

2 Arabic Book-Printing in the East Before 1700

2.1 Middle Eastern Societies Facing the Novelty of Printing: Hesitations and Obstructions

Gutenberg printed his famous Bible two years after the troops commanded by Sultan Mehmet II conquered Constantinople in 1453. Within the Ottoman Empire's new frontiers, the discussion about printing did not begin in 1455 but much later, when the new technology was already widespread across Europe and had covered a lot of ground. The British expert in communication sciences Elizabeth Eisenstein states that: "The theme of printing as proof of spiritual and cultural superiority, first sounded by Rome in its crusade against 'illiterate' Turks, was taken over by German humanists trying to counter Italian claims".¹ Muslims were not unaware of the Western typographic achievements: discussions took place, especially in the 17th century, between the (open-minded) supporters and (conservative) adversaries of this revolutionary craft that had, for an Islamic society attached to its own traditions of transmitting the sacred message, quite different implications than in the European societies. At first, the Muslim scholars ('*ulamā*') may have feared that this invention of the unbelievers (*kāfirūn*) would lead to a distortion of the holy scriptures of Islam. Any religious innovation was liable to suspicion of disrespect to Islam, or even heresy (*bid'a*).² As Antoine Galand states in his preface to Barthélemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*,

Pendant que Scaliger vivait, on avait imprimé à Rome les œuvres d'Avicenne en Arabe, un Commentaire sur Euclide, et une Géographie [...]. Mais ces Ouvrages ne furent pas imprimés dans l'intention que ceux qui apprenaient l'Arabe parmi nous en profitassent. [...] Mais, on fit cette grande dépense dans la vue de faire commerce en Levant de ces Livres, dessein qui échoua d'abord, parce que les Mahométans ne voulurent pas recevoir les exemplaires qu'on leur porta. En effet, ils craignaient que dans la suite, on ne leur introduisit l'Alcoran imprimé, ce qui aurait été regardé chez eux comme la plus grande profanation qui pouvait arriver à ce Livre, qui n'est pas moins sacré chez eux que les Saint Livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament le sont parmi nous.³

¹ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 147.

² Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change", p. 233.

³ Antoine Galand, "Discours pour servir de préface à la *Bibliothèque orientale*", in Barthélemy d'Herbelot [de Molainville], *Bibliothèque Orientale, ou Dictionnaire universel contenant tout ce qui fait connoître les peuples de l'Orient*, t. I, La Haye, 1777, p. XXIX.

Galand, who travelled to the Levant and was in Istanbul at the end of the 17th century, also described this situation.

On peut encore ajouter que les Arabes, les Persans, et les Turcs, ne peuvent goûter l'impression, quelque avantage que l'on en tire, et qu'ils aiment mieux lire les Livres de leurs Langues, écrits d'une écriture médiocre, que de les lire imprimées, quelques bines imprimez qu'ils puissent être. Cela paraîtra étrange à ceux qui ont observé et éprouvé, comme c'est la vérité, que nos Livres imprimez se lisent plus facilement et avec plus de plaisir, que les mêmes Livres écrits à la main, même les mieux écrits. [...] Quoi qu'il en soit, il est constant que ces Nations ne trouvent point d'agrément dans l'impression.⁴

The press was not the only European innovation that the Turkish society had to decide about through consultations between *'ulamā'*, court officers, and the Sultan: the new fighting techniques, arms and munitions, even clocks in public areas were, one after the other, topics of controversy. In the mid-16th century, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592), the Habsburg ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul, notes in his journal:

Puisque jamais nation étrangère n'a moins eu de peine à recevoir les belles inventions des autres peuples. N'ont-ils pas incontinent pris l'usage des canons et des mousquets et mille autres choses, qui naissant chez nous, ont été chez eux très glorieusement cultivées? L'impression véritablement, et les horlogers publics, n'y ont pas été approuvées: mais la Religion s'y est seulement opposée, de peur que par l'impression leur sainte Écriture cessât d'être écriture, que par les horloges publics, l'autorité de leurs ministres et de leur sacrilèges ne fut en quelque façon diminuée."⁵

In the 20th century, opposition to the wondrous invention of the printing press was explained by Virgil Cândea thus:

L'Orient traditionnel, conservateur, ne pouvait pas résister à cette fascination et à l'impératif du nouveau procédé qui, tout en « affranchissant » des centaines et des milliers de copistes, asservissait le livre à la stéréotypie, le transformant de création unique en un produit de série.⁶

The Sublime Porte manifested a certain indifference towards the circulation of Western printed matter in the territories under its control.⁷ At the onset of the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *Ambassades et voyages en Turquie et Amasie*, transl. S. Gaudon, Paris, 1646, p. 342–343.

⁶ Cândea, “Dès 1701: Dialogue roumanolibanais par le livre et l'imprimerie”, p. 283.

⁷ In Montenegro, for instance, a territory under Ottoman rule, Slavonic printing was present since the end of the 15th century under the influence of its Central European neighbors.

18th century, presses had developed for three centuries in countries and regions subjected to Catholic and Protestant powers. Born in Western Europe, the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants subsequently moved to the Ottoman Middle East, where missionaries from all sides used printed church books in their confrontations.⁸ To this complicated situation was added the discontent of the Eastern Churches subjected to the Sultans' government with not having access to printing in Arabic, the language spoken by most Levantine Christians, and for being flooded with liturgical texts printed in the West, issued from other sources than their own theological and ritual traditions and only answering the needs of the Catholic or Protestant faithful.

It has not yet been proven that the Sultan's administration totally banned Arabic printing before the 1700's.⁹ Several European witnesses claimed that this is what happened, beginning with the French Franciscan priest André Thevet (1502–1590), a traveler to the East in 1549, who notes that:

[...] les Grecs, Arméniens, Mingréliens, Abyssins, Turcs, Persiens, Mores, Arabes & Tartares n'écrivent leurs livres qu'à la main. Ce qu'entre autres les Turcs ont pratiqué, par l'ordonnance de Baiazeth, second du nom, leur Empereur, publiée l'an quatorze cens quatre vingt & trois, portant défenses, sur peine de la vie, de n'user de livres imprimés ; laquelle ordonnance fut confirmée par Selim, premier du nom, son fils, l'an mil cinq cent quinze.¹⁰

Thevet was probably told a legend that circulated in Constantinople, claiming that in 1483 Bayezid II issued an order banning printing, allegedly extended

8 Scлавенitis, "Méfiance vis-à-vis du livre imprimé et emploi parallèle du manuscrit", p. 123. The author presents here examples of Orthodox readers' reactions to the Greek texts printed by Catholics. Thus, at the end of the 18th century, a monk wrote on a copy of the *Λειτουργία τῶν Ἁγίων Πατέρων* (Paris, 1560): "Moult et encore moult choses ont été faussées dans ces trois liturgies par ces diables de Francs, qu'ils soient maudits trois fois mille fois et pour l'éternité."

9 See Neumann, "Book and newspaper printing in Turkish, 18th–20th century", p. 227–248; Dana Sajdi, "Print and Its Discontents. A Case for Pre-Print Journalism and Other Sundry Print Matters", *The Translator*, 15, 2009, 1, p. 105–135; Orlin Sabev (Orhan Salih), "A Virgin Deserving Paradise or a Whore Deserving Poison: Manuscript Tradition and Printed Books in Ottoman Turkish Society", in Jaroslav Miller and László Kontler (eds.), *Friars, Nobles and Burghers. Sermons, Images and Prints, Studies of Culture and Society in Early-Modern Europe, In Memoriam István György Tóth*, Budapest and New York, 2010, p. 389–409; Kathryn A. Schwartz, "Did Ottoman Sultans Ban Print?", *Book History*, 2017, 20, p. 1–39. This was one of the topics discussed at the 1st conference of the TYPARABIC project in Bucharest (September 5–6, 2022). The forthcoming volume of *Proceedings* (De Gruyter, 2023) contains several texts that are dedicated to this research theme.

10 André Thevet, *Les vrais portraits et vies des hommes illustres grecz, latins et payens ...*, t. II, Paris, 1584, p. 514v. In 1584, Thevet was appointed by Catherine de Medici historian and cosmographer of King Henri III.

in 1515 by his son Selim I, who succeeded him (1512–1520).¹¹ The same ban on opening a press was mentioned by Paul Rycaut, who resided in Istanbul in 1660, and Giovanni Donado, author of a study on Turkish literature printed in 1688.

It seems that Sultan Bayezid II issued a *firman* in 1483 that mentioned printing, and its validity was extended in 1515 by his son Selim I. It was, however, only meant to limit the spread of printing and did not refer to books printed by the *ḍimmīs*, but to the Islamic ones.¹² Informed about the dissemination of books printed in other languages, the Sublime Porte was concerned about the potential distortion of the Islamic holy scriptures placed in the hands of printers who had no theological education. None of the *ḍimmī* communities had any conflicts on this matter with the Muslim authorities – the *Şeiḫ ül-islām* or the *‘ulamā’*. Therefore, the Sultan, who was responsible for his subjects’ welfare, let them be. The Sultan’s orders were obeyed and enforced even by qadis in the most remote eastern provinces of the empire. Nil Pektaş (Palabıyık) states that “an Ottoman *kadı* would have no direct power over the affairs of non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan, but he was still responsible for ensuring the public order for all within the district under his jurisdiction.”¹³ Armenians were able to print in Istanbul as early as 1567, enjoying a certain freedom of the press. For a century, they were not bothered either by the Ottoman administration or by the Catholic censorship active in Italy.¹⁴ The Jews of Safed (Şafad), a city in the north of present-day Israel, received in 1576 the first press to have ever been active on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.¹⁵ Brought over by Rabbi Eliezer Ben Itzak Ashkenazi, who had manufactured it in Prague and used it in Lublin and Istanbul (in 1563), it only printed, between 1577 and 1587, Hebrew texts in Hebrew type, as the Sultan’s *firman* allowed. Printing in

¹¹ For a critique of Thevet’s work as a reliable source (“he was not expert in the languages or cultures of the region”) and an English translation of the cited passage, see Schwartz, “Did Ottoman Sultans Ban Print?”, p. 12–13.

¹² Glass and Roper, “Arabic Book and Newspaper Printing in the Arab World”, p. 177; Sabev, “A Virgin Deserving Paradise”, p. 389–409; Schwartz, “Did Ottoman Sultans Ban Print?”, p. 4, 14, 19–20.

¹³ Nil Pektaş, “The Beginning of Printing in the Ottoman Capital: Book Production and Circulation in Early Modern Istanbul”, *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları. Studies in Ottoman Science*, 16, 2015, 2, p. 9.

¹⁴ Raymond H. Kevorkian, *Catalogue des „incunables” arméniennes 1511–1695 ou chronique de l’imprimerie arménienne*, Geneva, 1986; Meliné Pehlivanian, “Mesrop’s Heirs: The Early Armenian Book Printers”, in Hanebutt-Benz, Glass and Roper (eds.), *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution*, p. 57.

¹⁵ In Arabic, ‘Şafad’, this is one of the four holy cities of the Jews, alongside Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tiberias. It is an old center of studies dedicated to the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism.

Hebrew type was not limited to the capital of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶ In the journal of his travels in the Levant (1671–1674), Johann Michael Wansleben reports that while in Izmir, in February–March 1674, he was invited by the Jewish printer and publisher Abraham Gabbai to buy his printing press.¹⁷

That said, however, research in the Ottoman archives has not revealed any such document or official act that specifically banned printing in the empire. In fact, the ban seems to have been purely formal. This is also the conclusion of Sinan Kuneralp: “Il semble que l’interdiction de l’imprimerie ne fut que formelle et ne paraît pas avoir été entérinée par un acte officiel. Du moins, aucun document officiel n’a été découvert à ce jour.”¹⁸

Wahid Gdoura wrote in defense of the Sultans Bayezid II and Selim I, who did not encourage the introduction of printing in their empire at the time. Nevertheless, Gdoura recalls, they were learned people, book readers, and proficient in several languages. Selim I is also remembered as a poet.¹⁹ Describing the state of mind of the clerical circles of Istanbul in the 17th century, Wahid Gdoura remarks that neither was the reading public ready for a free and widespread circulation of holy books, especially the Qur’ān:

Utiliser l’art d’imprimer apparaissait aux yeux des croyants comme une trahison de l’originalité du message du Prophète. Ils craignaient que des gens suspects ou profiteurs allassent publier en de multiples exemplaires des livres religieux falsifiés et défigurés.²⁰

Interestingly, this point was also raised by certain “Bishops of Belgium”, as Charles White reports from his Constantinopolitan journey in 1844: “[...] a sentiment that appears to find an echo in Christian lands – for, in a pastoral letter recently issued

16 For printing in Hebrew in Istanbul, Salonica, Safed and other cities during the Ottoman rule, see the excellent essay by Yaron Ben Na’eh “Hebrew Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire”, in Gad Nassi (ed.), *Jewish Journalism and Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Istanbul, 2001, p. 73–96, and, in the same volume, the extensive *Bibliography of works on [Hebrew] Journalism and Book Printing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*, p. 115–129. See also Glass, *Malta, Beirut, Leipzig and Beirut again*, p. 5; Ittai Joseph Tamari, “Notes on the Printing in Hebrew Typefaces from the 15th to the 19th Centuries”, in Hanebutt-Benz, Glass and Roper (eds.), *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution*, p. 46, n. 52; Pektaş, “The Beginning of Printing in the Ottoman Capital”, p. 10–17.

17 Alastair Hamilton, *Johann Michael Wansleben’s Travels in the Levant, 1671-1674. An Annotated Edition of His Italian Report*, Leiden and Boston, 2018, p. 33.

18 Kuneralp, “Les livres et l’imprimerie à Istanbul au XVIII^e siècle”, p. 2.

19 Gdoura, *Le début de l’imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 87–88.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 104–105.

by the Bishops of Belgium against bad books, printing is set down as the source of the evils complained of, and devoted by implication to abhorrence”.²¹

In favor of the copyists’ craft, passages from the Qur’ān were invoked, which could be interpreted as commands to transmit the Prophet Muḥammad’s teachings only through manuscript copies. According to Thomas F. Carter, Muslim scholars claimed that “it was against the religion and honor of Islam to allow the printing of the Koran, because the Koran rested upon written tradition, and must in no other way be handed down”.²²

When returning from the Orient, Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658–1730), who was well-acquainted with the realities of the Ottoman Empire, expressed a more plausible opinion in his work *Stato militare dell’Impero Ottomanno incremento e decremento del medesimo*. He states that the Turks’ preference for manuscript books had less to do with a legal ban and more to do with the cultural tradition and the legion of copyists active in the territories ruled by the Ottomans. The copyists’ craft would have suffered from the wide distribution of printed books, they feared. Indeed, this is what later happened. Here is the often-cited passage:

Les Turcs ne font point à la vérité imprimer leurs ouvrages, mais ce n’est pas, comme on le croit communément, parceque l’Imprimerie leur este défendue, ou que leurs ouvrages ne méritent pas l’impression. Ils ne veulent pas empêcher tant de Copistes, au nombre de quatre-vingt-dix mille, lorsque j’étois à Constantinople, de gagner leur vie ; & c’est ce que les Turcs ont dit eux-mêmes aux Chrétiens & aux Juifs, qui vouloient introduire l’Imprimerie dans l’Empire, pour en faire leur profit.²³

Count Marsigli’s opinions were confirmed in 1788 by Ignatius Mouradgēa d’Ohsson (1740–1807), an Armenian historian and Oriental scholar who resided in Istanbul and Paris.²⁴ While visiting Istanbul in 1844, Charles White remarked that the local booksellers would “induce strangers to believe that the transcribers of books have their seats near the gate of the seventh heaven, and that printing presses are made from the calcined wood of Al Zacum, the dread tree of the lowest pit”.²⁵

²¹ Charles White, *Three Years in Constantinople or Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844*, vol. II, 2nd ed., London, 1846, p. 155.

²² Thomas F. Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China and its Spread Westward*, 2nd ed., revised by L. Carrington Goodrich, New York, 1955, p. 151.

²³ Signor Conte Luigi Ferdinando di Marsigli, *Stato militare dell’Imperio Ottomanno, incremento e decremento del medesimo*, The Hague and Amsterdam, 1732, p. 40.

²⁴ Ignatius Mouradgēa d’Ohsson, *Tableau général de l’Empire othoman*, Paris, t. I, 1788, p. 295–298. Antoine Galland, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Joseph de Guignes expressed similar opinions, according to Gdoura, *Le début de l’imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 115, n. 161.

²⁵ White, *Three Years in Constantinople or Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844*, p. 155.

The manuscript codex required various talents and crafts, all endangered by the adoption of a different way of disseminating knowledge, whatever that was. Calligraphers,²⁶ miniaturists, binders, goldsmiths who applied the gilt coating on leather bindings, were all on the side of the opponents of this new mechanical technology.²⁷ They would have had to change their suppliers, their manner of negotiating, and the sellers they worked with, who were in contact with copyists' centers across the empire. To order and sell a copy of a manuscript requested by a select public was something else than to receive a large stock of printed books to be sold to a large readership.²⁸ Interestingly, after printing became available in the Middle East, copyists and binders continued to receive orders for manuscripts made in the traditional manner until the beginning of the 20th century. However, they would often use materials and tools imported from Western Europe, as their old suppliers had reshaped their business to suit modern requirements.²⁹

Another issue was that for many centuries, through the rarity and high price of manuscript copies of the holy scriptures, access to them had been restricted to a certain class of educated people, Muslim theologians, and clerics. It was only natural that the adoption of this invention imported from Western Europe worried the 'ulamā' of the Ottoman capital. More than a simple change in the scholars's habits, printing generated a new perception of the holy scriptures, which reflected differently the sacred character of their content. Obviously, printing brought a level of awareness accessible not only to scholars, but also to the public at large, more than had ever previously been possible in Muslim society. The transmission of religious knowledge would have acquired a "democratic" character beyond the limits acceptable to the society of Istanbul, unprepared for total submission to the winds of change blowing from the West.

"Al- Zacum" is the Tk. *zakkum*, as explained by Orlin Sabev, who identified this tree as the utterly poisonous oleander in his article "A Virgin Deserving Paradise", p. 389.

26 On the manuscript tradition and the privileges of Ottoman scribes, see Pektaş, "The Beginning of Printing in the Ottoman Capital", p. 9–10.

27 Glass, *Malta, Beirut, Leipzig and Beirut again*, p. 7.

28 The transfer from the manuscript market to the book market was not smooth even in Europe. The continuity of trade and the financial survival of the "manuscript book people of Paris" depended on tenacity and luck: see Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse, "Bridging the Gutenberg Gap: the Parisian Booktrade Shifting from Manuscript to Print", in Lucien Reynhout and Benjamin Victor (eds.), *Bibliologia 46, Librorum studiosus: Miscellanea palaeographica et codicologica Alberto Derolez dicata*, Turnhout, 2018, p. 335–343.

29 R. Sellheim, "Kitāb", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. 6, 2012, Brill online, s.v.

According to the erudite Swiss writer César François de Saussure (1705–1783),³⁰ who travelled across the Ottoman Empire and commented in 1732 on the delay in the adoption of printing in the capital, the danger was that printing would have allowed more books to circulate than it was advisable for the Sultan's subjects to read.

From the same perspective, Paul Dumont remarked in the introduction to the volume *Turquie. Livres d'hier, livres d'aujourd'hui*:

Si Evliya Çelebi visitait la Turquie d'aujourd'hui, c'est assurément cette production de masse, signe d'une spectaculaire démocratisation de la lecture, qui l'ébahirait le plus. Que les clercs n'aient plus le monopole des choses de l'esprit, quoi de plus inconcevable!³¹

This major transformation in the access to theological knowledge, in the first place, was interpreted by certain historians as a step forward from a traditional society towards a modern one.³² Clearly, this new type of freedom encouraged the common people to aspire to independence from authoritarian governments and regimes. By means of this new medium, revolutionary ideas detrimental to Ottoman power could easily spread across the empire.³³ Ḥalīl Šābāt commented on the administration's fear that the decrease in the price of books caused by printing would have made the written culture available to everyone, and that, in turn, would have helped the population attain a level of education that would encourage it to reject the despotic authority of the state.³⁴ Similarly, Wahid Gdoura cites a statement made by André Demeerseman (1901–1993)³⁵ which reveals a similar vision, globally applied:

La raison qui incita différents gouvernements à retarder l'introduction de l'imprimerie était le maintien de leur autorité sous sa forme ancienne et ils étaient tout naturellement

³⁰ A Swiss writer born in Lausanne, he wrote memoirs of his travels to England, Turkey, the Netherlands, and across Switzerland (1725–1740), published a century later. His remarks on the topic of printing in the Ottoman Empire are presented in *Lettres de Turquie (1730–1739)*, with parallel edition in French and Hungarian, Budapest, 1909, p. 94.

³¹ Dumont, *Turquie: Livres d'hier, livres d'aujourd'hui*, p. VIII.

³² Glass, *Malta, Beirut, Leipzig and Beirut again*, p. 8.

³³ Joseph Abou Nohra, "Les origines et le rayonnement culturel de la première imprimerie à caractères arabes au Liban (1733)", in Frederek Musall and Abdulbary al-Mudarris (eds.), *Im Dialog bleiben: Sprachen und Denken in den Kulturen des Vorderen Orients*, Wiesbaden, 2011, p. 219.

³⁴ Šābāt, *Tārīḥ al-ṭibā'a fī al-Šarq al-'arabī*, p. 21.

³⁵ A historian of Tunisian society and political life, active in Tunis at Institut des belles lettres arabes (IBLA), author of books written in French on topics connected to Muslim political thinkers, the modern history of Tunisia, and printing in Arabic, including *L'imprimerie en Orient et au Maghreb: une étape décisive de la culture et de la psychologie sociale islamiques*, Tunis, 1954 (reedited twice).

incline à penser que les publications et surtout les journaux n'auraient pas tardé à la battre en brèche.³⁶

This attitude also influenced the policy related to printing that the Phanariot princes of Wallachia promoted. For example, during the rule of Nicolae Mavrocordat,³⁷ the control over the princely press was given to the administration of the metropolitan's office. Tit Simedrea³⁸ explains:

As it did not yield a substantial income, or possibly for the fear of this 'baking composition'³⁹ – the book – where the mixture of progressive ideas gets leavened, the Phanar-born voivod felt more confident in placing the printing press under the safe authority of the Church than allowing it to print worldly books that could even have turned, as happened in other parts of the world, menacing to the legitimacy of such a rule. After all, he came from the empire where printing had been limited as much as possible: from Istanbul, where he had learned his lesson well!⁴⁰

Another equally significant element in the controversy regarding the “menace” of printing was the opinion of the fierce enemies of printing who declared that it is impure from the perspective of Islamic doctrines, as the typographic material manufactured from a metal alloy (punches, matrices, and type) needed to be

36 André Demeerseman, “Une étape décisive de la culture et de la psychologie sociale islamiques. Les données de la controverse autour du problème de l'imprimerie”, *IBLA*, 17, 1954, 66, p. 136. See other considerations in Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change”, p. 229–251; Muhsin Mahdi, “From the Manuscript Age to the Age of Printed Books”, in Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World*, p. 1–15; Reinhard Schulze, “The Birth of Tradition and Modernity in 18th and 19th Century Islamic Culture – the Case of Printing”, in J. Skovgaard-Petersen (ed.), *The Introduction of the Printing Press in the Middle East*, Oslo, 1997, p. 29–72.

37 Nicolae Mavrocordat (b. 1680, Constantinople – d. 1730, Bucharest), prince of Moldavia: Nov. 1709 – Nov. 1710 and 1711 – Jan. 5, 1716, then prince of Wallachia: January 1716 – November 1716 and March 1719 – September 1730.

38 Teodor Simedrea (1886–1971) was tonsured a monk in 1924 at the Cernica Monastery near Bucharest, taking the name Tit (Titus), and was later ordained archimandrite. A bishop of Hotin (Moldavia) from 1935, he was elected Metropolitan of Bucovina on June 13, 1940. He returned to Bucharest in 1945 and died at the Cernica Monastery. A great theologian and historian of the Orthodox Church and Romanian spirituality, he relentlessly worked for the benefit of the Romanians in Bucovina. See Mîrcea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, 3rd ed., Sibiu, 2014, p. 592–593; Arhim. Policarp Chițulescu, *Reuniuni ale spiritului. Mitropolitul Tit Simedrea al Bucovinei (1886–1971) și primele reuniuni spirituale din România*, Bucharest, 2020.

39 In Rom., *aluat*, lit., ‘dough’, i.e., the flour, water, and salt composition used in making leavened bread.

40 Tit Simedrea, “Tiparul bucureștean de carte bisericească în anii 1740–1750”, *BOR*, 82, 1965, 9–10, p. 866.

cleaned with pig-hair brushes, this animal being abhorred by the Muslims, who are not allowed to touch it.⁴¹

A step forward was made in 1588, when Sultan Murad III (1574–1595) issued an order (*firman*), later included in the Arabic translation of Euclid's work *Elements of Geometry* published by the Medici press in Rome in 1594. This act was the first text printed in Ottoman Turkish with Arabic type on a movable-type press. The decree did not indicate if the subjects of the books were limited in any way.⁴² It seems, however, that it was interpreted at the time in this way, for afterwards only non-religious books printed in Arabic type circulated in the Ottoman Empire.⁴³ The document allowed commerce within the Ottoman frontiers in "certain books and works in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish" that were printed in Europe. In the opening presentation of the issue, a phrase goes: '*Arabî ve Fârsî ve Tûrkî ba'zı mu'teber kitâblar ve risâleler*, "some valued Arabic, Persian, and Turkish printed books and treatises".⁴⁴ The Sultan had received a petition addressed to him by two European booksellers who complained that they had been attacked while unloading their merchandise consisting of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish books printed in Europe. Their stock of books had been plundered and a good part of them were seized. According to the Capitulations agreed upon by the Sublime Porte with the Republic of Venice in 1454, then with the king of France François I in 1569, and in 1580 with England, in similar conditions, the Sultan was expected to protect Western merchants who did business in the empire. Therefore, he condemned the aggression and strengthened the rights of the booksellers by issuing this new *firman*, which took on the force of a law for the governors of Ottoman provinces, qadis, and army commanders.

Most likely, the issuing of the 1588 decree also became necessary because of the discussions that took place in the circles of clerics and scholars at the Sultan's court. Reading these books, with the authorities' permission, allowed Ottoman

⁴¹ For a broader discussion of these aspects, see André Demeerseman, *L'imprimerie en Orient et au Maghreb: une étape décisive de la culture et de la psychologie sociale islamiques*, Tunis, 1954.

⁴² Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 85, 89.

⁴³ Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300–1600*, New York and Washington, 1973, p. 174–175.

⁴⁴ The phrase was reprinted in Latin script in Turgut Kut and Fatma Türe (eds.), *Yazmadan Basmaya: Müteferrika, Mühendishane, Üsküdar*, Istanbul, 1996, p. 16. Cristopher M. Murphy translated it: "certain goods and valuable printed books and pamphlets in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish"; see "Appendix: Ottoman Imperial Documents Relating to the History of Books and Printing", in Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World*, p. 283. I am grateful to Radu Dipratu for his help in translating this phrase and supplying to me references on the topic.

thinkers the freedom to become better acquainted with the art of printing and decide for themselves about its benefits – or dangers.

Between 1620 and 1627, several incidents occurred in Istanbul involving Catholic and Protestant missionaries who distributed books printed in Greek containing polemic or proselytizing texts considered unacceptable by one or the other of the denominations in the Ottoman capital. The Greek books that the Patriarch Cyril Lukaris requested to be printed, in Constantinople and elsewhere, were considered by the Vatican to reflect Protestant influences.⁴⁵ Ovidiu-Victor Olar explains Lukaris's intentions as follows.

Pourtant, malgré la situation difficile, la réponse à la violente question “Qui sommes-nous?” que Loukaris était prêt à donner – en disant que les chrétiens du rite grec n'étaient ni schismatiques ni hérétiques, mais de vrais enfants de l'Église orientale, des orthodoxes qui, contrairement aux Juifs et aux Latins, ne s'étaient pas éloignés de la vérité de Dieu – pouvait être rendue plus efficace avec l'aide d'une imprimerie. Mais pour réussir à imposer son programme, Loukaris devait contrôler l'imprimerie.⁴⁶

The ambassador of France in Istanbul vehemently protested at the Sublime Porte, provoking an equally vehement reaction from the ambassadors of England and the Netherlands who denounced the activities of the Catholic missionaries eager to attach all Christians in the empire to the Church of Rome. Even if the distortion of the original Christian doctrines in texts that circulated in the post-Byzantine world could pass as merely a “drifting movement” of some Greek theologians and scholars, the heads of the Arabic-speaking churches could only wish, even more, to be able to print those versions of the service books and spiritual works that reflected the liturgical and patristic traditions of the Byzantine Church, which circulated in the East in the form of manuscripts copied again and again over time.

For the Catholics, Patriarch Cyril Lukaris's wish to set up a printing press in Constantinople was new proof of his intention to place harmful books in the Eastern Christians's hands. In a letter dated to 1624, King Louis XIII congratulated the French ambassador to the Porte for having instigated the Ottoman authorities against Lukaris after he requested from England books printed in Greek

⁴⁵ According to Sclavenitis, “Méfiance vis-à-vis du livre imprimé et emploi parallèle du manuscrit”, p. 70: “Les *Confessiones fidei* (Ομολογίες Πίστεως) orthodoxes datant de la domination turque et vénitienne sont, dans une large mesure, érodées par la pensée théologique occidentale, au point que, non sans raison, nombre d'entre elles furent à l'époque considérées comme hérétiques”. See also Nil Palabıyık, “An Early Case of the Printer's Self-Censorship in Constantinople”, *The Library*, Seventh Series, 16, 2015, 4, p. 390–399.

⁴⁶ Olar, *La boutique de Théophile*, p. 179. On the press of Metaxas and its production, see *ibid.*, especially p. 145–149, 165–182.

and from the Netherlands Arabic books.⁴⁷ With the Dutch ambassador's assistance, Lukaris received in Istanbul several Arabic books that contained sections of the Holy Scriptures, from among those printed by Erpenius.⁴⁸ His real intention was to help the clergy of the Eastern Patriarchates to develop their knowledge of Greek, as this language was slowly becoming unfamiliar to most priests, monks, and even the upper clergy. Greek books that reached Constantinople were expensive and did not fulfill the needs of the Greek Orthodox. Having seen the presses of Italy and L'viv, Lukaris wished to print in Constantinople itself and distribute the books easily across the Levant. In the Patriarchate of Antioch, communication was possible with foreign visitors due to a shared knowledge of Greek. Considering the large variety of guests and pilgrims to the Arabic-speaking East – Greek, Georgian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian – knowledge of Greek, the *lingua franca* of Orthodoxy, was the only solution for all these Christians to connect without resorting to an Arab interpreter. Therefore, Greek books were needed both in Constantinople and in the Arabic-speaking communities of the Ottoman Empire. Patriarch Cyril Lukaris's project to open a Greek press addressed the needs of the Orthodox living under Ottoman government in wide areas of the former Byzantine Empire.

In 1627, the Embassy of England in Istanbul received several crates of Greek printing types. The next day, Lukaris dined with the ambassadors of England and the Netherlands, a fact considered suspicious by the French ambassador, Count de Césy, but equally suspect by the Ottoman authorities. Then, the English ambassador helped Lukaris to open a press for Greek books, directed by Nicodemus Metaxas, who had arrived from England with the printing tools, accompanied by two Dutch printers. Born in Kefalonia, Metaxas had printed several Greek theological books in London, where, among others, he became friends with Mitrophanes Critopoulos (1589–1639), who was studying at Balliol College in Oxford.⁴⁹ The books that Metaxas printed in England reflected his attachment

47 MS Fr. 16156 of BnF, f. 430, cf. Balagna, *L'imprimerie arabe en Occident*, p. 58.

48 For the report on the whole episode see Duverdiér, "Défense de l'orthodoxie et lutte d'influences", p. 265–266. See also Colin Davey, "Fair Exchange? Old Manuscripts for New Printed Books", in Robin Cormack and Elisabeth Jeffreys (eds.), *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes*, London, 2000, p. 127–134.

49 Mitrophanes Critopoulos remained in Oxford until 1623, then travelled in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. In 1632, he was ordained bishop in the Patriarchate of Alexandria, then elected patriarch in 1636. On a journey in Wallachia in 1639, he died on May 30 and was buried there. See Olar, *La boutique de Théophile*, p. 191–193.

to the values of tolerance and spiritual progress and his hope for a reasonable solution to the divide between the Eastern and Western churches.⁵⁰

Metaxas then transferred his press from England to Istanbul, where he arrived in June 1627 with a large shipment of printing implements, consumables, and printed books.⁵¹ Having passed through the Ottoman customs with the intervention of the English ambassador, the press was installed in Istanbul with the tacit approval of the grand vizier. Very soon in 1627 two collections of polemical anti-Catholic tracts were printed. A man of peace, Metaxas strived to appease tensions and edited them in a way to avoid any misgivings. However, the Jesuits of Istanbul, who had obtained some of the books brought by Metaxas when reaching the city, read in them a clear Protestant influence.⁵² The Count de Césy appealed to the Jesuit priests, who carefully surveyed the books brought from England and the Netherlands, as well as those printed in the Ottoman capital, and found several passages where Islamic beliefs were criticized or even ridiculed. Therefore, ‘properly presented’, these books could be considered disturbing by the Muslim authorities. The presence of the English king’s coat of arms on the title page of Metaxas’s books was also a breach of Ottoman authority. This was enough to justify the accusation that Lukaris was encouraging, together with the English, an uprising of the Cossacks, the Greeks, and other Orthodox peoples against the Sultan’s rule.⁵³ Here is what the Count de Césy wrote on January 27, 1628.

Le Patriarche Cyrille, ennemi des latins, répand l’hérésie dans l’Église d’Orient. Il a fait venir des livres hérétiques, imprimés en grec, qu’il a fait répandre partout. L’ambassadeur d’Angleterre a reçu une trentaine de caisses de caractères grecs pour faire imprimer toutes les hérésies imaginables. Le lendemain, le Patriarche Cyrille dina solennellement avec l’ambassadeur de Hollande, chez l’ambassadeur d’Angleterre.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Palabıyık, “An Early Case of the Printer’s Self-Censorship”, p. 389–390.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 391–392, and N. Palabıyık, “Redundant Presses and Recycled Woodcuts: The Journey of Printing Materials from London to Constantinople in the Seventeenth Century”, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 110, 2016, 3, p. 273–298.

⁵² Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés par des grecs au dix-septième siècle*, t. 1, no. 167, p. 237–240, and no. 168, p. 240–243.

⁵³ Palabıyık, “An Early Case of the Printer’s Self-Censorship”, p. 393, 395–396. For a complete report on the whole story, see Roper, “England and the Printing of Texts for the Orthodox Christians in Greek and Arabic, 17th–19th centuries”, p. 431–436; Pektaş, “The Beginning of Printing in the Ottoman Capital”, p. 17–19, 22–31.

⁵⁴ BnF Paris, MS Fr. 16153, f. 48, apud Gdoura, *Le début de l’imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 90–91, n. 85.

Based on the suspicions of betrayal that circulated at the Ottoman court, intensified by accusations from the French and Austrian ambassadors that he was sending dangerous books to the Christians of the empire's Eastern Mediterranean provinces, Lukaris was assassinated by the Janissaries in 1638, by order of Sultan Murad IV.⁵⁵ The Greek press was closed down but the Janissaries could not capture Metaxas, who found shelter with the Embassy of England. He succeeded in fleeing to his home island where he continued to print Greek books.⁵⁶ All the printing implements and books were seized, as well as the Jesuits' library of Istanbul where books were kept that were considered offensive to the Muslims.⁵⁷ The irony of the situation is pertinently captured by Nil Palabıyık:

Nicodemos's inclination towards a rhetoric of moderation in Christian writing is natural, given his previous record of publications and the pluralist sentiments of his circle of learned friends in England. In the multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan city of Constantinople, in which he had recently arrived, Nicodemos tried (albeit failed) to forge a platform for open dialogue and meaningful exchange of ideas between Christians, Jews, and Muslims.⁵⁸

Patriarch Cyril Lukaris's interest in church books printed in the West, which were surrounded by a negative aura in Istanbul, also had an impact on the attitude of the Sublime Porte towards the import of the printing technology to the empire, at a time when the court, the *'ulamā'*, and the Muslim clergy were exchanging opinions – for and against – on this sensitive topic. In January 1628, after the Lukaris episode was over, the French ambassador wrote: “Je me suis décidé de n'être pas seulement sur la défensive: mais de faire jouer quelque ressort, pour leur donner des affaires sur le sujet de l'imprimerie comme une nouveauté dangereuse dans cet État.”⁵⁹

Indeed, obstacles to the beginnings of printing in the East were often created not by the political or strategic options of the Sublime Porte but by Western powers who had their own interests. The foundation of a press in Constantinople was seen by the Vatican cardinals as undesirable competition. Therefore,

⁵⁵ Cyril Lukaris was declared a great martyr by the Patriarchate of Alexandria on October 6, 2009, and a saint martyr by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in January 2022.

⁵⁶ Letterio Augliera, *Libri, politica, religione nel Levante del Seicento. La tipografia di Nicodemo Metaxas, primo editore di testi greci nell'Oriente ortodosso*, Venice, 1996, p. 237–240 (inventory of the books printed by Metaxas, with illustrations).

⁵⁷ Antoine Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du christianisme en Orient, XVI^e–XIX^e siècles*, Paris, t. I, 1907, p. 353; R. J. Roberts, “The Greek Press at Constantinople in 1627 and Its Antecedents”, *The Library*, 5, 1967, 22, p. 13–43.

⁵⁸ Palabıyık, “An Early Case of the Printer's Self-Censorship”, p. 399.

⁵⁹ BnF, MS Fr. 16153, cf. Balagna, *L'imprimerie arabe en Occident*, p. 64.

through the missionaries that the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide sent to the Ottoman capital, they made all possible efforts to prevent this from happening, so that the Vatican press could keep its monopoly over books that circulated in the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁰ This was essential in preventing the distribution of books divergent from the Catholic creed. Nevertheless, a general feeling persists that Islam rejected printing for a long time because of intellectual backwardness. As Scott Reese notes in the first phrase of his introduction to the collection of essays published by De Gruyter,⁶¹ “one of the last great biases of the Western academy in relation to Islam centers around the issue of mechanical print”.

For Ottoman society, the ban on printing in Turkish with Arabic type was officially lifted during the rule of Sultan Ahmed III (1706–1730) and the Grand Vizier (*sadr ‘azam*) Nevşehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha (1666–1730). The year 1727 is unanimously considered to be the first moment in the history of book printing in Turkish (in Arabic type).⁶² It had become clear since the 17th century that more books were needed than could be copied in the traditional scribal workshops. This prompted a ban to be issued on the export of manuscripts outside the empire.⁶³ The moment was favorable to the project of opening the first Ottoman printing press. In the rule of the enlightened Sultan Ahmed III printing was not considered alien and worrying anymore.⁶⁴ In full agreement with the grand vizier, he wished to promote modernity in the empire’s capital as a way to stop the decline of Ottoman society and strengthen the court’s authority.⁶⁵ One of the weaknesses of his rule was the absence of printing capabilities, which were now universally accepted as a means of cultural and social progress. Volney recorded

60 It is worth mentioning that in the Romanian Principalities, in the 16th–17th centuries, although most printers were attached to the Church, or even members of the clergy, many typographers printed theological books without securing the approval of the local bishop. See Doru Bădără, “Ceva despre monopolul asupra tiparului din Țările Române, 1508–1714”, *Analele Brăilei*, New Series, 10, 2010, 10, p. 381–396.

61 Reese (ed.), *Manuscript and Print in the Islamic Tradition*, p. 1.

62 Cf. Neumann, “Book and newspaper printing in Turkish, 18th–20th century”, p. 227.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

64 Incidentally, Dimitrie Cantemir, the prince of Moldavia later to become a prince of the Russian tsardom, who tried to use printing as a way to avoid war, lived for twenty years at the Ottoman court, a good part under the rule of Ahmed III, whose enlightened thinking he embraced.

65 See the comments of Steve Tamari on the reconsideration of the 18th century as “simply the bleakest phase in an already lengthy history of decline” in his essay “Arab National Consciousness in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Syria”, in Peter Sluglett with Stefan Weber (eds.), *Syria and Bilad al-Sham under Ottoman Rule. Essays in Honour of Abdul-Karim Rafeq*, Leiden and Boston, 2010, p. 309ff.

this deficiency among the causes for the backward condition of Ottoman societies as compared to the Western European ones.⁶⁶ At this point in time, the grand mufti and part of the society of *‘ulamā’* embraced the idea of printing as a means of progressing and encouraging education.⁶⁷

In the *firman* issued on July 5, 1727, concerning the foundation of a printing press in Istanbul, the conditions for a printing press to work there were clearly indicated:

Excepting books of religious law, Koranic exegesis, the traditions of the Prophet, and theology, you asked the Padishah’s permission in the aforementioned tract to print dictionaries, history books, medical books, astronomy and geography books, travelogues, and books about logic.⁶⁸

The *fetva* indicated precisely what was to be printed: “Copies will be printed of dictionaries, and books about logic, astronomy and similar subjects, and so that the printed books will be free from printing mistakes...”⁶⁹

Finally, the rules devised for book-printing in the Ottoman capital were the following:

1. It was totally forbidden to print holy books – naturally, those of the Muslim: the Qur’ān, Ḥadīṭ, Qur’ānic exegesis, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).
2. All printed work needed to receive the approval of four theologians – *‘ulamā’* – and *qadis* selected by the Sultan, entrusted with the task of selecting the books to be printed, revise and correct them, and check all texts before going to print. This was, in practice, a right to censorship that the great mufti requested.
3. Elegant Arabic type of a high aesthetic quality was to be manufactured and books were to be printed with care, under the direction of master printers.

In his treatise in support of the printing press, Ibrahim Müteferrika declares the following:

Except for those on law, exegesis, traditions, and theology, books will be printed, such as dictionaries, histories, medical texts and science books, philosophy and astronomy books,

⁶⁶ Constantin François Volney, *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1790, t. II, p. 273–283.

⁶⁷ Two contributors to the 1st TYPARABIC project conference (Bucharest, 2022) addressed this topic in papers that will soon be published in the *Proceedings*: Hasan Çolak, “İbrahim Müteferrika and the Ottoman Intellectual Culture in the early Eighteenth Century: A Transcultural Perspective”, and Radu Dipratu, “Ottoman Endorsements of Printing in 18th-Century Istanbul”.

⁶⁸ Volney, *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte*, p. 285.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

and information about nature, geography, and travelogues. By its grace and majesty, publication of the glorious royal rescript giving royal permission in this matter from the exalted world-renowned Emperor, defender of the faith's exalted position, is fitting.⁷⁰

It is worth recalling here the life story of İbrahim Müteferrika, the first printer of Turkish books, in Arabic type, who endeavored to secure this approval from the Sultan and started operating the first press of Istanbul in the 1720s.⁷¹ His biography is somewhat legendary, as it is not supported by any historical documents and even his birth name remains unknown. Supposedly born in Cluj, a major Transylvanian city in Northwestern Romania, in a Hungarian family of Unitarian beliefs, he was taken prisoner at a young age by Ottoman troops making their way westwards. His fortune took him to Istanbul, where his intelligence and worldly talents propelled him into the lower levels of the Ottoman court, where he converted to Islam and took the name 'İbrahim Müteferrika'. Having acquired a certain skill in lobbying, he petitioned for the opening of a Turkish printing press. In 1727, making the best of circumstances favorable to his obsessive project and helped by outside forces (including the French ambassador to the Sublime Porte), he secured a *firman* that allowed him to start printing in the Ottoman capital. The approval covered books printed in Arabic type, without mentioning any language, but it restricted the *content* accepted for publishing to scientific subjects: mathematics, medicine, grammar, lexicography, geography – and maps. The point was that anything religious, theological, or spiritual was banned from being printed. By not allowing such books to be printed, the court was actu-

70 Murphy, "Appendix: Ottoman Imperial Documents", p. 292.

71 For the life and works of İbrahim Müteferrika, see especially: Neumann, "Book and newspaper printing in Turkish, 18th–20th century", p. 227–248; Maurits H. van den Boogert, "The Sultan's Answer to the Medici Press? İbrahim Müteferrika's Printing House in Istanbul", in Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert and Bart Westerweel (eds.), *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, Leiden, 2005, p. 265–291; Andrea Trentini, "Il codice a stampa nel mondo islamico", in Valentina Sagaria Rossi (ed.), *Libri islamici in controluce. Ricerche, modelli, esperienze conservative*, Rome, 2008, p. 147–180; Yasemin Gencer, "İbrahim Müteferrika and the Age of the Printed Manuscript", in Christiane Gruber (ed.), *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: Ten Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections*, Bloomington, 2010, p. 154–193; Vefa Erginbaş, "Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context: İbrahim Müteferrika and his Intellectual Landscape", in Geoffrey Roper (ed.), *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East, Papers from the Third Symposium on the History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East, University of Leipzig, September 2008*, Leiden and Boston, 2014, p. 53–100; Orlin Sabev, *Waiting for Müteferrika: Glimpses of Ottoman Print Culture*, Boston, 2018; Orlin Sabev, "The Müteferrika Press: Obstacles, Circumvention and Repercussion According to Contemporaneous German Sources (1727–1741)", in Dıpratu and Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, Berlin, 2023 (forthcoming).

ally forbidding printers to address topics connected to the holy scriptures of the Muslims, their exegesis, and the entire domain of Islamic thought.

According to J. R. Osborn, Müteferrika tried to have his printed texts look like manuscript texts, deliberately shaping his Arabic type to resemble the script used in Ottoman scriptoria, to make his books more readable.⁷² The demand for printed books was, however, quite modest at first. The educated society of Istanbul, conservative and cautious as to inventions imported from Europe, preferred to keep ordering manuscript copies from the calligraphy workshops of the city. Although quite a large number of books were sold,⁷³ Müteferrika's press was not exactly a success story in terms of its profitability. Nevertheless, it went down in history as the first Turkish press in the Ottoman Empire, which secured its founder's celebrity to this day. According to Michael W. Albin,

Among the secular saints of modernization in the Islamic world Ibrahim Müteferrika occupies an archangelic throne. It was he, a Muslim not by birth but by conversion, who Islamicized the printing press, thereby guaranteeing for himself a place in the hagiocracy of reform.⁷⁴

After Müteferrika's workshop closed, several decades passed before a new press was opened in Istanbul, which this time would have a longer period of activity. In 1803, an Arabic grammar, *Mu'rib alizhār* by Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ZaynīZādeh, was published at the new printing press of Üsküdar that operated under the authority of the Ottoman court.⁷⁵ In Istanbul, the printed book only became a sought-after commodity,⁷⁶ shaping the way of thinking of the intellectual milieus in the 1870s–1890s,

⁷² In his survey of the typographic particularities of Müteferrika's books, J. R. Osborn finds that his was the first "state-supported" printing enterprise and his production mostly consisted of texts that assisted the Ottoman administration. See *Letter of Light. Arabic Script in Calligraphy, Print, and Digital Design*, Cambridge, MA, 2017, *passim*. In a recent essay (2022), J. R. Osborn explains: "Prior to print, Ottoman society employed a system of script variation to visually classify document genres. The Müteferrika press interfaced with and extended this system by introducing a new genre of administrative text, as well as a new 'style of script' (i.e. movable type printing) with which to represent these novel texts". See J. R. Osborn, "The Ottoman System of Scripts and the Müteferrika Press", in Reese (ed.), *Manuscript and Print in the Islamic Tradition*, p. 61.

⁷³ Sabev, *Waiting for Müteferrika*, p. 58–75.

⁷⁴ Michael W. Albin, "Early Arabic Printing: A Catalogue of Attitudes", *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 5 (1990–1991), 1993, p. 114.

⁷⁵ Glass and Roper, "Arabic Book and Newspaper Printing in the Arab World", p. 194–195. See an early description of this book in Schnurrer, *Bibliotheca Arabica*, p. 104–106, and the more recent work edited by Kut and Türe, *Yazmadan Basmaya: Müteferrika, Mühendishane, Üsküdar*, p. 119.

⁷⁶ On books as commodities, see Cristina Dondi, "The Venetian Book Trade: a Methodological Approach to and First Results of Book-Based Historical Research", in Wagner and Reed (eds.), *Early Printed Books as Material Objects*, p. 219–227.

at a time when society at large was in a process of modernization, and the national feelings of various ethnic groups under Ottoman rule were on the rise.⁷⁷ Incidentally, the Ottoman press – newsletters, journals and magazines – also had a late start in the second half of the 19th century and witnessed its “boom” as late as 1908.⁷⁸

The situation of Damascus is relevant for the vision that the Ottoman court had of printing as an instrument of progress. Roper and Glass describe it in clear terms:

In Damascus, the capital of the Ottoman province of Syria until 1918, there were greater obstacles to Arabic book and newspaper printing than in Istanbul, Cairo and Beirut. In the first half of the 19th century practically nothing happened in Damascus. As Arab historians stress, the Ottoman authorities held back development, well aware of the revolutionary power of Arabic typography. The first initiative to break out of this stagnation was taken in 1855 by a man named Ḥannā Dūmānī, who founded *al-Maṭbaʿa ad-Dūmāniya* named after himself, the first typographical workshop in Damascus.⁷⁹

Dūmānī continued to be the only printer of Arabic books in the Damascus region until 1864, when a state-controlled press opened in the city. Moreover, in Damascus, as everywhere else, Christian copyists were not eager to lose their age-old lucrative occupation.⁸⁰

In conclusion, it was neither financial nor technical impediments that obstructed the beginnings of printing in the Ottoman era, but rather the resistance against this “imported” invention that was somewhat imposed from outside the *Dār alislām* (House of Islam), not a natural growth of the local societies. It was invented by the unbelievers, *kāfirūn*, foreign to Islamic traditions, and, in the eyes of the decision-makers at the Sultan’s court, it allowed the multiplication of the holy scriptures beyond the needs of the Muslim public. The absence of control by the clerical authorities over *what* was printed and *how* was seen as a danger to avoid, when considering the possibility of spreading to all possible readers the sacred teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad by mechanical means unheard of in a traditional society.

⁷⁷ Mehmet Kaplan, *Tevfik Fikret ve Şiiri*, Istanbul, 1946, p. 19.

⁷⁸ See Erol A. F. Baykal, *The Ottoman Press (1908–1923)*, Leiden and Boston, 2019.

⁷⁹ Glass and Roper, “Arabic Book and Newspaper Printing in the Arab World”, p. 196.

⁸⁰ On the Christian copyists of the 15th–17th centuries, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique*, p. 146–147. In the 15th century, in the Maronite communities of Lebanon around 150 copyists were active.

The situation was not much different for the copyists who worked in Christian scriptoria across the empire.⁸¹ Joseph Nasrallah notes the impact that the foundation of printing presses in the Middle East finally had on the Christian copyists' trade.

La création des Imprimeries d'Alep et de Šuwaïr, et aussi de celle moins importante de Saint-Georges des grecs Orthodoxes de Beyrouth, auxquelles il faut ajouter les presses créées en Moldo-Valachie (Bucarest, 1701, Jassy),⁸² a diminué l'importance et le gagne-pain des copistes. [...] Cependant, la multiplicité des ouvrages créés dans les Patriarcats melchites, en particulier dans celui d'Antioche, a rétabli l'équilibre rompu par la chose imprimée.⁸³

In the languages used across the Ottoman Empire, even the concept of 'printing' was foreign. For speakers of Arabic (as well as those of Turkish and Persian), words needed to be coined in order to name the many elements specific to the domain of printing, the press, and its outcomes. One theory is that the use, for 'printing', of the Arabic word *ṭibā'a* ('activity of printing') was inspired from the equivalent word in French or Italian. Words derived from the Arabic root *ṭ-b-* are recorded in 1829 in the *Dictionnaire français-arabe* of Ellious Bocthor and Armand Pierre Caussin de Perceval: *ṭibā'at^{um}* and *ṣinā'at al-ṭab'* for 'printing', the printing press is a *maṭba'a*, and the workshop – *dār al-ṭibā'a* (lit., a 'house/place for printing'). The new word family of 'printing', with derivatives that name various elements connected to printing and printed books, was created using the triconsonant root *ṭ-b-*, which includes the semantic features *imprint*, *stamp*, *mark*, *impress*, *seal*. From the 1st form verb *ṭaba'a* resulted all the derivatives necessary to cover the semantic area of 'printing' characteristic of European languages. These were then employed for all the typographic forms, using woodblocks, movable type, or lithography.⁸⁴

81 Rare cases of 'inter-faith scribal workshops', with similar issues, are also known in the history of Middle Eastern manuscript copying; see Ronny Vollandt, "The Production of Arabic Multi-block Bibles: A Case Study of a Coptic-Muslim Workshop in Early Ottoman Cairo", *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter*, 3, January 2012, p. 31–32, referring to a "professional workshop, which manufactured books on a large commercial scale" in Cairo, where the MS BnF Arabe 1 was copied in 1584–1585.

82 As I explained before, there were no 'Arabic presses' in Wallachia and Moldavia. A limited number of Christian Arabic books were printed in Snagov, Bucharest, and Iași, with typographic material manufactured locally or brought from abroad for this purpose, in pre-existing presses that printed, as a rule, books in Greek, Slavonic, and Romanian.

83 *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 387.

84 Tit Simedrea mentions that the verb *a tipări* (Romanian for 'to print') was present for the first time in a Romanian work dated 1564, in the book *Tâlcul Evangheliilor* printed by Diaconul Coresi at Brașov, and the word *tipograf* ('printer') is first mentioned in the Slavonic *Antologion* printed by Ștefan in 1643 at Câmpulung, in his signature: *Ștefan ieromonah, tipograf sârb* ("Stephen hieromonk, Serbian typographer"). See Simedrea, "Tiparul bucureștean de carte bisericească în anii

Until printing presses were present in the Middle East, a ‘book’ was a collection of paper leaves bound together, a codex, which could include handwritten pages, blank pages, or pages imprinted using early techniques, by means of woodblocks or stamps.⁸⁵ The Arabic word for ‘book’, *kitāb* (belonging to the family of *kataba*, ‘to write’), could refer to any activity connected to writing: inscription, letter, document, administrative act, flyer, manuscript, printed book, etc. In Islamic civilization, the exertion dedicated to collecting all the *ṣūrās* of the Qur’ān between the covers of a volume was the first initiative connected to making a ‘book’.⁸⁶ In the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1, the entry on ‘Books and Book-making’, signed by J. L. Sharpe, starts thus:

There were no books in Arabic before the Koran. The pre-Islamic literature of the Arabs [...] was preserved in songs, stories and recitations retained in memory and transmitted orally. The oldest extant written examples are no earlier than the middle of the sixth century CE. But it was only during the Umayyad period that Islamic literary culture inspired the collection and codification of the ancient literary remains [...]. The origins of this literary culture are to be found in the scribal development centred on the Koran after the seventh century, during which the Arabic book was defined.⁸⁷

The “Arabic book” is, therefore, strictly connected to the ‘scribal development centered on the Koran’. This is also the perspective of Beatrice Gruendler’s work *The Rise of the Arabic Book* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2020), which is dedicated entirely to the *manuscript* codex of the first Islamic centuries, starting with the ‘foundational book’ of the Qur’ān, as explained in the Introduction, where a section is devoted to *The Arabic Codex*.⁸⁸ In her outstanding research on ‘the Arabic book revolution’,⁸⁹ the author focuses on the *manuscript* codices of the 8th – 9th centuries, not on the *printed book* of a much later age.⁹⁰

1740–1750”, p. 882. For comments on the term *maḥtūm*, lit. ‘sealed’ or ‘stamped’, used in connection with printing, see Roper, “Arabic biblical and liturgical texts printed in Europe”, p. 174–175.

85 Vercellin, “Venezia e le origini della stampa in caratteri arabi”, p. 61, n. 12.

86 For details on how the first form of the Qur’ān came to be, see R. Sellheim, “‘Kitāb’”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*; Houari Touati, “Book”, in Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third edition*, Brill online, s.v.

87 Sharpe, “Books and Book-making”, p. 154.

88 Beatrice Gruendler, *The Rise of the Arabic Book*, p. 3–5. The corpus surveyed is mostly Islamic. “Christian books” (i.e., Christian Arabic manuscript codices or texts) are only discussed on p. 3, 14, 104, 143, and 167.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

90 Vercellin also remarks that even Western researchers consider ‘the book’ in this perspective: several works and exhibitions include the word ‘book’ in their title although they mostly

David McKitterick notes that in the catalogues of libraries in Western Europe the distinction between manuscript codices and printed books appeared only in the 17th century. Previously, all works were recorded as ‘books.’⁹¹

It is worth noting, in this respect, the way the Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo (d. 1667),⁹² son of the Patriarch of Antioch Makarios III ibn al-Za‘im,⁹³ refers to concepts of the domain of ‘printing’ in the middle of the 17th century, when no Arabic-type press was yet available anywhere in the Ottoman Empire. The verb *ṭaba‘a*, ‘to print’, only occurs four times in the *Journal* of the Syrian archdeacon preserved in MS Arabe 6016 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the longest of all surviving copies. The concept of ‘printing’ is rarely mentioned there, while the ‘books’ that he refers to – *kutub*, *tawārīḥ*, *nawāmīs* – are generally manuscripts, *maḥṭūṭāt* (Sg. *maḥṭūṭ*), since in Syria texts, particularly the liturgical ones used in the Church of Antioch, circulated only in this form. Even the absence of the word *maḥṭūṭ* from passages referring to written works proves that the time had not come, in the mid-17th century, to indicate precisely if you referred to a manuscript or a printed book.

2.2 An Attempt Doomed to Fail: Arabic Books Sent from the Levant to Western European Presses

Arabic-speaking Christians had complete versions of the essential biblical texts used in Christian liturgy translated into their language in the 9th–10th centuries.⁹⁴ The adoption of Arabic as a liturgical language was a slow process, but no other option was available to the Christians of the Eastern Churches after the Ottoman

present comments on manuscript works, types of script, miniatures, etc. His examples are: the exhibition *Das Buch im Orient. Handschriften und kostbare Drucke aus zwei Jahrtausend* at the Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, in November 1982 – February 1983; Johannes Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, transl. Geoffrey French, ed. and introd. Robert Hillebrand, Princeton, 1984; the collection of essays edited by Atiyeh, *The Book in the Islamic World*, which I cited before.

⁹¹ David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 12–13.

⁹² On Paul of Aleppo (Būluṣ al-Ḥalabī), see Ioana Feodorov, “Paul of Aleppo”, in *CMR* 10, p. 344–370.

⁹³ On Patriarch Makarios III, see Carsten Walbinder, “Macarius ibn al-Za‘im”, in *ibid.*, p. 354–343.

⁹⁴ Ronny Vollandt, “1.4.11. Arabic (Christian) Translations”, in Armin Lange (Gen. Ed.), *Textual History of the Bible*, Brill, first published online: 2016. See also, in the same collection of essays, Ronny Vollandt, “2.4.9. Arabic Translations”.

rule was imposed on them. Here is how Basile Aggoula explains the evolution of the vernacular and liturgical languages in the Middle East:

L'occupation Ottomane de la Syrie et du Liban en 1516 donna un signal d'alarme à ces chrétiens qui devaient choisir entre l'arabe (malgré les réticences multiséculaires de certaines communautés) et le turc, jugé comme une langue inadéquate. Pour ce qui est de la première langue, la grande partie de la chrétienté proche-orientale s'en était lentement et péniblement accommodée, en lui imposant ses lois en matière de vocabulaire et des tournures propres au syriaque, langue liturgique parlée par la majorité, alors que la seconde leur était une «étrangeté». Par ailleurs la mort du syriaque comme idiome parlé rendit le choix obligatoire.⁹⁵

Originating in old Arabic translations revised by Middle Eastern theologians in the 16th century, the holy scriptures preserved the liturgical traditions of Arab Christianity. According to Dabbās and Raššū,

Arab Christians welcomed the art of printing and appreciated its benefits, after they had seen the books printed in [Western] Europe that had reached them. Nevertheless, their interest in printing did not prevent them from rejecting the content of the books sent to them from Rome and Paris, as [...] they contained texts that reflected the Catholic teachings. The Latin Church was making every effort to attach the Eastern Churches to the Catholic creed [...].⁹⁶

Sent as gifts to the Christian communities of the Eastern Mediterranean provinces, the Arabic liturgical and spiritual books that had received the *imprimatur* (publication approval) from the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide were meant to replace the old manuscripts that had been used for many generations by priests and monks across the Levant. The Arabic-speaking Christians of the Ottoman provinces received from Rome versions of the Gospels and the Psalms that had been edited by scholars attached to the Propaganda Fide so as to observe the Latin teachings and help their dissemination in the churches of Greater Syria. Noticing the absence of presses in the Ottoman provinces of the Eastern Mediterranean, Fr Girolamo Dandini wrote in his report of 1596 “Missione Apostolica al Patriarca e Maroniti del Monte Libano”, addressed to the Propaganda Fide, that he saw in this situation “a great benefit for this community (of the Maronites) and for all Christendom.”⁹⁷ Thus, it becomes clear why the Church of Rome and the king of

⁹⁵ Aggoula, “Le livre libanais de 1585 à 1900”, p. 308.

⁹⁶ Anṭuwān Qayṣar Dabbās and Naḥla Raššū, *Tārīḥ al-ṭibā'a al-'arabiyya fī al-Mašriq, Tārīḥ al-ṭibā'a al-'arabiyya fī al-Mašriq. Al-Baṭriyark Aṭanāsiyūs al-ṭālīṭ Dabbās, 1685–1724*, Beirut, 2008, p. 33–34.

⁹⁷ Nasrallah, *L'imprimerie au Liban*, p. 2, citing *Missione Apostolica al Patriarca, e Maroniti del Monte Libano*, del P. Girolamo Dandini, Cesena, 1656, p. 60–69.

France – in his capacity as defender of the Catholic Church – refused to send to the Levant printing presses and tools that could have fallen either into the hands of the Greek Orthodox or in those of the Muslim Ottomans.⁹⁸

Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl (d. after 1052) was a deacon of the Church of Antioch, a theologian and translator from Greek into Arabic, active in a period when Byzantium ruled over the city of Antioch and Northern Syria. Grandson of a bishop of the Church of Antioch, he received a good Greek education and then studied Arabic with the famous poet Abū l-‘Alā al-Ma‘arrī.⁹⁹ The Arabic versions of biblical and patristic texts composed by him were used, revised, and printed until the 19th century.¹⁰⁰ Although slightly inaccurate, Ibn al-Faḍl’s portrait in the introduction to one of the miscellanies composed by the Patriarch Makarios III ibn al-Za‘īm is worth recalling.

He mastered Arabic, Greek, and Syriac, [...] and translated into Arabic the New and the Old Testament, together with the exegesis devoted to them, for the Christians’ benefit, commanding them to read them on all Saturdays and Sundays and our Lord’s Feasts.¹⁰¹

Born ‘Abd al-Karīm Karma (1572–1635), the second famous scholar who revised Arabic religious texts was a theologian and historian of the Church of Antioch. Educated in both Arabic and Greek culture, he spent some time at the Monastery of the Holy Archangel Michael in Jerusalem, where he devoted himself to translations from Greek into Arabic. Elected a metropolitan of Aleppo under the name Meletios (1612–1634), he then became, for a brief time, Patriarch Efthimios II of Antioch (1634–1635).¹⁰² While a metropolitan of Aleppo, he was in open conflict with the Patriarch Cyril IV Dabbās, who strived to do him harm in any way he could: in 1624–1626, Karma was sentenced to beating and jail by the *wālī* Muṣṭafā

⁹⁸ For the role of the kings of France, especially that of Louis XIV (1643–1715), in protecting Catholic interests in the Orient, see Hasan Çolak, “Catholic Infiltration in the Ottoman Levant and Responses of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates during the Late 17th and Early 18th Centuries”, *ARAM*, 25 (2013), 2016, 1 & 2, p. 86ff.

⁹⁹ Samuel Noble, “‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Antaki”, in Samuel Noble and Alexander Treiger (eds.), *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World 700-1700. An Anthology of Sources*, DeKalb, IL, 2014, p. 171–187.

¹⁰⁰ Charon, *Le Rite byzantin dans les Patriarcats melkites*, p. 49–50.

¹⁰¹ Foreword of the *Kitāb al-naḥla* published by Ḥabīb Zayāt, *Ḥazā’in al-kutub fī Dimašq wa-ḍawāḥi-hā*, Al-Faḡḡāla, 1902, p. 150.

¹⁰² *HMLĒM* IV.1, p. 70–86; Carsten-Michael Walbinder, “Melkite (Greek Orthodox) Approaches to the Bible”, p. 55–56.

Bāšā, after Patriarch Cyril obtained a *firman* against him from Constantinople, and in 1627 he was again jailed.¹⁰³

He strived to unify the biblical texts that circulated in the first half of the 17th century, proceeding from the observation that texts used in the Eastern Churches, translated from or through Greek, Syriac, Coptic, or Armenian, contained passages that were transferred or interpreted wrongly, were inconsistent, or corrupted. Relying on Greek editions printed in Venice, he translated and revised most of the fundamental liturgical and prayer books necessary for Arabic-speaking Christians: The Book of the Divine Liturgies, the Sticharion, the Typicon, the Horologion, and the Euchologion.¹⁰⁴ The latter two were sent to Rome for printing, both while he was still in office and later, during the term of Patriarch Makarios III. The portrait that Bernard Heyberger recently drew of Meletios Karma is revealing:

Historians of the Melkite community generally see Meletios Karma as an exceptional figure, considered to be the spearhead of projects for editing the Arabic Bible and liturgical books, who attempted to convince Rome to support a team located in Aleppo. He was a strong figure who was convinced of the necessity to produce revised books in order to improve the education of the clergy and the flock, believing that the Arabic manuscripts had been corrupted by the ignorance of scribes and the insubordination of believers.¹⁰⁵

Karma completed the translation of the Arabic Bible by 1622, but printing it in Rome proved, again, impossible, for the same reason. The Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide opposed their printing because the council of censors identified in the Arabic version inconsistencies as compared to the Vulgate and the Catholic versions of the other liturgical texts. In a meeting on May 12, 1622, Cardinal

103 For the unrelenting conflict between the two, see Heyberger, “East and West. A Connected History of Eastern Christianity”, p. 21.

104 According to Bernard Heyberger, “L’entourage de Malatjus Karma, à Alep, travaille dans les années 1620 à la version arabe de la Bible, qui doit être imprimée à Rome”. See Heyberger, “Livres et pratique de la lecture chez les chrétiens”, p. 213. See also Charbel Nassif, “La révision liturgique du métropolite melkite d’Alep Malâtîyûs Karma et les réformes liturgiques dans les pays d’Europe de l’Est au XVII^e siècle”, in Yulia Petrova and Ioana Feodorov (eds.), *Europe in Arabic Sources: The Travels of Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch, Proceedings of the International Conference “In the eyes of the Orient: Europe in Arabic Sources (Kyiv, 22–23 September 2015)*, Kyiv, 2016, p. 117–134, and id., “Autour de l’euchologe melkite de Malatios Karmé”, *Proche Orient chrétien*, 98, 2018, p. 46–61.

105 Heyberger, “East and West. A Connected History of Eastern Christianity”, p. 16. For Karma’s dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church in connection with the printing of Arabic liturgical books, see the entire Chapter 3, *The Different Scales of Agency of the Metropolitan of Aleppo Meletios Karma*, in *ibid.*, p. 16–23.

Ubaladini, the Catholic prefect for the province of Syria, informed the Propaganda Fide of the verbal request of Meletios Karma, then metropolitan of Aleppo, “for the printing of some Arabic books and especially the Bible, the translation of which Karmeh wanted to unify because partial versions were found in the east here and there.”¹⁰⁶

In his efforts to obtain the printing of an accurate Arabic version of the Bible that would become a standard version, in 1633 Meletios Karma sent to the Propaganda Fide the the *Pentateuch*, which he had revised, accompanied by a letter where he explained the need to spread through printing, among the Christian communities of the East, a biblical text that preserved the Arabic manuscript tradition of the Holy Scriptures.¹⁰⁷ According to ‘Abdallāh Raheb,

In the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on July 4, 1633, Cardinal Ubaladini showed the other cardinals that the Arabic version of Genesis which was sent by the Greek metropolitan of Aleppo contained improper words and some notable differences with that of the Vulgate.¹⁰⁸

The secretary of the Propaganda Fide then read before Pope Urban VIII a text concerning the preparation of an Arabic translation of the Vulgate, declaring that:

The Bible, which is printed in France, could not respond to the needs of the Eastern Churches represented by Matran Karmeh, Archbishop of the Melkites of Aleppo; its price would be so high that only an insufficient number of copies could be sent to these Churches.¹⁰⁹

In 1695, Iṣṭifān II al-Duwayhī (1630–1704), the Maronite patriarch of Antioch, sent a manuscript of the Maronite liturgical text to Rome for printing.¹¹⁰ He was aware that, more than ever, the success in obtaining Arabic printed texts in unified ver-

106 ‘Abdallāh Raheb, *Conception de l’Union dans le patriarcat orthodoxe d’Antioche (1622–1672). Partie historique*, Beirut, 1981, p. 39, n. 133. See also Carsten-Michael Walbiner, “‘Und um Jesu willen, schickt sie nicht ungebunden!’ Die Bemühungen des Meletius Karma (1572–1635) um den Druck arabischer Bücher in Rom”, in Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule (eds.), *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S. J. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Leuven and Paris, 2004, p. 163–175.

107 Walbiner, “The Christians of *Bilād al-Shām* (Syria): Pioneers of BookPrinting in the Arab World”, p. 55–56; Hilary Kilpatrick, “Meletios Karmah’s Specimen Translation of Genesis I–V”, in Sara Binay and Stefan Leder, *Translating the Bible into Arabic: Historical, Text-critical and Literary Aspects*, Beirut and Würzburg, 2012, p. 61–73.

108 Raheb, *Conception de l’Union dans le patriarcat orthodoxe d’Antioche (1622–1672). Partie historique*, p. 46.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

110 Nasrallah, *L’imprimerie au Liban*, p. 12.

sions that would be generally accepted, devoid of the inconsistencies in the old monastic manuscripts, was a requirement for the unity of the Maronite Church and its strong bond with the Latin Church.¹¹¹ In 1700, the Patriarch notes in connection with the sacred texts printed in Rome: “[...] les Maronites ont également une supériorité sur les autres Orientaux, puisqu’ils sont les seuls à publier librement, et depuis toujours, les vérités de la foi catholique.”¹¹² Thus, at the end of the 17th century, liturgical books had become a weapon in the battles between the various denominations of the East.¹¹³

2.3 Short-Lived Plans: Istanbul 1546, the Qozhaya Psalter, and Makarios III’s Unfulfilled Hopes

2.3.1 The Arabic Text in the Polyglot Bible of Istanbul, 1546

In 1546, a polyglot Bible was printed in Istanbul in Hebrew type, in four languages, including Arabic (and Persian). Fragments of a copy of this book, known as the ‘Constantinople Polyglot Bible’,¹¹⁴ were found in the Genizah collections from the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo.¹¹⁵ The thirty pages identified in the collection, labelled T-S NS 295.212, contain passages of the Old Testament in Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, and Judeo-Persian, as well as the commentary of Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, or ‘Rashi’ (1040–1106).¹¹⁶

111 Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 45.

112 Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique*, p. 447.

113 Tensions between the various denominations of the Levant could become extremely violent. There was a rumor that Patriarch Makarios III ibn Ibn al-Za’im died from poisoning because of his Catholic inclination. On the ‘martyrs of the union with the Church of Rome’, see Raheb, *Conception de l’Union dans le Patriarcat orthodoxe d’Antioche (1622–1672). Partie historique*, p. 72, 83–92, 122.

114 Considering the proportion of Judaic translations it contains, this is most likely closer to a ‘Rabbinic Bible’.

115 Roper, “Printed Matter in Egypt before the Būlāq Press”, p. 5. The fragments are now in the Cambridge University Library, shelfmark T-S NS 295.212, cf. *ibid.*, n. 13 (on p. 14); Tamari, “Notes on the Printing in Hebrew Typefaces from the 15th to the 19th Centuries”, p. 35, 452 (catalogue description); Ronny Vollandt, “Some Observations on Genizah Fragments of Saadiah’s *Tafsir* in Arabic Letters”, *Ginzei Qedem*, 2009, 5, p. 9–44; Abou Nohra, “Les origines et le rayonnement culturel de la première imprimerie à caractères arabes au Liban (1733)”, p. 219. See also the online presentation by Melonie Schmierer-Lee: *Throwback Thursday: The Constantinople Polyglot of 1546* | Cambridge University Library.

116 This is, possibly, what David H. Partington had in mind when asserting in the entry on

Typographers expelled from Spain were the first to print in Hebrew type in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, starting in 1493. The Jews of Istanbul, increasingly numerous after their expulsion from Spain, had avoided the Sultan's intentions of limiting the spread of printing by obtaining as early as 1490 a *firman* which allowed them to open a press for Hebrew liturgical books. Sultan Bayezid II granted them the right to print texts for their community on the condition they would not print in Arabic type. In 1493, Samuel ben Naḥmias¹¹⁷ and his brother Joseph established the first Hebrew press in the Ottoman capital.¹¹⁸ The initiators of Hebrew printing argued in the same way as promoters of printing anywhere else: the manuscripts of their holy scriptures were rare, difficult and expensive to copy, and plagued by scribal mistakes. The first book with Hebrew type was printed in Istanbul in 1493, in 408 pages: *Arba'ah turim* (*Four Series*), a collection of decrees issued by Jewish judges from the earliest times, collected by Rabbi Jaakov ben Asher (b. Germany, ca. 1270 – d. Toledo, 1340).¹¹⁹ This press was active until the end of the 18th century.¹²⁰

Rabbi Eliezer Ben Itzak Ashkenazi manufactured a printing press in Prague and used it in Lublin. He then transferred it to Istanbul in 1563 and produced, according to the approval granted, Hebrew books printed in Hebrew type.¹²¹ As I mentioned, this press was transferred in 1576 to Safed (Şafad), a city in the north of present-day Israel, the first press to have ever been active on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

“Arabic Printing” (quite inaccurately): “The first printing press in the Middle East was located in Istanbul before the end of the 15th century – but it used Hebrew type exclusively. It printed a few Arabic books by using Hebrew characters”. See Partington, “Arabic Printing”, p. 57.

¹¹⁷ Born in Thessaloniki, he left for Venice with his brother and his son David. There, they all embraced Catholicism. Subsequently known as Giulio Morosino, Samuel became a librarian of the Propaganda Fide and wrote an anti-Jewish treatise of 1,453 pp. On the Naḥmias family, see *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, New York, 1901, p. 145.

¹¹⁸ Avraham Yaari, *Ha-Defus ha-Ivri be-Kushta*, Jerusalem, 1967.

¹¹⁹ This book was accepted at the time as “the fundamental book of religious law by all Jewish communities” and it was republished several times. See Gad Nassi, *Amplified Glossary of Book Printing*, in Gad Nassi (ed.), *Jewish Journalism and Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, p. 99.

¹²⁰ Another famous printer of Hebrew books, born in an old family of Jew typographers, was Gershom ben El'azar Soncino, who established a Hebrew-type press in Cairo in 1557 and printed two books. Copies of them were discovered in the Cairo Geniza. For this period of Hebrew printing in Istanbul, see Yaron Ben Na'eh, *Hebrew Printing Houses in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 79–80.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80–81. See also Glass, *Malta, Beirut, Leipzig and Beirut again*, p. 5; Tamari, “Notes on the Printing in Hebrew Typefaces”, p. 46, n. 52.

This said, the Jewish typographers' printing activities addressed the Arabic-speaking Christian readership only marginally: their intention was to produce marketable items for the largest possible number of buyers. Printing in the Arabic language with Hebrew type was a short-lived project.

2.3.2 The Monastery of Saint Anthony in Qozhaya as a Hub of Cultural Progress

After the Hebrew type was used in several books for printing Syriac texts, the first passage in Syriac type was included in 1539 in a fragment of the *Gospel According to Luke* printed in Pavia by Theseus Ambrosius.¹²² The Maronites' presence in Rome, at the College founded for them in 1584, was also necessary because of the help they were able to give to the Italian scholars and printers who produced Syriac and Arabic books for the missionaries sent to the Middle East. Calendars were printed in Arabic in 1582-1583 after the reform of Pope Gregory XIII. The *Garshuni* script was chosen, to facilitate the adoption of the new calendar system by the bishops, priests, monks, and scholars of the eastern Ottoman provinces. As Gérard Duverdier notes, the distribution of this new calendar – and the theological thinking it relied on – in several languages, including Arabic, allowed it to be more quickly adopted, but also inspired a clear understanding of it that helped certain Eastern Churches to articulate why they rejected it.¹²³

In 1584, the Pope requested from the printer Domenico Basa and the engraver Robert Granjon an edition in Syriac and Arabic with *Garshuni* script, a book named *Kitāb al-sab'a ṣalawāt* (*The Seven Prayers [of the Day]*).¹²⁴ If the first priority of printing was, for the Propaganda Fide press, the service books necessary for the priests of the Maronite Church, there was also a demand for catechisms and prayer books useful for the common people. In the 17th century, priests of the Maronite Church served the Divine Liturgy in Syriac, but private prayers were said in Arabic.

Starting in the second half of the 16th century, Maronites received Arabic books printed in Italy and brought to the Eastern Mediterranean provinces of the Ottoman Empire by the Catholic missionaries.¹²⁵ Patriarch Miḥā'il al-Rizzī and the

¹²² See J. F. Coakley, *The Typography of Syriac: A Historical Catalogue of Printing Types*, New Castle and London, 2006, W1 and full-page illustration, p. 28–30; Hanebutt-Benz, Glass and Roper (eds.), *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution*, cat. no. *126, p. 166.

¹²³ Duverdier, “Défense de l'orthodoxie et lutte d'influences”, p. 265.

¹²⁴ Schnurrer, *Bibliotheca Arabica*, p. 237; Balagna, *L'imprimerie arabe en Occident*, p. 33.

¹²⁵ See a list of such books in Nasrallah, *L'imprimerie au Liban*, p. 10–11.

local bishops welcomed Frs Eliano and Bruno in 1580, on their second mission to Syria, when they brought a second print run of the Catholic catechism printed in Arabic, with Arabic type. In Rome, the Maronites had a generous protector, Cardinal Caraffa, who in 1583 called Fr Yūḥannā Ibn 'Ayyūb al-Hasrūni to supervise the printing work of Arabic and Syriac church books. The latter wrote to Fr Eliano, who was on a mission to the Levant: "The Pope gave us access to a press endowed with large Syriac types. God reward him in His Heavenly Kingdom!"¹²⁶

In a letter addressed to Fr Eliano, three Maronite priests of Tripoli in Lebanon expressed their appreciation of the printing work done in Rome: "We wish the church books to be printed under your eyes, with God's will and your science."¹²⁷

Their requests to Rome, conveyed through the Jesuit missionaries, reflected the needs of the clergy of all the Eastern Churches. In 1585, Fr Eliano received from Gabriel al-Bānī, the first student of the Maronite College of Rome, a request to send to Lebanon "The Acts of the Apostles and books to enlighten us" (possibly, works of biblical exegesis).¹²⁸ Several patriarchs of the Maronite Church, including Yūḥannā Maḥlūf (1609–1633) and Yūsuf Ḥalīb, asked the Pope for books printed in Syriac and Arabic, both liturgical and secular, for the Catholic communities of the Middle East. Moreover, the Propaganda Fide agreed to print in Rome Arabic versions sent by the Maronite clergy, such as the 1614 Psalter, on the basis of a manuscript sent from the monastery of Qannūbīn.

Nevertheless, the books that were printed in Rome for the Maronites had to pass a revision process that sometimes led to the censoring of passages in the texts sent for printing. The Vatican scholars made an open effort to bring the Syriac and Arabic versions of liturgical books as close as possible to the canonical ones used in European churches, which had been approved by the Propaganda Fide. This was an attempt to unify the church books of the Latin creed, west to east. The "Latinization" of their liturgical books was not approved by the upper clergy of the Maronite Church. This contradiction was apparent from the very first mission of Fr Eliano in the Levant, in 1578, when he started collecting manuscripts from the local monasteries, in order to take them out of service. He wrote then to Pope Gregory XIII:

In the course of time, and because of their [i.e., the Maronites'] life alongside other denominations, in their books and their Liturgy errors and heresies have crept. This is only accountable to the absence of priests to guide them, not to any disagreement with the Roman

¹²⁶ Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 43–44.

¹²⁷ Lūwīs Ṣayḥū, *Al-ṭā'ifa al-mārūniyya wa-l-rahbāniyya al-yasū'iyya*, Beirut, 1923, p. 84. See also Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 44.

¹²⁸ Ṣayḥū, *Al-ṭā'ifa al-mārūniyya wa-l-rahbāniyya al-yasū'iyya*, p. 82.

Church. [...] These inconsistencies that I discovered in their manuscripts do not reflect their true beliefs, but they were transcribed by ignorant scribes. If you ask them about their doctrine, they will answer that it is similar to the Roman creed."¹²⁹

Girolamo Dandini also collected manuscripts from the Lebanese monasteries, but he took them to Rome and handed them to the Pontifical Archives. The revision of a liturgical text was delayed, in 1592–1594, by the painstaking effort of comparing the available manuscripts of the Maronite Church with the Latin canonical text, which revealed a significant number of nonconformities.

The attitude of the Jesuits towards their liturgical literature convinced the Maronite upper clergy of the benefits of opening their own printing press in the dioceses of present-day Lebanon. Here, they would have had to deal with the authority of the Ottoman governors.¹³⁰ The attempt to bring a printing press into Ottoman territory was discussed at a time when the Maronite clergy was in turmoil. In March 1610, as the “reforms” of Patriarch Yūsuf Rizzī, who tried to force Western Catholic rituals upon the local churches and “Latinize” the liturgy, had angered many of the Maronite faithful and their spiritual leaders, Pope Paul V asked the new patriarch, Yūḥannā Maḥlūf, to revert to the old rituals.¹³¹ Printing for themselves, in Maronite territory, was a step forward to gain autonomy from the Church of Rome. On the other hand, through the assistance it offered to the Maronite Church, the Vatican secured the permanence of the Maronites’ attachment to the Latin doctrines.

Thus, in 1610, a printing press was installed at the Maronite Monastery of Saint Anthony in Qozhaya (Quḏḥayyā),¹³² close to the stream of Saint Sergius (Mār Sarkīs) in the Qādišā Valley of northern Lebanon. This was indeed the first Christian press for Syriac and Arabic books to function on Ottoman territory. An old establishment dating back to the 12th century, enjoying a remote location in the mountains, away from the roads traversed by Ottoman officials and troops but visited by many Christian pilgrims, the Monastery of Saint Anthony

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 759.

¹³⁰ For a historical report on the difficult life of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon in the early 17th century, see Moukarzel, “Le Psautier syriaque-garchouni édité à Qozhaya”, p. 519–521.

¹³¹ Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 59, n. 176.

¹³² On the etymology of this rare word, see Moukarzel, “Le Psautier syriaque-garchouni édité à Qozhaya”, p. 513–514. Basile Aggoula preferred the form ‘Quḏḥayyā’ and suggested the translation ‘the lightnings’ (*les éclairs*), cf. his essay “Le livre libanais de 1585 à 1900”, p. 297 and 313, n. 1. The forms ‘Qazaḥyā’ and ‘Qozahyā’ in the online entry on Miḥā’il al-Raḡḡī’s article published in *Al-Machriq*, 32, 1934, 3, p. 337–361, do not seem to have a phonetical support; see سفر المزامير بالسريانية: طبعة قزحيا. طبعة كمبردج || The Book of Psalms in Syriac: Qazaḥyā Edition. Cambridge Edition (biblia-arabica.com).

was the community where several Maronite patriarchs and bishops came from. According to Joseph Nasrallah, in the early 17th century, the monastery owned farmland and a watermill, and all around it there were stone-carved *kellia* where recluses lived.¹³³ In the 15th century, this was the abode of several hermits of the al-Rizzī family. Mihā'il al-Rizzī left the monastery only to become patriarch of the Maronite Church (1567–1581),¹³⁴ like his successor, his brother Sarkīs (1581–1596) and their nephew Yūsuf (1596–1608).

Another member of this family, Sarkīs al-Rizzī, born in 1572 in a village near Ehden, was a student of the Maronite College in Rome from 1584. He returned to Lebanon towards 1592, to live a hermit's life at the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Qozhaya. Girolamo Dandini found him there in 1596. Ordained bishop of Damascus in 1600, and later a vicar of the Patriarch Yūsuf al-Rizzī, Sarkīs travelled to Rome in 1606 to convey to the Pope a congratulatory message from the head of the Maronite Church.

In 1610, Sarkīs al-Rizzī set up at the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Qozhaya a press where a single book, with two versions of the same text, was published: a Psalter in Syriac and Arabic. The first version was printed with Syriac type (*Serṭo*, the western Syriac script), the second, with *Garshuni* type. This is a beautifully printed book, in black and red ink, with decorative elements and a visible effort to delight the reader. A note placed at the end of the book mentions the printers: Eliās ibn al-Ḥaḡḡ Ḥanna, a monk of Qozhaya, and the deacons Yūsuf ibn 'Amīma and Yūsuf ibn Yūnān,¹³⁵ who had been active in Italy under the direction of the master Pasquale Eli of Camerino.¹³⁶ All the Arab printers spent time in Rome and returned in 1609. Therefore, the typographic material is supposed to have been brought from Rome, installed, and used by printers who had some preliminary training in an Italian press where such books had already been produced. Joseph Nasrallah notes that only a master printer from Europe could have made things work in Qozhaya:

¹³³ Kuri, *Monumenta Proximi-Orientis*, p. 56–61, presents an overview of the monasteries and hermitages in this famous valley, including that of Qannūbin.

¹³⁴ The doctrinal opinions of this patriarch, alien to Catholicism, and his relations with the Jesuit missionaries, are presented by Kuri, *Monumenta Proximi-Orientis*, p. 99–101. The biography of several members of the Rizzī (Ruzzy) family is provided in *ibid.*, p. 464–465.

¹³⁵ On the apprentices of the Qozhaya press, see Moukarzel, “Le Psautier syriaque-garchouni édité à Qozhaya”, p. 518.

¹³⁶ The note was published by Fr Butros Ġālīb in his article “Nawābiġ al-madrassa al-mārūniyya al-'ulā”, *Al-Machriq*, 1924, 7, p. 501, and republished by Nasrallah, *L'imprimerie au Liban*, p. 4.

En 1610, personne au Liban, en dehors des anciens élèves du Collège Maronite de Rome, n'avait vu une imprimerie. Personne, non plus, ne pouvait en assurer le fonctionnement. Force avait été d'appeler un typographe d'Europe. Son nom nous est conservé au début et à la fin du Psautier, c'est le maître Pasquale Eli, originaire de Camerino, ville des Marches d'Italie, de la province de Macerata.¹³⁷

Recorded by Schnurrer in 1811 in his *Bibliotheca Arabica*, on p. 351–354, the Qozhaya Psalter was briefly described much later, in 1900, by Louis Cheikho.¹³⁸ As surviving copies are rare, only a few researchers of the written culture of Eastern Christianity were aware of the existence of this book in the last century: Franz Babinger mentioned it in 1925.¹³⁹ A copy held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France was surveyed by Miḥā'il al-Raġġi, Basile Aggoula, Wahid Gdoura, and J. F. Coakley.¹⁴⁰ In 1934, in his article “Sifr al-Mazāmīr bi-l-suryāniyya: ṭab'a Quẓḥayyā, ṭab'a Cambridge” (“The Syriac Psalter: the Edition of Qozhaya, the Edition of Cambridge”),¹⁴¹ Fr Miḥā'il Raġġi compared the Psalter of 1610 with the edition of W. Emery Barnes published in *The Peshita Psalter According to the West Syrian Text* (Cambridge, 1904).¹⁴² Joseph Nasrallah briefly described a copy held in the library of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in Lebanon,¹⁴³ which I have also seen in 2022. Carsten-Michael Walbinder surveyed a copy in the Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, acquired in 1611 by a German scholar who travelled in Lebanon.¹⁴⁴

The most accurate and detailed description of the Qozhaya Psalter, relying primarily on the copy held in the library of the USEK, is Fr Joseph Moukarzel's article “Le psautier syriaque-garchouni édité à Qozhaya en 1610. Enjeux historiques et présentation du livre”.¹⁴⁵ The author notes the rarity of this book, which previously obstructed a full investigation of its form and content. Having studied the Psalter thoroughly, Joseph Moukarzel provides comprehensive infor-

¹³⁷ Nasrallah, *L'imprimerie au Liban*, p. 7.

¹³⁸ Ṣayḥū, “Tārīḥ fann al-ṭibā'a fī al-Mašriq”, *Al-Machriq*, 3, 1900, 6, p. 253–255. This description was repeated by 'Abū l-Futūḥ Raḍwān in his book *Tārīḥ maṭba'at Bulāq wa-lamḥa fī tārīḥ al-ṭibā'a fī buldān al-Šarq al-'awsaṭ*, Cairo, 1953.

¹³⁹ Franz Babinger, “Mitteilungen 1. Ein vergessener maronitischer Psalterdruck auf der Nürnberger Stadtbücherei”, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1925, p. 275.

¹⁴⁰ Aggoula, “Le livre libanais de 1585 à 1900”, p. 297–298; Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 59–66; Coakley, *The Typography of Syriac*, W8-W9, p. 45–48.

¹⁴¹ Published in *Al-Machriq*, 32, 1934, p. 337–361.

¹⁴² See also the comments of Nasser Gemayel, “Les imprimeries libanaises de Rome”, p. 190–193.

¹⁴³ Nasrallah, *L'imprimerie au Liban*, p. 1–8.

¹⁴⁴ Walbinder, “The Christians of *Bilād al-Shām* (Syria): Pioneers of BookPrinting in the Arab World”, p. 22–23.

¹⁴⁵ Fr Joseph Moukarzel, “Le Psautier syriaque-garchouni édité à Qozhaya en 1610. Enjeux historiques et présentation du livre”, *MUSJ*, 63, 2010–2011, p. 511–566.

mation and comments on all its features of content and form. He also addresses the dissemination of the Psalter and gives a detailed picture of the historical circumstances and the scholars involved in its printing. The press of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik produced a facsimile edition of this book in 2017.¹⁴⁶

The bilingual Psalter of Qozhaya comprises 260 pp., with a text size of 28 x 15.5 cm and 24 lines per page. Printed in black and red ink, the title, in Syriac and Arabic, is placed on the first page inside an elegant border:

- in Syriac: *Ktobō d-mazmūrē d-Dawīd malkō wa-nbiyō* / *The Book of Psalms of the King and Prophet David*,
- and in Arabic: *Kitāb mazāmīr ‘am taṣābīḥ al-malik wa-l-nabiyy Dāwūd* / *Book of the Psalms or Songs of the King and Prophet David*.

The title page, which looks quite profuse, includes bishop Sarkīs al-Rizzī’s coat of arms, a hymn to the Virgin Mary composed in Lebanese Arabic, and a note that is repeated on the last page: “In the beautiful hermitage of the Qozhaya Valley, on the blessed Mount Lebanon, the work of master Pasquale Eli and the humble Yūsuf ibn ‘Amīma of Karm Sadda, a deacon by rank, in the year 1610.”

There follows a foreword addressed by bishop Sarkīs al-Rizzī to “the faithful Catholic brethren,” where he explains the benefit of the Psalms for the redemption of the soul, without any details about the circumstances surrounding the book publication. He mentions the assistance of the bishop Ġirġīs Amīra, “our dear elder brother,” who offered advice and blessing and “worked together with us.” According to a note in the book, the latter revised the Syriac text of the Psalms from a doctrinal point of view and approved its printing.¹⁴⁷

Then comes the text of the 151 Psalms – 150 canonical and the final apocryphal one – followed by the ten biblical odes (*taṣābīḥ*), the two last ones only in Syriac, then, a prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian’s, the blessing of the archbishop of Ehden under whose authority the monastery was placed, and a final note, as a colophon, on p. 259–260. The Psalms are placed in two columns: to the right – the Syriac text in *Serṭo* type, to the left – in Arabic, in *Garshuni* type. The two sets of types are different in letter size. They were both considered elegant, manufactured after models of a calligraphic handwritten script, by Joseph Nasrallah¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ I have seen this copy at the USEK library in May 2022. I am grateful to Fr Joseph Moukarzel for the wonderful reception there and the access to all the Arabic printed books in the library collections. The description that follows chiefly relies on Fr Joseph’s above-mentioned article in the *MUSJ*.

¹⁴⁷ Gdoura, *Le début de l’imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 62; Moukarzel, “Le Psautier syriaquegarchouni édité à Qozhaya en 1610”, p. 535.

¹⁴⁸ Nasrallah, *L’imprimerie au Liban*, p. 3: “Les caractères *carṣūnī* sont fins, de petite taille, les syriaques plus gras et plus grands.”

and later by Carsten Walbinder.¹⁴⁹ According to Basile Aggoula, these types were nicer than all those available in European presses at the time.¹⁵⁰

Historians of Arabic printing explained the choice of Syriac for the Psalms alongside Arabic (the vernacular of the time) by the desire to encourage its conservation as a liturgical language in the Maronite Church. This was an essential feature of Maronite culture, different from other cultures of the region, none of them equally attached to the Church of Rome. According to a note of Fr Girolamo Dandini, the Maronite communities were surrounded by sects able to disturb their connections, still fragile, with the pontifical see.¹⁵¹

Bishop Sarkis al-Rizzī sponsored this book himself, as well as the manufacture of the type. Unsurprisingly, history records that the bishop struggled for a long time because of his debts.

Joseph Nasrallah remarked with surprise: “Il est regrettable que les sources de l’histoire religieuse du Liban se soient tu sur l’origine de la première imprimerie du pays”.¹⁵² Thus, this printing press is neither mentioned in the *Annals* of Iṣṭifān al-Duwayhī, the patriarch of the Maronite Church, nor in the *History of the Lebanese Congregation* composed by the Maronite bishop Ġibrā’īl Farḥāt. Local sources do not mention it, neither do any of the famous Western travelers in their journals: Thévenot (1655–1659), Chevalier Laurent d’Arvieux (1660), Jean Goujon (1668–1669), Henri Maundrell (1697), Richard Pococke (1738), etc.

Bishop Giuseppe Assemani¹⁵³ mentioned in the catalogue of Lorenzo de Medici’s library (*Catalogo Biblioth. Medicaea Laurentianae*), which he prepared while residing in Italy, a Psalter printed in 1585 in Syriac and Arabic, with *Garshuni* type, which he described in detail. The volume he mentioned was not preserved, nor is any other copy of this book extant. Therefore, several scholars – Chr. F.

149 Walbinder, “The Christians of Bilād al-Shām (Syria): Pioneers of BookPrinting in the Arab World”, p. 23.

150 Aggoula, “Le livre libanais de 1585 à 1900”, p. 299. On the aspect of the type, see Fr Joseph Moukarzel’s comments in “Le Psautier syriaquegarchouni édité à Qozhaya en 1610”, p. 526–527.

151 Jérôme Dandini, *Voyage du Mont Liban*, transl. R. S. P. Richard Simon, Paris, 1675, p. 96; Gdoura, *Le début de l’imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie*, p. 66.

152 Nasrallah, *L’imprimerie au Liban*, p. 1.

153 The Maronite scholar Yūsuf al-Sam’ānī. About him and the Assemani family, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique*, p. 96, 131, 247, passim. On the entire episode connected to the Qozhaya Psalter, see Moukarzel, “Le Psautier syriaquegarchouni édité à Qozhaya en 1610”, p. 514–515.

von Schnurrer, Silvestre de Sacy, Louis Cheikho, and Joseph Moukarzel – have rejected the existence of this book, suggesting that Assemani saw a later Psalter.¹⁵⁴

Nasrallah notes at the end of his survey of the Qozhaya Psalter that this was “an attempt with no future” (*un essai sans lendemain*). Basile Aggoula surmised that the book was printed on a mobile press transferred from Rome and returned to the supplier, while the typographers who had printed it also went back to where they had come from.¹⁵⁵ Dagmar Glass and Geoffrey Roper found a different explanation: the typographic activity could not continue without the assistance of the Church of Rome, and this never came.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, as become apparent from Girolamo Dandini’s note cited before, the aim of the pontifical authorities was, at the time, to disseminate through the missionaries they sent to the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire books printed *in Rome*, under the direct control of the scholars working for the Propaganda Fide, devoid of any distancing from the Catholic dogmas. Encouraging the printing of books in Ottoman territory, with no control over the accuracy of the printed texts, was not seen as helpful to the projects of the Holy See for the Maronite Church, and for Arabic-speaking Christians in general.¹⁵⁷

In 1625, three years after the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide had started supporting more the activities of the missionaries sent to the Middle East, a monk of the Capuchin order by the name of Joseph received approval to install a press in Lebanon. He had been quite insistent, being worried about the activities of Patriarch Cyril Lukaris, who was sending Greek and Arabic books printed in Protestant countries to the Christians of Mount Lebanon. Informed of the patriarch’s project to set up a printing press in Constantinople, Father Joseph started conceiving a press for Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Persian, and Turkish that he intended to install in Lebanon by transferring typographic tools and materials from Italy and France. It is not known if he was aware of the printing that had been done at Qozhaya. In any case, he knew that although there was no official ban on printing in the Ottoman Empire, this enterprise was not safe, especially if he intended to print books in Arabic and Turkish, with Arabic type, which would draw the attention of the Ottoman authorities.

Finally, the Propaganda Fide decided to issue a decree on February 4, 1628, forbidding the installation of this press in Lebanon, since its own press had

¹⁵⁴ This is not, however, the opinion of Basile Aggoula, who wished to place the first printed book of the East in 1585, cf. Aggoula, “Le livre libanais de 1585 à 1900”, p. 297, 299.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 300.

¹⁵⁶ Glass and Roper, “Arabic Book and Newspaper Printing in the Arab World”, p. 178.

¹⁵⁷ Kunalalp, “Les livres et l’imprimerie à Istanbul au XVIII^e siècle”, p. 2.

started functioning in 1627, working with several alphabets and languages, just as Pope Gregory XIII had desired. After long conversations with Savary de Brèves, Father Joseph had already prepared type for several Oriental languages. Nevertheless, the Propaganda Fide preferred to keep its control over printing for the Maronites, which it would have lost, had an independent press started operating on Mount Lebanon.

At the Monastery of Saint Anthony of Qozhaya, printing was resumed only in the beginning of the 19th century, on a press transferred in 1803 by Fr Serafim Šušani of Beirut from the monastery Mār Mūsā al-Habaši of Duwār (Lebanon), where it had started to work in 1798. This press was active until 1897.

It is worth remembering here, for the purpose of our research, that there is no word in Arabic type in the book printed in 1610 at the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Qozhaya. The inaccurate idea that the Psalter of Qozhaya was the first book printed in the Middle East in *Arabic type* stems from the decision of some Arab authors to publish in Arabic script the final note of the book, printed in the Psalter in *Garshuni type*. Thus, the Qozhaya Psalter was the first book printed in the Ottoman Empire *with text in the Arabic language*, but *printing with Arabic type* did not occur until 1706, in Aleppo. In the early 17th century, the Maronites' aspiration to print in the lands ruled by the Sublime Porte could only be fulfilled by transferring tools and expertise from Rome. Furthermore, that after the first book was printed, the press closed down, probably because the local apprentices were not able to learn the craft of book-printing before the Italian printer(s) returned home, at least not enough to continue printing by themselves. Finally, the book printed there was meant for a distinct Christian readership, the faithful of the Maronite Church. Thus, the Psalter printed at the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Syriac and Arabic with *Serto* and *Garshuni* script, while being the first Christian book printed on the Eastern Mediterranean coast, was not a book meant to be distributed to all the Arabic-speaking Christians in the Ottoman Empire. It could hardly help the faithful of the Church of Antioch, who strived, at the time, to normalize the use of Arabic – language and script – in their liturgical and spiritual life.

2.3.3 Makarios III's Dream of Printing in Eastern Europe

The determination of the Wallachian and Moldavian rulers to open presses was one of the reasons why Patriarch Makarios III ibn al Za'im and his son Paul travelled to the Romanian Principalities in 1653–1658. Paul's report on his travels alongside his father, preserved in several manuscripts, contains precious information on historical figures and events, churches and monasteries, liturgical

rites, icons, and popular traditions of the peoples in Constantinople,¹⁵⁸ Eastern Europe and Muscovy that they came to be acquainted with.¹⁵⁹ In his *Journal*, Paul of Aleppo included many passages in praise of the printing activities supported by Vasile Lupu, the prince of Moldavia (1634–1653), and Matei Basarab, the prince of Wallachia (1632–1654), about the library of the Cantacuzino family on their estate in the village of Mărgineni, and the circulation of printed books at the princely courts and in the clerical circles of these lands. The Antiochian archdeacon commented in connection with Vasile Lupu:

In his time in Moldavia, at his court, many books were printed, church books, education books, and comments in the Wallachian language,¹⁶⁰ for the people of Moldavia had first read in Serbian,¹⁶¹ i.e., in Russian, as from the Bulgarian and the Serbian lands to Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as from the Cossacks' lands to Moscow, they all read in Serbian, and this is how all their books are [written]¹⁶². Nevertheless, the language of the people of Moldavia and Wallachia is Wallachian, so, they did not understand what they read. Therefore, [the prince] built near his monastery a great school all in stone,¹⁶³ and he printed books in their own language.¹⁶⁴

Paul's interest in the language of liturgy and that of the church books in the Romanian Principalities can be explained by the similarity of their situation to

158 See Mihai Țipău, "Byzance et les Grecs dans le récit de voyage de Paul d'Alep", in Feodorov, Heyberger and Noble (eds.), *Arabic Christianity between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe*, p. 79–94.

159 Never translated and edited in its entirety, Paul of Aleppo's *Journal* is now the object of a complete annotated English version, alongside the Arabic text, which I am preparing, together with Yulia Petrova, Mihai Țipău, and Samuel Noble, for the Brill Editors series ACTS directed by Alexander Treiger. For brief passages translated into English to illustrate the importance of Paul of Aleppo's work as a historical source, see Ioana Feodorov, "Chapter 12: Paul of Aleppo", in Noble and Treiger (eds.), *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World 700–1700. An Anthology of Sources*, p. 252–275.

160 In the manuscript, *bi-l-lisān al-falāḥī*, an expression that Paul uses both for Moldavian and Wallachian, as Romanians spoke the same language, which was in the early process of developing into the Romanian literary language.

161 The author refers to Old Slavonic, or Church Slavonic.

162 I.e., in the Cyrillic script.

163 Vasile Lupu's College, or the "Basilian School", established by a princely decree of May 9, 1640. The college started functioning in 1641 and closed after burning down completely in 1723. Young men studied Greek, Latin, Slavonic, and Romanian there. See Nicolae Iorga, *Documente privitoare la familia Callimachi*, t. I, Bucharest, 1902, p. 449–451.

164 This is a passage from the English translation to be published soon in the above-mentioned volume with Brill Editors. In MS Arabe 6016 of Bibliothèque nationale de France, the passage is placed on ff. 33v–34r.

that of Syria under the Ottomans: there, the Christians who had no theological or monastic education no longer understood Greek and Syriac. Paul's father, Patriarch Makarios III, translated and adapted into Arabic several Greek works designed to bring the liturgical rituals of the Church of Antioch closer to those of Byzantine tradition. At his request, other translators participated in this effort, among them his son Paul. Their travels to the Holy Land,¹⁶⁵ Eastern Europe, and Georgia were an opportunity to reconnect with the Byzantine roots of church services as they were formulated in the works that circulated there in manuscript copies and especially in printed books.¹⁶⁶

Another revealing episode for the appreciation that Patriarch Makarios III had for the benefits of printing occurred during the visit he paid to the Pechersk Lavra ('Monastery of the Caves') in Kyiv, where the Syrians were invited to see the famous press of the monastery. Here is what Paul reports on this visit:

Next to the large church [of the Pechersk Monastery] there is an admirable printing press, famous all around these lands.¹⁶⁷ All their church books come from here. They are splendidly printed, in various sizes and colors, with images on large sheets, showing wonders from other countries, icons of saints, wise teachings, and such. We printed here, as patriarchs are accustomed to, a certain number of letters of absolution signed in red ink by our master the patriarch, i.e., with his name written in their language, and the icon of the [Holy] Apostle Peter. They came in three sizes, a whole sheet for noblemen, a medium one for common people, and a small one for women.¹⁶⁸

Traveling across the Romanian lands during their long absence from home, the Syrians had the opportunity to see several libraries – of monasteries, princely courts, and wealthy boyars – where the Romanian, Greek, and Slavonic books were plentiful. Books printed by the monk Makarios¹⁶⁹ at the Dealu Monastery in

165 In 1642, Makarios III and Paul went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem accompanied by Maximos, the catholicos of Georgia, and sixty clerics and lay people from Aleppo. See MS Arabe 6016, BnF, f. 7r.

166 Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique*, p. 148; *HMLÉM* IV.1, p. 87–127; Hilary Kilpatrick, "Makāriyūs Ibn al-Za'im (ca. 1600–1672) and Būlus Ibn al-Za'im (1627–1669)", in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography 1350–1850*, Wiesbaden, 2009, p. 262–273. For the works written by Makarios III and Paul of Aleppo, see also Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans*, p. 445–451.

167 The press of the Kyiv Pechersk Monastery was founded by the Archimandrite Yelisey Pletenetsky, apparently in 1606, on the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. The first book, a dictionary, was printed there in 1626.

168 MS Arabe 6016, BnF, f. 82v.

169 This was possibly the same monk Makarios who had worked at the press of Cetinje. See Dan Simonescu, "Tipografi sârbi în slujba vechiului tipar românesc", *Analele Societății de Limba Română* (Panciova – Zrenjanin), 3–4, 1972–1973, p. 533–538; Mîrcea Păcurariu, *Geschichte der*

Târgoviște, the Book of the Divine Liturgies in 1508 (Fig. 1), the Oktoechos and the Gospel, had such a wide circulation across all the Orthodox areas (the Romanian Principalities, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, present-day Ukraine, and Muscovy) that they surely reached the libraries that Makarios III and Paul of Aleppo visited. While they were in Wallachia, at the Cozia Monastery, Paul paid a visit to the *stolnic* Constantin Cantacuzino, from whom he wished to obtain the unique manuscript copy of the *Comments to the Psalms of David the Prophet* composed by Niketas, the metropolitan of Heraklion (b. around 1060), who had collected passages from the works of forty saints and church fathers including Theodoret, the bishop of Cyrillus in 423–457.¹⁷⁰ Paul reports that he and his father wished to copy this important text, translate it into Arabic, and then secure its printing “in the lands of Europe, for our benefit and that of the entire Christian people.”¹⁷¹

Another work that they would have liked to see printed was the Book of the Divine Liturgies revised by Meletios Karma. When leaving for Europe, the Patriarch Makarios III took with him a manuscript Liturgikon that Paul refers to several times in his *Journal*. The patriarch cited from it in 1656, when asked to arbitrate the divergent opinions of the participants in the synod convened by Nikon, the Patriarch of Moscow. In the discussions concerning the “inventions” that had crept into liturgical books over time, Makarios appealed to an Arabic version of the Liturgikon used in the Church of Antioch since the old days.¹⁷²

Fr Charbel Nassif has studied a manuscript preserved at the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos (MS 1049) that contains the Greek and Arabic version of the Liturgikon, a copy made in 1637 by the secretary and scribe Ṭalḡa al-Ḥamawī,

Rumänischen Orthodoxen Kirche, Erlangen, 1994, p. 221–222; Ionel Cădea and Cristian Luca, “Libri manoscritti e a stampa nei Paesi Romeni del Cinquecento”, in Luisa Secchi Tarugi (ed.), *L'Europa del libro nell'età dell'Umanesimo* (secc. XV–XVI). *Atti del XIV Convegno Internazionale*, Florence, 2004, p. 176.

170 See Virgil Cădea, “Sources byzantines et orientales concernant les Roumains”, *RESEE*, 16, 1978, 2, p. 311–312; Paul din Alep, *Jurnal de călătorie în Moldova și Valahia*, Arabic manuscript edition and English translation by Ioana Feodorov, Bucharest and Brăila, 2014, p. 345, n. 852, and p. 346, n. 854.

171 MS Arabe 6016, BnF, ff. 270r–271r. See Paul din Alep, *Jurnal de călătorie în Moldova și Valahia*, p. 347.

172 In an article of 1896, Georgy A. Murkos declared that he had seen at the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos a Book of the Divine Liturgies in Greek and Arabic copied in 1647, with an Arabic foreword, which Patriarch Makarios had carried with him on his first journey to Europe. See Georgy A. Murkos, “O sluzhebnykh Antiokhiiskogo patriarkha Makariia, nakhodiashchemsia na Afone”, in *Drevnosti Vostochnye. Trudy Vostochnoi komissii Imperatorskogo Moskovskogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva*, t. II, Moscow, 1896, fasc. 1, p. 1.

brother of the Patriarch Efthimios II Karma.¹⁷³ The manuscript ends with a text signed by Patriarch Makarios III ibn al-Za'im, mentioning that it was given as *waqf* to the Church of the Saints Cyprian and Justina in Damascus.¹⁷⁴ This is the same version that was printed in 1701 in Snagov (Wallachia) by the Metropolitan Athanasios Dabbās, as I shall explain below. However, according to Fr Charbel, the copy kept at Vatopedi is not the one that accompanied the Patriarch Makarios III on his journeys.

173 Ṭalğa exchanged letters with Edward Pococke who, before he became the first professor of Arabic at Oxford, was chaplain to the English merchants of the Levant Company in Aleppo from 1630 to 1636. These letters are preserved in MS Pococke 432 of the Bodleian Library. He is also mentioned in these letters as the owner of a manuscript work called *Man ta'allāqa al-dīn al-naṣrānī*. See Hilary Kilpatrick, "Arabic Private Correspondence from Seventeenth-Century Syria: The Letters to Edward Pococke", *The Bodleian Library Record*, 23, 2010, 1, p. 21, 25–27.

174 Charbel Nassif, "Le Liturgicon arabe de Vatopedi (Mont Athos, Vatopedi 1049)", *Chronos*, 2021, 42, p. 57–82.

