such as pilgrimage. For the Jewish Iraqi community, Arabic was an ingredient amongst other imperial languages, the other being Ottoman Turkish and English (administrative and imperial languages in Iraq and in India) and French (the language taught in the Alliance schools). Hebrew was not only a liturgical language, but also an imperial language because it functioned as a means to converse with and respond to the writings of European Jews.

It seems to me that all writers, both in the European-Hebrew journals and in the Judeo-Arabic publications attempt to answer the question “What is Enlightenment?” They all relate to the complex historical processes, which shaped their daily lives, and to “types of political institutions, forms of knowledge, projects of rationalization of knowledge and practices.” Surely, they did not provide such sophisticated answers as Kant’s, but they do expose and critique such processes as colonial trade, education systems and print capitalism. Given their Iraqi, Ottoman and Arabic nature, these publications can be seen as part of the cultural revival of the Middle East in the nineteenth century, specifically the Arabic naḥḍa. Rather than searching for the specific moment when the naḥḍa began or constructing a particular order for its spread (first in Egypt and Lebanon, later in Palestine and Iraq), it is preferable to explore the naḥḍa as an ethos, as movements of ideas concurrently coming from diverse centres. Different people, at different places in the nineteenth century, spoke of science and progress, although they had very different conceptions of who was enjoying the rays of light, and who was to remain in darkness.

Arabic Books Printed in Malta 1826–42: Some Physical Characteristics

Geoffrey Roper

The Arabic press run by the English Church Missionary Society in Malta between 1825 and 1842 produced over a hundred editions of Arabic and Turkish books, tracts and newspapers for readers in the Middle East at a time when indigenous printing was still in its infancy. These included not only Christian texts and tracts, but also secular educational texts intended for Muslim, Christian and Jewish pupils in the new schools and colleges of the Middle East, as well as a newly literate adult population. These text-books dealt with the Arabic and English languages, mathematics, geography, astronomy, zoology, history and art; also translations of English literature, and a periodical in the style of a newspaper.

They were distributed in quite large numbers: figures from the missionary archives and records indicate that a total of over 150,000 Arabic and Turkish books and 8,600 ‘newspapers’ from Malta arrived in the Middle East and North Africa between 1825 and the mid-1840s. At the time, this represented a drastic increase in the availability of reading material: neither traditional manuscript production, nor the earlier imports of European printed books, nor the output of books from most of the local presses can have approached these levels in a comparable period of time. Only the Būlāq Press in Egypt exceeded the Malta production figures; but their output was aimed at a quite different readership, the already educated adult elite.

The main destinations of the Malta books were Egypt and Lebanon, where missionary educational establishments were in operation, and which, in the Muhammad ‘Ali period, were relatively open to foreign influences. But significant quantities were also distributed in the Maghrib, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Turkey, with some copies also finding their way to the Hejaz, Yemen and Eritrea.

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1 For a history of the press, and a full bibliography of its Arabic and Turkish publications, see Geoffrey Roper, Arabic Printing in Malta 1825–1845: Its History and its Place in the Development of Print Culture in the Arab Middle East, Ph.D. Thesis, (University of Durham 1988).
2 Ibid., 270–2.
4 Roper, Arabic Printing, 272–302.
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What impact did all these books make on their Arab readers? Obviously this relates partly to the texts, which they contained; but the intention here is to examine a different aspect of the question. The effects which books have on their readers' thought processes depend also on their physical characteristics, on the way in which the texts are packaged and presented. So what did the Malta books look like, and how did they differ from what Arab readers of the time might have found in other reading matter? Of necessity this can be only a brief survey of some of the relevant characteristics.

Perhaps the most important feature of a printed book is its type-face. The first Arabic types used in Malta were supplied by the London printer and type-founder Richard Watts. These were almost identical to, and most probably from the punches and/or matrices of, the fonts prepared by the English typographer William Martin, who was a pupil of the famous Baskerville. He cut them from models provided by the orientalist Charles Wilkins at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Two type-faces were supplied to Malta — English and Great Primer sizes — and they were exclusively used until the late 1830s. Any larger size of lettering, as required sometimes for headings and titles, had to be specially engraved or lithographed.

These Martin/Watts type-faces were a considerable improvement on many earlier ones used in England and northern Europe generally. But although they are quite elegant in appearance, they do not really correspond to any authentic Arabic ductus, or style of writing, and certain features, such as the opaque ‘eyes’ in letters such as fi, qa’d and waw, must have seemed somewhat alien to Arab readers. The use of the Persian form of the numeral 4 (which probably came from Wilkins’s Indian models), and Western numerals and letters for sheet signatures, would also have contributed to the ‘foreign’ look. It seems that, in consequence, the early Malta books did encounter some criticism from their Arab recipients on account of their type-style and appearance. An internal memorandum in the missionary archives, dated December 1831, notes that ‘The Arabs generally dislike the characters of the books issued from our Press.’

Because of this, and also because the Watts types were wearing out, completely new Arabic founts were brought into use in 1838. These were prepared and cast entirely in Malta, under the supervision of George Badger and the famous Lebanese writer Fāris al-Shidyāq. The latter had been a copyist in his youth in Lebanon, and this undoubtedly contributed greatly to the preparation of good calligraphic models. George Badger — later a noted orientalist — had considerable mechanical skill and typographical experience — he had previously worked as a typographer at the American Press in Beirut. This, combined with his feeling for Arabic, ensured that Shidyāq’s models were reproduced as faithfully and elegantly as possible on the punches that were cut.

Three sizes of alphabet were created, of which the largest, Double Pica, was quite calligraphic: as well as being used for headings and titles, some entire texts were set in it, such as Shidyāq’s own reading-book, Al-Laṣf il-Kull Ma’ānī Ta’il (1839) and the Biblical Kitāb al-Zarī’ of 1840, which one Arab typographical historian has described as being ‘of extreme beauty of script and excellence of typography.’ The two smaller ones — Great Primer and English — were designed to replace the Watts types, and were also considerably more authentic than their predecessors, being fair reproductions of good naskhī styles. All three type-faces reflect some of the characteristics of Shidyāq’s handwriting, particularly the strong bold horizontals, which can be seen in his extant autograph manuscripts.

The impression made by lines of type is affected not only by the type-face, but also by the type-setting: this is especially true of Arabic typography, which must imitate cursive script. Careless or disjointed type-casting or composition can greatly mar the appearance of the text and alienate the reader. A few of the early Malta publications do suffer from this; but most of them are carefully set, with the cursiveness well maintained. Typographical spelling errors, however, are not

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in frequent, despite the proof-reading efforts of the missionary printers and their assistants. Among other things, the compositors seem to have had continual difficulty with Eastern Arabic numerals, frequently muddling 2 and 6, or 7 and 8, or reversing the order of digits. Most of these errors occur in the earlier books: by the late 1830s the vigilance of Shidyq and Badger was brought to bear, and eliminated most such misprints. Printed errata lists are appended to some volumes, a new feature of Arabic books at the time.

The arrangement of the text on the page, and the accompanying typographical features which serve to present it and package it as a book, are also of crucial importance in determining its impact on readers. The books produced at the early Turkish and Egyptian presses were usually modelled quite closely on traditional manuscript layouts and styles of presentation. The Arabic and Turkish books from Malta, on the other hand, introduced a number of new features derived from the European printed book, while at the same time retaining a sensitivity to Middle Eastern norms which was often lacking in Arabic books printed in Europe. Some traditional features are sometimes found, such as, in a few cases, decorative headings, corresponding to manuscript 'awnās (although these are generally much less elaborate than their counterparts in Istanbul or Bukhār books); also, occasionally, the use of ruled borders around the text, red ink for headings or rubricated key words, and sometimes tapered colephons.

On the other hand, unlike manuscripts, and contrary to the practice in most Egyptian and Ottoman printed books of the period, the Malta books contain no printed marginal glosses or commentaries, and there are no catchwords to link one page of text to the next. Instead, several of them introduce footnotes, a novel way of presenting ancillary information in Arabic books. At the top of the page, another novel feature is sometimes found: running heads, repeating the title of the chapter or section as an aid to those referring to the book.

Most ordinary manuscripts, and many printed books from the Middle East until the late nineteenth century, lack title-pages. The Malta books, however, with only a few exceptions, do provide them. Usually (but not always) they set out the place and date of publication as well as the title. The author’s name, however, is only seldom given: in most cases the omission is understandable, as many of the books have no identifiable authors, being biblical anthologies, reading books, prayers or such like, or are translated from English authors, with names like Bickersteth, Pinnock, etc., which, if transliterated into Arabic, would appear as nothing but gobbledygook to Arab readers; but it is perhaps surprising that Shidyq’s name is missing from the title-pages of the books of which he was the author; and that the names of the Arab authors ‘Abd Allāh Zākhir and Jibril Farḥāt do not appear on the title-pages of the Malta editions of their works.14

Many of the title-pages are adorned with quotations from biblical or other sources, and some have wood-engraved vignettes, mostly taken or copied from contemporary English editions. Some have decorative engraved panels or borders, sometimes incorporating patterns produced by the repetition of ornamental types known as fleurons, or small foliate, floral or crystal devices. These reintroduced to the Arab world elements of the arabesque, originally taken by Europeans from Islamic models, and now re-cast (literally) in a new form. Such compositions were subsequently used quite frequently on Middle Eastern printed books, until the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. Some books have large or elaborate engraved lettering for the title or part of it: in particular, the word Kišb, in large letters with the bā’ placed over the kāf, appears in identical form on several title-pages, and must have been engraved on a block which was reused. A few title-pages were produced entirely by lithography, with attempts at calligraphy for the titles and sometimes elaborate decorative ensembles: one notable example is the first edition of Farḥāt’s Baḥth al-Maṣāliḥ of 1836, with a very elaborate design incorporating rather incongruous ancient Egyptian motifs.

Tables of contents, with page numbers, are also to be found in a number of the Malta publications. While this was not entirely unknown in Arabic books, it was still uncommon in that period. Other tables and charts also appear within the texts of certain books.

The page layouts likewise set new standards, being considerably more spacious and easier on the eye than most ordinary Arabic manuscripts or contemporary printed books from the Middle East. Margins are reasonably wide, and are unencumbered by glosses or commentaries. The spacing between lines and between words is also quite

generous, leaving a reasonable overall ratio between black and white, which contrasts markedly with the normal appearance of a pica of a Bâlîq or Istanbul book of the same period. Many of the Malta texts are also divided into paragraphs (albeit often rather long ones), which is not true of most of their local counterparts.

Punctuation, in the modern sense, was not used in Arabic in the manuscript era, although sometimes circles, rosettes or groups of dots were used to indicate the ends of passages, such as verses in the Qur‘an.15 Early printed books in the Middle East did not depart from scribal tradition in this respect. The Malta press for the most part did likewise, and the only marks in most of their books are asterisks or dots enclosed in inverted heart-shaped devices, conforming in their use with the traditional Arabic system. There was, however, one serious attempt to introduce modern punctuation, and it came not from the Europeans at the press, but from the Arab scholar Fâris al-Shidyâq. His approach to the Arabic language was a combination of conservatism in his determination to maintain classical norms of grammar and style, and radicalism in seeking ways to revitalise it for use in the modern world. By the late 1830s he had become familiar with European books and literature, and had observed the usefulness of punctuation marks in clarifying the structure and meaning of passages of prose. In 1836 he published at the Malta press his English grammar in Arabic, Al-Bikâira al-Shahîya, and was careful to set out in detail the punctuation signs, their names and uses. Then, three years later, in 1839, when he came to publish his primer and reading book of literary Arabic, Al-La‘îf bi Kull Ma‘nâ Tarîf, he boldly decided to introduce these Western punctuation marks into it. He announced his decision in the preface to the book, setting out the signs and their uses, and calling for their general adoption.

This remarkable proposal for a significant change in Arabic orthography was, however, far ahead of its time. Although all these punctuation marks appear throughout Al-La‘îf, they were, apart from the full-stop, very seldom used in other Malta books, and are even missing from some for which Shidyâq himself was entirely responsible. A few commas, dashes, colons and quotation marks appeared in books published in 1839 and 1840. Exclamation and question marks are not found anywhere outside Al-La‘îf. In the Middle East, Shidyâq’s appeal fell on deaf cars, and he himself soon gave up the idea. In the second edition of Al-La‘îf published in Istanbul in 1881 at Al-Jawâ’îl Press, of which he was the director, all the punctuation marks were omitted, as well as the relevant section of the introduction. It was not until the twentieth century that full punctuation became widely adopted in Arabic.

Another new feature of printed books for Arab readers was the use of pictorial illustrations. From 1832 the German artist Carl-Friedrich Brocktorff (resident in Malta) and his son Ludwig (or Luigi) were employed to prepare both wood-engravings and lithographed drawings and maps.16 These were mostly copied from the illustrations in the English originals from which Arabic books were translated, such as Robinson Crusoe. Some fine lithographed maps were also published in the form of an Arabic atlas (1835).17

The formats and sizes of the Malta Arabic books vary considerably. Apart from the oblong folio atlas and a calligraphic copying book,18 and quarto drawing lessons,19 none of them exceeded the standard octavo size of the 1840 dialogues (Al-Mu‘awwara al-Usmiyâ). Many, however, especially the early tracts and primers, were much smaller — mostly 16mo, little more than pocket size. This was presumably both for reasons of cost, and to facilitate their transport and distribution by travelling missionaries.

It remains to mention the Arabic publications in newspaper format printed in Malta in 1833 and 1834. They seem usually to have contained six pages, consisting of one sheet folded, with a half-sheet tipped in. They measured, when folded, 25 x 21 cm. The upper 11 cm. of the first page contains the title, Akhbar al-Qisîd, in large engraved calligraphic lettering, surmounted by a wood-engraved vignette, on either side of which are printed the year, the issue number and the names of the month in the Eastern Christian and Coptic calendars, in small type. The main text, in two columns divided by a rule, is set in Great Primer Arabic from the old Martin & Watts foundry. The imprint appears in small type at the foot of the back page. The ‘news’ is simply

16 On the Brocktorff family and their artistic output in Malta, see Nicholas de Piro, The International Dictionary of Artists Who Painted Malta (Valletta 1980), 33-7; their employment by the CMS is recorded in the CMS Archives: CMS/065/21, Schilzke to Secs., 20.6.1832; CMS/067/6, Weiss to Jowett, 28.8.1833; their names also appear on several of the engravings and lithographs.
17 Carmel G. Bonavia, Bibliography of Maltese Textbooks 1651-1799 (Mudra 1979), n. 35, 29; Eva Hanbott-Bensa, Dagmar Glass, and Geoffrey Roper (eds), in collaboration with Theo Smet, Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-cultural Encounter (Westholme 2002), n. 86, 495.
18 No title or imprint [1835]. British Library ob Ed.14546.f.1.
19 Be‘l Qawâld‘l al-I‘idal al-Rasim [1835].
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the 'good news' of the Christian gospel. But for most, if not all, of its readers, it will have been the first publication in newspaper format which they had ever seen.20

The role of the Malta press in standardising layouts and methods of presentation of printed Arabic texts had a significant impact. Some of the new features which it introduced correspond with several which Elizabeth Eisenstein mentioned, in her seminal work on the printing press as an agent of change, as significant in the systematisation of thought-processes in the formative era of European print culture. The use of title-pages engendered 'new habits of placing and dating' as well as helping the later development of new standards of cataloguing and enumerative bibliography. The use of footnotes, running heads and abbreviations, as well as Sildyâq's experiments with punctuation, all served to 'reorder the thought of readers' and to create a new 'esprit de système'.21

The plates and engravings in some of the Malta books also broke new ground. The views and story illustrations incorporated perspective, which was still a very new convention in Arab pictorial representation, and one which, as McLuhan and others have pointed out, implied a new reordering of consciousness by the adoption of a fixed point of view.22 The lithographed diagrams, which accompanied an astronomical work published in Malta in 1833,23 were another important new feature of the Arabic book. Technical illustrations were sometimes found in Arabic manuscripts; but, as David James has aptly observed, 'in the absence of the printing press, transmission of technical data depends upon the accuracy of the scribe. The problem becomes doubly difficult when information has also to be communicated in the form of diagrams ... [which] were regarded by the copyists as little more than an exotic appendage, frequently misplaced and sometimes omitted.'24 With the introduction of standard, repeatable, engraved diagrams incorporated into printed books, the presentation of such information became transformed.

20 The only previous Arabic publication in newspaper format was the Egyptian official gazette Al-Waqfât al-Miṣriya, which had started publication five years earlier, in 1828.
modernizers and progressives of the late-nineteenth-century 

**SOURCES**

The most important sources are the Malta books themselves. The best single collection of them is in the British Library in London. Other significant holdings are to be found at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (including especially the Malan collection in the Indian Institute Library housed there), Cambridge University Library, New College Library in Edinburgh, Dar al-Kutub in Cairo, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft in Halle and the Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, USA.

**Archives**

Church Missionary Society, kept in Birmingham University Library
- Letter-books (outgoing): CM/L ...
- Original papers: CM/O ...

![Figure 1. [Bible: O.T.] Kūth Tawāliḥ kustūtaj min al-'Ahd al-Quḍūn (Book of histories extracted from the Old Testament (Rome 1671 version). Malta 1833. Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.28. Title within Greek-style border; word Kūth calligraphically engraved; woodcut vignette of European origin)](image-url)
Figure 2. (FARHAT, Jherl.) *F* - waw' *Q* (On preaching). No imprint [Malta 1841.] Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.29. Title set in the large 1838 type, within an elaborate engraved European Gothic architectural panel.

Figure 3. [BIRD, Isaac.] Thulatha 'asara ri'ala [13 letters]. Malta 1834. Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.33. Title-page, set in the original types of Richard Watts, from the Wilkins/Martin design. First word of title misprinted (all/i omitted). Printed by the CMS on behalf of the American missionaries in Beirut.
Figure 4. [Church of England.] Kāfīb al-Salāwiyya al-'Arabīyya [Book of Common Prayer]. Valetta 1840. Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.35. Title-page, lithographed from a semi-calligraphic hand, probably that of Ifris al-Shidyāq. Vignette depicts the Pit Press building in Cambridge, probably taken from a contemporary English prayer-book.

Figure 5. [DEFOE, Daniel.] Qisāt Rūbūnān Karūf [The story of Robinson Crusoe.] Malta 1815. Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.37. Title-page set in Watts types, within border constructed from ornamental typographic sets. Wood-cut vignette. Frontispiece apparently lithographed from a wood-cut original.
Figure 6. [PINNOCK, William.] Kitāb Tawārīkh mukhtasar [Concise book of histories (from A catechism of universal history)]. [Malta] 1833. Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.46. Set in Watts types. A traditional MS-style tapered calepophen is followed by a more modern table of contents, with the engraved heading *Fihrist* containing a rather fanciful rendering of the final *b*.

Figure 7. [PINNOCK, William.] Kitāb Tawārīkh mukhtasar [Concise book of histories (from A catechism of universal history)]. [Malta] 1833. Cambridge University Library, 8828.d.46. Title-page set in Watts types, with word *Kitāb* calligraphically engraved; woodcut vignette of European origin, depicting a missionary engaged in a literary discussion with a 'native'.
الأخبار القاسد

Figure 8. Abhâr al-Qâhid (News of the straight path), no. 1, Malta 1833. Bulletin in newspaper format, 25x21 cm., set in two sizes of the Wata types, with engraved calligraphic title surmounted by a woodcut vignette.

Figure 9. [Fâris al-Seidyâq] Al-Lîfâ 'l-kull na'āfâfî [The throne, on every exquisite meaning], Malta 1839. Cambridge University Library, Mosh 315.d.18. Set in the smaller size of 1838 types. Two pages from the introduction, setting out the punctuation marks (al'mâhâ) and explaining their use.