works in Fano, Italy, starting with 1514, Cardinal Ferdinando de Medici established a printing press in Rome, in 1584, conforming to the Papacy's desire, in order to print Islamic books. The Arabic edition of Avicenna's (Ibn-i Sina) book of \\textit{kanun fi'r-Tikh} which was used as a textbook in European universities for years, was printed in this printing press in 1594.

In Istanbul, which was the political and also the scientific and cultural capital of the Ottoman State, Armenians and Greeks established their printing houses to produce the books needed by their communities: Aghar of Tokar and his son Sultanparg printed an Armenian grammar in 1567, and priest Nikodemos Merakias printed a book in Greek in 1627 with the equipment he imported from London. It is known that minority communities set up other printing houses and produced literature. So much so that a dispute which arose between two communities by the medium of publications resulted in a temporary interruption of printing activity. While most Muslim communities living in the Ottoman State were active in this sector to meet their own needs, some works of Islamic culture which were printed in the West were introduced to the Ottoman world as commodities. In
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1588, two Italian traders, Bramond and Orazio Bandini, obtained that their imports of Turkish books printed abroad would be exempted from customs duties. A traveler who frequently visited bookshops in Istanbul mentions that a collection of poems in Persian printed in Europe was not sold for months, but that manuscript copies of the same work were traded many times for higher prices at each. It is also recounted that the illustrious 17th century bibliophile, thinker and intellectual Kâtip Çelebi said that he would have included more maps in his Cihannımı if printing were as advanced in the Ottoman State as it was in Europe, but given the state of the art, the maps would have been damaged during copying by hand and lost their utility; therefore, he included only a few.

Finally, Bastaq Ibrahim Efendi, who was of Hungarian origin, rose to the post of Müteferrika in the service of the Ottoman State and printed a few maps in 1719 by means of wooden molds, established the Bastaqhanesi or Daru-ı-Tehsili-i Amirî, which is widely known by its name Müteferrika Mathaas. This was all what he did, according to the sources, with the help of Yirmi merkez Mehmed Çelebi zade Said Efendi who served during his father’s ambassadorial mission to Paris and with state patronage and support.

It would be appropriate to describe the printing house established by Müteferrika as “the first printing house to be set up under the patronage and with the support of a Muslim State (the Ottoman State) in its lands with the aim of printing the books belonging to and needed for the culture of that state”.

AFTER MÜTEFERRIKA

The printing and publishing activity of Müteferrika’s time ended with Ferhat-i Suri, which was printed in 1729. When Müteferrika died three years later, many of the books he printed were found, unread, among his effects. Ibrahim Efendi, his son-in-law, who wanted to re-activate the printing press, printed only the second edition of Van Kula Lusat (1169-1170/1755-1756). The printing press remained idle for the following thirty years until it was bought, renovated and re-activated by Beylikçi Raşid Efendi and Vâk-a-tivâs Vâli Efendi, who printed the works entitled Sami in 1198/1784 and Şahsi ve Şahsî Tarıhları and İzi Tarıhi.

PRINTING ACTIVITY CONTINUED THEREAFTER DESPITE SOME SHORT BREAKS

The expansion of printing in the real sense of the term took place in the 19th century. Some institutions, such as the Mekteb-i Baskılı (School of Engineering) set up their own printing presses (for the printing press of the Mekteb-i Baskılı, see Kemal Beyüllü, Tıbbî Bülêm ve Mekteb-i Baskılı Hanı Memleket-i Mektebeden 1277-1826, Istanbul 1995). With the start of the publication of newspapers, private printing presses started to be operated beside public ones. The Cârde-i Rumesi (official gazette) was printed in the Taikemhâne-i Amire (office for dating and calendars).

Most noteworthy among these first printing houses are, after the Mekteb-i Baskılı’s press, the Üsküdar printing press and the Taikemhâne-i Amire. Meanwhile, lithography started to be used, which was a variation over the monotype of the movable letters. It allowed the introduction of the esthetic beauty of calligraphy to the books and encouraged the printing of Quranic copies and religious books.

The spread of printing techniques over Ottoman lands was made possible by the establishment of provincial printing houses. These were first set up to provide the stationery needed in the provinces. But it is there that later, the provincial yearbooks (Vilâyet Savânehleri), which are in many respects the most valuable references on the provinces, and other publications of high documentary value, were printed. These printing houses were highly instrumental for the development of provincial publishing activity.

Another notable printing house was the Bulag printing house established in the Bulag town near Ca-ir. Famous Ottoman collections of poems (divans) were among the first books to be published there. The Bulag printing house played a major role in the dissemination of works of Islamic culture. It published Arabic, as well as Turkish books. All its publications were always considered to be reliable and valuable ones.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

The time lag of almost three centuries which elapsed between Gutenberg’s setting up his press and Müteferrika’s publishing his first book Van Kula has been interpreted in various ways by contemporary historians, which resulted in the common belief that this was one of the main reasons for the Ottoman State’s “backwardness”.

The description of Müteferrika’s printing press as it reached its time has become a galat-i meheb (common mistaken belief) as is the case with many other subjects of Ottoman history. For our contemporaries who have not examined it thoroughly, this printing house is known as “the first Turkish printing press, activated in 1729 after a fena (religious authorization) was obtained on the condition that it would not print religious books”. In our opinion, virtually all the comments of this description are deficient, as explained below:

1. Its description as “the first Turkish printing press” needs to be reconsidered and corrected. What is meant by “Turkish printing press”? If it is meant to indicate this was the first printing press to be established in Ottoman lands, it is wrong, as others were set up and operated in those lands much earlier, starting from the 1480s.

If this description is used in relation with the founder, it is again incorrect, as İbnüllah Müteferrika was a convert of Hungarian origin and a civil servant of the Ottoman State.

The adjective “Turkish” is not appropriate either as regards the publications and their languages, as it is known that Turkish, Arabic and Persian books were printed in Europe before Müteferrika set up his press.

In view of the above, the expression “the first Turkish printing press” needs to be corrected. No doubt, the printing press set up by Müteferrika was a “first”. The following description would correctly explain in what respect it was so: “The first printing house to be set up under the patronage and with the support of a Muslim State (the Ottoman State) in its lands with the aim of printing the books belonging to and needed for the culture of that state”.

2. In our opinion, the date 1729 is not mentioned in its correct context either. This is the date of publication of Van Kula Lusat which is accepted to be the first book printed by the Müteferrika Mathaas; in other words, it refers to the completion of the printing of that work’s two volumes. Obviously, the establishment of the printing press was much earlier. Even regardless of the work Vâzîr-i Tahâ, and the maps which were printed some ten years before Van Kula, this date has to be taken back by several years to account for the technical and mechanical preparations that must have been completed before printing Van Kula. Therefore, 1729 is not the establishment date of the press, but the date of completion of the printing of its first book Van Kula Lusat.

3. “A fena issued on condition that it would not print religious books” is another mistake frequently repeated. The emphasis of the fena was that the books to be printed ought to be authentic and without mistakes. A preference was expressed for those belonging to the “ulum-iâtî”, i.e. textbooks, while no statement of prohibition was there whatsoever. It is observed that despite this, many authors of the present century have repeated this unfounded opinion without feeling the need to verify it.

A deeper inquiry into the subject shows us how this opinion was formed. A barâ-i bîmûray (imperial order), or anâr-i hâfiz-i aliânî as the document is titled, has the mention not of “religious sciences” but “...books on sciences and sciences on religions and jurisprudence, hadis (Qur’ânic theology), tevarîh (exegesis) and hadis (sayings of the Prophet) will be printed...”, which can be considered as a limitation or prohibition. This means that if there is any prohibition, it was stipulated not by the fena but the imperial order. Thus, the reason, which shaped common opinion, has to be examined. In our opinion, those reasons suggest that it
would be more appropriate to speak of a limitation instead of a prohibition.

It would be useful to point out, as regards the correction of the mistake, the differences between a *feme* and a *ba't-i hâmean*. A *feme* is an opinion which is issued by a *wilâ'eh* (religious authority) on a particular subject or in answer to a question, on the basis of the fundamental religious sources of reference. In today's terms, it would correspond to a legal verdict pronounced by a judicial authority on basis of the applicable legislation. As to the *ba't-i hâmean*, it is a decision issued by the political and executive authority. Though in theory, such a decision is expected to be in conformity with the religious opinion, there are many examples showing that in practice, application of the former often depended upon other decisions and conditions that were then in effect.

Why was such a limitation imposed upon Mütterfikra's printing house? This question can best be answered not by commonplace labels and simplistic arguments such as bigotry or backwardness, but by taking into consideration the characteristics and circumstances of the time and in the light of sources and documents.

Having pointed out these three elements of the above incorrect description, it would be appropriate to mention some other aspects of the printing press which are not known well enough and which, when explained, will help in understanding the nature of this printing press much better.

The first point is, why was the establishment of our printing press delayed until Mütterfikra's taking the initiative? Given that the circles concerned were no dubs aware of the technique starting from the period of Sultan Bayezid II, wasn't there any effort, since then, to set up printing and book production facilities? Clear evidence to the effect that the matter was considered earlier is found in the work titled *Vâlîke-i Tâhâ*, though the possibility of applying the technique in the country was deliberately pondered by Mimar Sinan, the needed skills and technology were not found, given that "this is a difficult and painstaking work".

It is understood from the above statement that the state did take into consideration the possibility that this technology already used by minorities be used by Muslims too to meet their own needs, but wasn't able to provide the skilled manpower needed to apply the technique which was found to be difficult and painstaking. The difficulty and pain involved must have been of technical nature only, and once Mütterfikra undertook the task, or was helped to do so, i.e. when somebody who would take charge of its technical aspects was there to do it, the press was set up.

It would be useful, at this juncture, to briefly evoke, with an example, the far-reaching movements that are often mentioned in connection with this press. The famous Kabalep revolts is usually described as a manifestation of fanaticism which put an end to the Tulip Age. This movement, which caused many heads to be cut off, did not even take note of Mütterfikra and his press.

Another point which has not been clarified enough in studies conducted until now is the role Mütterfikra played in this activity. Although Mütterfikra is qualified in the sources as "beharar" (printer), in our opinion he was much more than that: a publisher. *Veiled-i-Tahâ* is not only a document expressing the need to set up a printing press, but it can also be considered as a publication program. The document depicts the subject areas in which publications were needed in order to diffuse knowledge to the people and thus help the modernization of the Ottoman State. An examination of these subject areas helps to better understand the mention of technical books contained in the *feme*, while the document confirms that Mütterfikra was both a printer and a publisher.

Was Ibrahim Mütterfikra only a printer and a publisher? Taking into consideration the maps and the books he printed and the works he wrote, he was also a distinguished intellectual of the Ottoman State from the millet-i islamîye (Muslim millet, or nation). Mütterfikra, who appeared to be a true intellectual fully conscious of the circumstances and requirements of his time and endowed with a sound knowledge and culture, was one of the representative figures of the "Ottoman identity" who deserve to be studied by researchers interested in defining it.

It is also necessary to examine in detail the role and contributions of Said Efendi in this enterprise. Was his contribution only a privilege extended to the job, and was such a privilege necessary, or did he go as far as helping the publishing activity itself?

Another subject which has not been studied thoroughly until now is, how were the books printed by Mütterfikra received? The answer to this question would also throw light on the reasons for the delay in establishing the press after Gürgen. The following example is significant in this regard: Şehzade Nâsim, a famous poet and intellectual contemporary to Mütterfikra, who was as close to the Palace as Mütterfikra was, and known for his interest in scholarship and learning, would be expected to have shown an attention on the printing press and its activities. However, surprisingly enough, Nâsim's collection of poems does not contain any mention of it. An indication as to the reasons for this inattention would also help to explain the reasons for the above-mentioned delay in the establishment of the press.

Neglecting to seriously examine the reasons for this delay and citing the latter as one of the reasons for the country's "backwardness" - whatever that might mean in this context - is another common, frequent mistake. Some reasons were stated by authors who wrote on this subject. The correct way to investigate the reasons for the delay would be to try to determine Ottoman learned circles' needs for books, the ways of supply and characteristics of these books. Let us try to find out along these lines:

It would not be correct, in our opinion, to claim that Ottoman learned circles faced difficulties in procuring the books they needed. Books were produced at any period and in all areas by way of authorship, compilation and translation. This is confirmed by subject-wise analyses of collections contained in our libraries and their catalogues. Adding to this the fact that the available books were multiplied by means of copying, one can state safely that the production and supply of books were carried on as uninterrupted activities. Various notes recorded on copies of books indicate that books were not only produced but were also circulated regularly. We can conclude that the Ottoman intellectuals and learned circles did not face any shortage of books; on the contrary, the latter were always rather readily available to them.

As was pointed out earlier by some authors, another reason for the delay was related to the esthetic characteristics of books. Manuscript books other than technical books prepared for students were generally produced with a special quality; the grain of paper, the beauty of the calligraphy, the gilding and the binding, they reflect an esthetic concern. It was not possible, at least then, to find the same esthetic features in printed books. As long as one could afford it, one would opt for the manuscript book.

In this connection, the teaching methods of the time acquire relevance as well. By examining available copies of books, some notes written in them, and some libraries' establishment drafts, we can see that madrasa students used to start a course first by copying the related book for their own use. It is stated in some of the deeds of libraries that on certain days of the week, the library would be opened exclusively to students, and for copying purposes. This also explains why some copies of books are abundant and their handwriting is irregular. The madrasa student, who was the potential buyer of a book was, instead, producing his own copy of the book by his own labour, using pen and ink that he generally obtained through assistance, and this was also a way for him to be initiated to the subjects he would later study with the teacher. In such a situation, there would not be any demand for printed works by madrasa students at least.

This brings us to the main reasons for the delay in introducing the technique to the country, which is related to demand and supply conditions. Ottoman learned people always had access to the literature they needed. While books became abundant due to the copying activity described above, bookshops were always there to serve the needs, as the latter were not only trading places, but also production places for books.
oks. Bookellers used to maintain stocks of copies matching potential demand, and were also able to meet arising needs upon order by getting books copied by the thousands of copyists, calligraphers, etc. who worked in this field. The process was not one of creating demand for the available supply, but matching the supply with the demand, which was the case not only in the book production sector, but also in other sectors of life in the Ottoman State. There are many areas in which the capitalististic way of generating demand to buy the supply did not correspond to the way Ottoman economy was run, where needs felt were translated into a demand that would generate a supply. In this respect, the Ottomans' establishing the printing press three centuries later than Gutenberg can be considered as one of the manifestations of this approach or practice, in addition to its resulting from a combination of several factors, still needing to be studied as stated above.

THE PUBLICATIONS OF MÜTEFERRİKA

The establishment of Ibrahim Müteferrika's printing house can be considered as the beginning of a new era in our cultural history. As a result of this development, 22 volumes were printed under 17 different titles. 500 copies of each were printed on the average. Some are illustrated with drawings and maps. It seems unlikely that those who read the reachers for a "low price" were as pleased. These books are, according to dates of publication and title:


2. Tufahat-ı Küleik fi Eşref-i Bekâr, Author: Kâtip Cevher (Haci Halife Mustafa bin Abdullah), 5-75-2 folios and 5 maps. 29 May 1729 (Guerre-i Zîli-kâde 1141). On history and navigation.


4. Tarîh-ı Hindî Gahir el-Mumtâmâ be-Haddîl-i Nuvî (Kâtip Cevheri), Author: Enûrî Muhammad bin Hasen el-Mesallâ. 3-91 folios, 1 map, 15 illustrations. 5 April 1730 (Fevre-i Râzaan 1142). The first illustrated book in Turkish to give information on the American continent.


10. Fihrist-i Mähölâtî, translated from Latin in summary by Ibrahim Müteferrika. 23 folios, 2 pictures, 27 February 1732 (Guerre-i Ramazan 1144). The magnetic sphere of the earth and its relation with the compass.

11. Cihannâmâ, Author: Karîf Çelebi. 32-698 pages, 15 plates, 27 maps, 3 July 1732 (10 Muhammed 1145). Geography in general and geographic knowledge of the country. The maps of many countries change in every copy.

12. Taşkerîn-ı Tarîvâhir, Author: Kâtip Çelebi. 12-247 pages. 14 June 1733 (Guerre-i Mu- hamed 1146). An early reference on Ottoman history where events are cited chronologically.


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"Heraç", Tıbbi Asilâbîlî. Vol. 3, fasc. 37-58, pp. 545-588 (Avâder-i Âmmûzû). An early manuscript containing information on printing in general and printing in the Ottoman State in particular. It results from several sources and can be considered to be one of the first information on the subject. For this bibliography can provide useful guidance for researchers concerned. This article was noted neglected by the researchers although it is important that the information on the printing of religious books was traced not as the main but in the minor branches, many failed to take this information into consideration and recently make the mistake of ignoring the country.

Bulaç, Ali. "Kâtip Cevher in Tarîke-ârâ" in Gûrîzâ, 3rd ed. Tıbbi Kütüphânelerin (Istanbul 1965), pp. 146-154. For the literature of the scholars used, this book opens some new topics for discussion and study by the researchers concerned. On the basis of excerpts from foreign sources, it shows ways to covering some wrong opinions which exist in the Western world about printing activity in the Muslim world. The establishment of Mihâfbîn's pressing press and the delay in its establishimportance is measured from the right viewpoint and with accuracy. This book too is indispensable source for researchers concerned.

Pabuç, M. Zü. "Köksâlî", in Mihâfbîn, Tıbbi Kütüphâneleri ve Tıbbî Kütüphâneleri, Vol. 2, pp. 46-58. Millî Döküman太多的. A valuable article at simplifying from several studies in the historical documents and previously published research, which, despite this, was really neglected by researchers. It is important because it draws the attention to some archival sources which were not used by other researchers and some related topics which would further contribution. To fill some of the gaps of research on the history of printing and publishing, it would be useful to further research taken into consideration the sources and documents pointed out by the late Pabuç.

Şen, Ahmet. Mihâfbîn Kütüphâneleri ve Ulu-Muhammed-i Fethullah-i Obûnî, 1998, III, XIII, 1993. (The book is an edition of the book "Ulu-Muhammed-i Fethullah-ı Obûnî" published by Mihâfbîn Kütüphâneler and not so contains information on this personality. The introduction and the beginning of the book took into the establishment of the printing press and the circumstances surrounding it, and gives information which is far from the past and current ministries opinion. It is a valuable study which, in a sense, crosses the previous literature as far as Mihâfbîn's printing press is concerned, and brings really new facts as regards epigraphic information on the subject.)
INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman State entered the nineteenth century with political and social problems also with some novelties, and tried to find solutions with different approaches to domestic and foreign problems of the country. Reformist ruler Selim III was then deposed (29 May 1807), his reformist army was dispersed and reformist activities were obstructed. Mustafa IV replaced him for a short period (1807-1808), but by support of the Senator of Tuna, reformist Alemdar Mustafa Pasha and his novelist friends, Mahmud II was enthroned.

It would not be wrong if we say that the years of political power of Mahmut II are full of crises. Because, it is an age in which ravings and turmoil of novelties are added to an existing political domestic and foreign crisis. As a natural result of such a situation, Mahmut has been the popular personality that was of spoken and discussed.

Mahmut did not live the caged life that the Ottoman rulers lived. He was traditionally educated. He was fond of literature and music. He was a calligrapher, music composer and poet. He wrote poems in different styles. He was brave, deliberate, determined, and patient. He learnt all the necessary political and state knowledge. Mahmut learnt from his uncle Selim III the distressing situation and character of the Ottoman Empire and the necessary revolutions of salvation. The killing of his uncle, the brave death of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha by Janissary disorder, the incessant defects of the Ottoman army in domestic revolts and foreign wars caused Mahmud II to develop his thoughts and feelings to make a radical revolution. He knew that previous rulers lost their lives for this purpose. In spite of this, for the salvation of the country, as there was no other remedy, he started an organizational study on a wide range.

Mahmut had witnessed the weakness and the results of the hesitations of Selim III. At the same time, he had seen how tactful the limited reforms brought by "The Order of Revolution" were successful. In the first years of his reign, he envisaged those points:

a) For the success of the revolutionary movement, the reforms should cover not only some military elements but also whole Ottoman institutions and the society.

b) The institutions that were negatively affected by previous revolutions before him must be wholly abolished. So the functional abruption of previous institutions would be prevented.

c) Before starting the movement, the reforms must be faradically done and the necessary support must be provided.

In later years, these points formed the framework of the reformist policy of Mahmud II. It is barely clear that the reformist maneuvers at the end of the eighteenth century based on a different and new undertaking. The cadres either around Selim III or Mahmud II went by gropingly. This was the state mentality of the age. Making reforms to recall the age of Süleyman the Magnificent though they used such explanation in front of the scholars or imperial edicts,
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YENİ TÜRKİYE
PREFACE

The incredible fact that the Ottoman frontier beylik became an Empire over such a short period of time has attracted many Western researchers and scholars to delve into the history of the Ottoman State. It could be argued that there are miscellaneous determinants and dimensions that actually created the possibility for such an incredible feat to be accomplished. This volume has been edited with the aim of focussing on the main factors that gave rise to such a great civilisation. In the first place, the institutional character of the Ottoman State is of utmost importance. In order to understand the basis of Ottoman civilisation, the different patterns of its institutions should be studied, as the comprehensive analysis of the institutional structure of the Ottoman Empire might enable us to conceive how a small beylik was able to turn into one of the greatest Empires in the world. In this volume, the administrative, judiciary and military institutions of the Empire are set out as the main subject titles. In addition, there are various subjects which have been analysed, under such subrubles as bureaucracy, religion and law, shedding light on the main characteristics of Ottoman institutions.

In appreciation of the highly developed institutional structure of the Ottoman Empire, the ideational and philosophical sources cannot be underrated. Unless these sources are taken into consideration, it is impossible to grasp the various dynamics of Ottoman institutions. Therefore, this volume is entitled “Philosophy, Science and Institutions”, due to the close correlation and importance of these subjects to one another.

Contrary to conventional Euro-centric and Orientalist assumptions, which hold “science” as the peculiar praxis of the Renaissance and Enlightenment in
the West, in this volume it is generally argued that the Ottomans had a number of successes in scientific activities (ilm ü fen). The Ottoman State not only promoted the development of science within the borders of the Empire, but also facilitated several interactions with scientific activities outside of its territories. During this interaction, it both benefited from and contributed to the scientific improvements made in Europe.

Additionally, this volume dedicates an important place to the development of philosophy and thought in the Ottoman Empire; although in the Ottoman Empire such major philosophical schools as developed in Europe were not formed, rather the Ottomans focused mainly on Islamic philosophy. Yet this situation does not arise from the fact that the Ottomans lagged behind in speculative matters. On the contrary, they were not interested in philosophical issues that were outside the realm of Islamic tradition. From their point of view, Islam encompassed all ontological and epistemological matters, making any other philosophical concern dysfunctional.

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