MANUSCRIPT AND PRINT IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

Edited by Scott Reese

Manuscript and Print in the Islamic Tradition

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Edited by
Michael Friedrich
Harunaga Isaacson
Jörg B. Quenzer

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In memory of Kathryn A. Schwartz (1984–2022)

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Scott Reese
Introduction

One of the last great biases of the Western academy in relation to Islam centres around the issue of mechanical print.[1] The first successful Muslim owned printing press dates only to 1727 and the Ottoman grant of a license to İbrahim Müteferrika – a state functionary and entrepreneur – to establish a business devoted chiefly to the publication of works of a secular nature including history, geography, government organisation and occasionally science.[2] Because the printing press was established in the Islamic world a full two and a half centuries after Gutenberg, Western-trained scholars have adopted the question 'why so late?' as a near mantra. Until recently, the answers to this query have focused almost universally on Muslim shortcomings: Muslim disdain for Western science, a cultural obsession with calligraphy that could not be emulated by type, a fear of 'defiling' the sacred texts through the printing process, and the jealousy of the ulama who feared type posed a threat to their religious authority. Indeed, one persistent myth held that the Ottoman sultan, Bayazid II – prodded by the religious elites – banned all printing at the end of the fifteenth century, violation of the *firman* being punishable by death.[3] All of these have been offered up as explanations for the late adoption of mechanical print.[4]

One by one each has been dismantled. There exists no convincing evidence for a Muslim disdain for print or a belief that a tool of the unbelievers would desecrate the holy scriptures. Most important, there is no evidence for the existence of Bayazid II's supposed decree.[5] Indeed, important evidence exists to suggest just the opposite, that Muslim intellectuals and leaders understood print as a powerful and useful tool. In fact, a Muslim predisposition towards the efficacy of print can be found in the earliest works produced by Müteferrika. Appended to each of the first books in 1729, was a *fatwa* or religious opinion

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1 This longstanding and misguided trope in modern scholarship dates to the 1950s with works such as Carter 1955, Febvre and Martin 1958, and is perpetuated more recently in Coşan, Miceli and Rubin 2009.
2 See Osborn, this volume.
3 Faroqhi 2000, 94–96; Finkel 2005, 366. Indeed, J.R. Osborn speculates that, if a ban did exist, it may have targeted only certain types of texts rather than establishing a prohibition against print (Osborn 2017, 106–108).
4 See, for instance, Atiyeh 1995; Roper 2013.
5 Schwartz 2015, 18–25; Osborn 2017, 106.

given by *Sheikh ül-Islam* Abdullah Effendi, who was tasked with providing offi-
cial religious blessing to the publisher's endeavour by the Ottoman Court: 'If a
man undertakes to imitate the characters of handwritten books', he was asked,
'[...] by forging letters [of metal] making type and printing books conforming
absolutely to handwritten models, is he entitled to legal authorisation?'. The
scholar replied: 'Allahu alim [only God can say]. [But] when a person who un-
derstands the art of the press has the talent to cast letters and make type cor-
rectly and exactly, then the operation offers great advantages'.[6]

The 1729 fatwa, cited in two of this volume's chapters, is critically important
for two reasons. First, it shows that Muslim religious authorities, in the Ottoman
Empire at least, bore no hostility towards mechanical print for religious or any
other reasons. Indeed, as *Sheikh ül-Islam* Abdullah noted, it offered 'great ad-
vantages'. Equally important was the timing of this notice. A growing body of
scholarship holds that the eighteenth century was also a critical period for the
evolution of print in Europe. Strong scribal traditions continued there well into
the 1700s and it was only late in the century that print attained an unchallenged
position of pre-eminence across society.[7] Perhaps the question we should be
asking is not why did Muslim printing appear 'so late' following Gutenberg, but
where does print fit within the Islamic written tradition? That is the question
with which this volume concerns itself.

1 Towards an Islamic written tradition

In his brief but influential 1986 work, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,* Talal
Asad proposed that Islam should not be approached as a static set of beliefs.
Rather, in his estimation, it is more profitably viewed and explored as a mallea-
ble and inherently adaptable 'discursive tradition'.[8] This approach is one that
has gained increasing currency among Islamic studies scholars, the most rele-
vant of whom, for our purposes, is Samira Haj. Her book *Reconfiguring Islamic
Tradition* is a re-examination of the thought of the Arabian and Egyptian reli-
gious reformers Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) and Muhammad Abdu
(d. 1905) within the context of 'discursive tradition'. As such, it does not deal
directly with notions of writing or print. However, the ideas she posits regarding

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6 Osborn 2017, 117.
7 Sajdi 2014, 116–117; see also Johns 1998.
8 Asad 1986.

the nature of tradition and its implications for how we comprehend social, cultural and intellectual evolution are instructive for the way we understand the emergence of print. Thus, it is an idea that bears revisiting in some detail.

Although within the last two or three generations, scholars of Islam have managed to drop most of the worst tendencies represented by Orientalist thought, most academics have continued to measure Muslim 'progress' using Western yardsticks. So, Haj notes, Muslim reformers are defined as modern 'only to the extent that they employ modern [European] material and institutional resources'[9] and ideas. Modern Islamic reform is presumed possible only through the adoption of these.

It does not take a great leap of imagination to see how a similar critique can, and should, be applied to how scholars have spoken about the emergence of print in Muslim society. As Osborn and Nemeth point out in this volume, along with many others throughout the field, the widespread adoption of print by Muslims in the nineteenth century is always portrayed as making up for an earlier 'absence', 'lack', or 'failure'.[10] This is in large part due to the application of Western benchmarks as markers of 'progress' that results in a kind of technological determinism.[11] If the trajectory of Islamic print does not adhere to the same indicators, it is by definition an aberration from the Western norm.

As Haj has demonstrated, a much more fruitful approach is to engage with Islamic institutions within their own 'discursive tradition', a process that consists of 'historically evolving discourse[s] embodied in the practices and institutions of communities'.[12] 'Tradition' she writes, 'refers not simply to the past or its repetition but rather to the pursuit of ongoing coherence by making reference to a set of texts, procedures, arguments and practices' that constitute a perceived canon.[13] But, rather than a rigid, unchanging body of knowledge, Muslim communities engage in a continuous reinterpretation of this canon, enabling them, in the words of Adeline Masquelier, 'to respond to the conditions of a changing world'.[14]

For Haj, the primary focus of the 'discursive tradition' is the emergence of 'modern' Islamic reform within the context of a much longer history of Muslim intellectual endeavour. But a similar case can be made for understanding the

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9 Haj 2009, 2–3.
10 Osborn and Nemeth, this volume; Sajdi 2014 and Schwartz 2015.
11 Sajdi 2014, 122.
12 Haj 2009, 4.
13 Haj 2009, 5.
14 Masquelier 2009, 24.

history of print not as an innovation belatedly adopted from the West, but as a technology and a paradigm that emerges as part of a historically deeper Islamic tradition of writing that evolves and changes to fit the needs of Muslim societies. Ample evidence of such change exists in the secondary literature. However, few scholars discuss such transformations as part of an on-going discursive process that takes place across space and time. One notable exception to this is Ahmad El Shamsy's recent book, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*. In an amazing feat of erudite detective work, El Shamsy convincingly demonstrates how a small cadre of Egyptian and Ottoman elite bibliophiles resurrected many of the foundational works of the Islamic classical tradition from what he describes as a post classical malaise. Equally important, his work constitutes an excellent illustration of the evolution of the Islamic written tradition as works moved from manuscript into print within the context of the late Ottoman Empire; a tradition that stretched back more than twelve-hundred years by this point.[15]

The essays in this volume seek to further complicate this picture. As such, there are several things we must bear in mind from the outset. First, the Islamic written tradition was, and is, a process whose creators included not just those from the so-called Arab heartland but the far wider global *Umma* or community of believers. So, while we can argue the existence of a single Islamic written tradition, it is a whole constructed from many parts. Second, the written tradition is inherently discursive. Writing systems and texts, of course, must be created by people. As such, the various elements of written expression (e.g., scripts, genres, punctuation and accepted conventions to name but a few) only emerge through processes of discourse about what is and what is not acceptable. Finally, participation in the written tradition was hardly the sole purview of intellectual elites. Most studies of reading and writing in Islam – especially those focused on the pre-modern period – have tended to concentrate on the scholarly production of elites. This is due largely to the sources that have survived, as modern scholars readily admit.[16] In practice, however, it was a tradition of writing from which all Muslims could draw from and contribute to regardless of geographic location or social status. This is a feature that becomes increasingly clear as we move closer to the modern with a larger array of surviving source material available to scholars.

Written Arabic was in its infancy at the time the Prophet appeared in the seventh century. By the eighth century, however, a sophisticated scribal tradition had emerged as the dominant paradigm for the transmission of knowledge.

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15 El Shamsy 2020, 4–5.
16 See Hirschler 2012.

Some of the earliest genres to emerge included poetry, based on pre-Islamic models, prose works for courtly behaviour crafted from middle-Persian proto-types as well as bureaucratic writing that served the needs of the growing Islamic state. But at the centre of the written tradition lay what became known as the ʿulūm al-dīn or the religious sciences. Including Quranic commentary (tafsīr), jurisprudence (fiqh) grammar (naḥw), theology (ʿilm al-tawḥīd) and mysticism (taṣawwuf), among others, the disciplines developed specific genres of texts that took on particular hallmarks. The question-and-answer format of classical fiqh texts, the marginalia commentary used to annotate classical theological works and augmented five hemistich poems of takhmīs collections are all standard forms that date to the height of Islamic learning in the medieval centuries of Islam. In addition, various conventions emerged that served to legitimate and authorize texts as correct, authentic knowledge. The concept of the ijāza, or literally a 'license to transmit', is well known, but this was hardly the only safeguard put in place to ensure that not only were those who transmitted texts qualified to do so, but that the knowledge contained therein was 'correct' and rightly guided. Dictation, formal public readings, drafts and 'clean' copies that were checked and checked again, notifications of which were carefully placed in the final written manuscript.[17]

However, this tradition was hardly stagnant, and changes regularly occur as responses to the needs, demands and difficulties encountered by the authors, as well as the consumers, of written artefacts. Konrad Hirschler has noted, for instance, numerous syntactical and punctuation innovations that appeared in Arabic prose between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries were driven largely by a documented growth in readers and part of an effort to make the written word more accessible.[18] Nir Shafir has demonstrated the emergence of another consumer-driven innovation in the seventeenth century, the appearance of pamphlets as a relatively new genre of writing in the Central Islamicate lands.

Shafir argues that historians of the Islamic book have tended to focus primarily on works produced for the religious sciences. Such books were linguistically and conceptually complex and correspondingly expensive. As such, they were aimed at a very limited, elite audience. From the mid-seventeenth century at least, there began to appear various types of cheap books that included 'stories and tales (hikāya) and catechismic texts (ʿilm al-ḥāl)', and possibly most important, polemical pamphlets. Inexpensive, brief and written in clear accessible prose, these hand-written booklets – produced in their hundreds,

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17 Pedersen 1984; Messick 1993; Déroche 2006.
18 Hirschler 2012, 19.

if not thousands – reveal the presence of a growing reading public outside the religious and political elites, albeit one that was primarily urban.[19] So, in the mid-seventeenth century, Islamic textual traditions and genres, even in the Arabic heartland, were already shifting regardless of whether print was being utilized or not.[20]

Manuscript pamphlets represented a relatively innovative element of the written Islamic tradition. Referred to as *risāla*s or treatises, they were not only cheap, but enabled and encouraged individuals to read independently outside the madrasa setting.[21] As such, 'manuscripts [acted] as agents rather than the ideas inscribed within'. They were written artefacts 'that ...encouraged superficial and visual reading, a practice outside the traditional social strictures of learned society'.[22] Equally important, these were not objects that encouraged spiritual contemplation or simple moral self-improvement. Rather, they were 'purposefully argumentative texts, made to be used by groups of skilled and unskilled readers who wanted ready access to arguments and proofs to deploy in debates'.[23] Most were devoted to a variety of legal and social debates including the acceptability of certain religious practices and cultural innovations such as the consumption of coffee and tobacco both of which were held by some to be indicative of declining societal morality.[24]

In many cases, the authors of such tracts were noted scholars. Ibn Taymiyya was an early example, while probably the most prolific among late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century pamphleteers was the Damascene Abd al-Ghani al-Nabalusi (1642–1731), who wrote more than two hundred pamphlets during his lifetime.[25] But, as readership was beginning to change in the early modern era, so was authorship. In her book, *The Barber of Damascus*, Dana Sajdi discusses the rise of 'nouveau literacy' in the Levant from the mid eighteenth-century. A certain level of literacy had long existed in urban settings outside of the religious and political elites.[26] However, by the eighteenth century, in Syria at least, literary endeavours were being taken up by locals of disparate backgrounds who seemed to have viewed it as a mode of creating their own cultural capital. Mostly through the genre of chronicle, or local histories, people as

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19 The following is taken from Shafir 2016, 86–97.

20 For a detailed discussion of Europe see Johns 1998.

21 Shafir 2016, 93.

22 Shafir 2016, 87.

23 Shafir 2016, 88; also, Terzioglu 2013, 83.

24 Shafir 2016, 94.

25 Shafir 2016, 120.

26 See Hirschler 2012 for a full discussion of this.

varied as Shi'i farmers, Greek Orthodox priests and a barber from Damascus used writing as a way to lay claim to authority in a political and social landscape that was quickly changing.[27] This occurred, Sajdi notes, as regional provincial elites such as large landowners, merchants and tribal chiefs were rapidly emerging to challenge the presumptive power of the Ottoman state. Driven by economic issues, growing sectarianism and a more general desire for regional autonomy within the Ottoman structure, Sajdi argues that written expression in local Arabic vernacular became one tool of this upward mobility.[28]

Whether or not Sajdi is correct about such works as tools for acquiring social and cultural capital – these were, after all, works with a limited distribution – they do represent the emergence of a new genre within the tradition. The *yam'iyyat* or daily chronicle were works of history composed by non-elite authors frequently in various registers of Arabic – both literary 'classical' and more colloquial language. In these we certainly witness the emergence of a new set of voices often expressing their dissatisfaction with their social and political betters and with sufficient examples to be regarded as a new branch in the written Arabic tradition, one that seems to presage the seemingly explosive growth of readers, authors and written objects in the following century.[29]

2 Mechanical print and the Islamic written tradition

In this light, the adoption of print in the nineteenth century should not be understood as a sudden break with the past. Instead, it is more profitable to approach Islamicate print as emerging within the framework of an Islamic written tradition. Rather than a sudden print 'revolution', the mechanical production of writing in Muslim contexts developed through various continuities and adaptations to changing circumstances over a long period of time. This is what J.R. Osborn refers to in his contribution to this volume as a 'long revolution', a term coined by Raymond Williams.[30] European technological innovation, imperial expansion and Christian missionization are certainly part of this picture. But these were hardly the only determining factors. Local contexts such as

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27 Sajdi 2014, 19.
28 Sajdi 2014, 15–20.
29 Sajdi 2014.
30 Osborn, this volume, referring to Williams 1961.

geography, economics, political culture and not least of all aesthetic tastes, also played a role. But, essential in the decision-making process of Muslims when turning to mechanical print is an element that has been hitherto neglected: the previous twelve-hundred years of writing culture and book production.

The papers in this volume seek to push our understanding of the Islamic written tradition beyond the so-called Arabo-Persian heartland. While two of our contributors focus on the development of print within the Ottoman realm and the 'Nadīm memo' focuses on Arabic reform in Egypt, the remaining seven contributors all direct their efforts outside this supposed core. Five essays focus on print in Africa as well as one each for South and Southeast Asia. This regional emphasis is not accidental. Indeed, it is intended to illustrate that scholarly examination of the Islamic written tradition demands a broader geographic scope. Africa, South and Southeast Asia are as central to this discursive tradition as the Arab lands, Persia, and Turkey. The distribution of essays pulls the written tradition outside the so-called 'heartland', in a way similar to Clifford Geertz's attempt to stretch the examination of Islamic practice from east to west in *Islam Observed* fifty years ago.[31] If we do not embrace the full geographic diversity of Islamic practice, our scholarship risks reinscribing the same tropes that we argue against: just as Islamic printing *writ large* should not be measured by European standards as an outsider looking in, Muslim written practices in Africa, Asia or anywhere else should not be measured against an imaginary Middle Eastern core .

The papers in this volume are divided into two – albeit unequal – parts. The contributors in Part I directly take up the supposed hesitation of Muslims to adopt print. Both Titus Nemeth and J.R. Osborn hold that rather than an 'irrational' aversion to new technologies, the reservations of the Ottomans and other Muslims were grounded in very real technical and aesthetic issues that rendered print unattractive even while recognising its benefits.

As Nemeth argues, the poor quality of Arabic type prior to the late eighteenth century made print unattractive to readers and, as a result, a poor commercial investment. The earliest experiments with Arabic fonts were carried out primarily by non-Muslim Europeans who had little experience with a complex system that rendered them unable to cope with its many intricacies such as multiple forms for each letter or the super- and subscripted vowels. The result, he points out, was a product wholly unacceptable to readers. Even the relatively advanced press established by Müteferrika fabricated an aesthetically inferior product in comparison to even the most basic manuscripts. As a result, Nemeth

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holds, there were few incentives for Muslim entrepreneurs to invest large amounts of capital in a venture that had so little prospect of profitable returns.

J.R. Osborn in his contribution echoes these points but argues that it was not simply economics that informed Muslim, or Ottoman to be more precise, views on the value of print. Aesthetics, he notes, played an equally important role driven by what he refers to as 'structures of feeling', defined as 'particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions',[32] that can come to be representative of a culture in a given period. One such structure of feeling within Ottoman society, he notes, was script variation, 'a textual practice in which visual and aesthetic differences of script, or styles of script, signify meaningful distinctions of textual genre and audience'.[33] Six classical scripts known as *al-aqlām al-sittah,* emerged as 'recognizable and repeatable types', for use within Ottoman society. Each ultimately became associated with particular kinds of texts and genres and which 'readers learned to decipher [...] as a secondary code', encrypting certain meanings. Thus, one script, for example, came to be associated with religious writings while another with royal decrees etc. Initially, print could not hope to replicate this complex code of meanings. Overtime, however, it did find its own niche as a script associated with the bureaucratic state. Osborn argues that 'the Ottoman shift from a manuscript-dominant society to the adoption of print took time' and was in effect 'a long revolution'.[34]

As such, Müteferrika's effort was a venture that while in the short term might be viewed as only a limited success set in motion a series of processes whereby print would, Osborn argues, emerge as a new genre or style of script that signalled the production of a new kind of written object – the printed book – that was devoted to, among other things, science, mathematics, history and diplomacy aimed at an audience of bureaucrats and state functionaries rather than religious elites. Müteferrika's press was a beginning – and not an end – that took more than fifty years to bear fruit. He did not revolutionize the Islamic written tradition but he did nudge it in a new direction, setting in motion changes that would develop and spread over time. This long revolution finally took hold with the founding of an Ottoman State press in 1797.[35] Pasha Muhammad Ali of Egypt continued this trend with the establishment of a state press at Bulaq in 1820 with the first books produced in 1822.

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32 Osborn, this volume. Also, Williams 1961.
33 Osborn, this volume.
34 Osborn, this volume.
35 Nemeth, this volume.

So, the Müteferrika interlude notwithstanding, the widespread adoption of mechanical print in Muslim lands dates to the 1820s. But, importantly, Islamicate mechanical reproduction did not follow a single technological trajectory. By the time Muslim states and individual actors turned to print as a means of large-scale production there were two major technologies available. First, of course was 'moveable type' or typography invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-fifteenth century and virtually the only means of mechanically reproducing texts for nearly four hundred years. In the late eighteenth century, however, Alois Senefelder (1771–1834) developed a technique for printing that created text – and images – not through the use of individual punch cut letters but by etching on flat, stone tablets and reproducing the image using a combination of grease and acid-resistant ink. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, lithography (literally, 'stone printing') was a proven technology with broad applications. In Europe, however, it was used primarily for printing designs on cloth, sheet music and producing pictures as either inexpensive pieces of art or for books. It never emerged as an alternative to typography.[36] But, in the Islamic world, lithography was quickly adopted for the large-scale printing of books.[37] As such the articles in this volume examine cases where both technologies were in play. However, the technology itself is less of a focus, than the ways in which mechanical reproduction fit into and changed the broader Islamic written tradition.

Print, from this point forward, would emerge as an increasingly integral element of the Islamic written tradition. This is evidenced first by the exponential rise in print production over the course of the nineteenth century. From the 1830s print rapidly transcended its place as a medium serving the needs of the state to one with far broader social appeal. It soon became an important new venue for the dissemination of countless new Muslim voices. This included, of course, religious knowledge – both old and new – but also new genres (e.g. political treatises and novels) and types of written objects (e.g. newspapers).[38]

But while print in many ways transformed the written tradition – at the very least in terms of volume and accessibility – it was also forced to conform to it. There is no better illustration of this than the continuous efforts to refine the always problematic Arabic moveable type to enable it to fit more easily into the

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36 Senefelder 1911; Proudfoot 1997.

37 It needs to also be pointed out that numerous other non-European societies such as those in Persia, China and Southeast Asia also turned to lithography as a means of reproducing the written word.

38 It should be pointed out that some of these new texts were printed, while others were handwritten. Taken together, these new genres demonstrate a shift in the written tradition regardless of medium.

deeper tradition. As Nemeth points out, one of the biggest problems with early Arabic type was that it was ugly and unpleasing to the eyes of the reader. This was an issue with which Arabic typographers never ceased to struggle. Muḥammad Nadīm's Memo to the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, the volume's third contribution, provides us with a succinct introduction to script reform up to the era of the Second World War. In her overview of the memo, Kathryn Schwartz highlights the ongoing concern among intellectuals and artisans to make Arabic more 'user friendly' and easily readable for a broad public, without betraying the technical and emotional structures of the language. For instance, Muḥammad Nadīm noted, 'the word of majesty (الله) [for God] [...] is much in circulation and use and it carries a special value which should be respected and preserved'.[39] As such, he recommended, it should never be broken into its constitutive letters but instead always appear in print as a unified word.

3 Exploring the tradition more broadly

The articles in Part I focus primarily on the development of print and the efforts of Muslims to fit it into the already existing tradition particularly within the so-called Islamic heartland of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. The essays in Part II cast a broader net in the form of case studies across time, geography and technology exploring the various contours of the evolving Islamic written tradition once print entered the equation. It thus emerges as not the story of Arabic print, but of the Islamic written tradition in its broadest sense.

In Egypt and the Ottoman heartland printed book production was dominated by typography or 'moveable type'. However, not all Muslim communities found this method of mechanical reproduction equally attractive. Indeed, for some, lithography was ultimately deemed a more appropriate technology. Ulrike Stark illustrates this point in her contribution on Qur'an production in nineteenth-century South Asia. Indian Muslims turned to print nearly as early as their Egyptian and Ottoman counterparts and the Hooghly edition of the Qur'an, produced in Calcutta, appeared in 1829. Stark, however, notes this and other early typeset versions of the scriptures were seriously lacking in aesthetic appeal, and through 'their rather crude typefaces and sparse use of ornamentation, they display the technical constraints of movable type printing and presumably had

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39 Nadīm's memo, transcription f. 7, this volume.

little visual appeal for Muslim readers'.[40] Compared to India's sophisticated manuscript tradition, Arabic script works produced with moveable type hardly constituted an advance. For this reason, at least in part, it seems South Asian entrepreneurs – led by the indomitable Naval Kishore – soon shifted almost universally to the use of lithography which held obvious advantages not only for printing scripts that were cursive in nature but also enabling greater ornamentation as well as colour (albeit in limited amounts).

Holger Warnk's contribution, focuses on *Cermin Mata* ('The Spectacles'), a journal produced by Christian missionaries in mid-nineteenth-century Singapore. A missionary journal would hardly seem to fit within a collection devoted to the Islamic writing. However, while certainly a publication intended to promote mission work, the journal also highlights the continued importance of the local Islamic written tradition. The journal was produced in Jawi (Malay written in Arabic script) and many of those who wrote for it were themselves traditionally trained Muslim Munsyis, or scribes. As Warnk points out, this led to not only a certain standardization of Jawi handwriting[41] but also promoted Malay-Islamic written culture. While containing numerous pieces that upheld and promoted European Christian values, *Cermin Mata* featured numerous stories from the local Malay repertoire as well as the unfinished Hajj account of a prominent Malay man of letters, known simply as, Abdullah Munsyi. The stories in *Cermin Mata* also had a life beyond the mission journal finding their way into the curricula of both mission and government schools of Malaya, as well as the coffee houses of Singapore where copies were read aloud for popular entertainment.

The next several contributors, Scott Reese, Alessandro Gori and Jeremy Dell, all take up the evolution of typographic print among different African Muslim societies and the ways in which local practice had an impact on the larger written tradition. Reese's 'The Ink of Excellence', examines the role of Egyptian publishers in the evolution of local print culture among Muslim scholars in coastal East Africa. But it also tackles the ever-evolving written tradition looking at some of the ways print changed religious composition while also identifying the many ways in which print incorporated the structures of the manuscript tradition; including the shape and content of books, but also markers of scholarly

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40 Stark, this volume.
41 The standardization of handwritten styles and regional styles, either before print or alongside printing, seems to be a key feature of the Islamic written tradition and a feature that is rarely problematized in European-based models of print development. Personal communication J.R. Osborn. See also Bondarev, Gori and Souag 2019.

authority such as chains of transmissions, practices of 'emendation,' editing and the resurrection of the medieval practice of the scholarly 'blurb' or *taqrīdh*. This last practice is particularly instructive as its revival seems to have been driven by the East African authors of printed books rather than their Egyptian counterparts.

Remaining in Egypt, Alessandro Gori's contribution, 'Early Ethiopian Islamic Printed Books' offers a companion view from the Horn of Africa. Following the trajectory of a single book from manuscript to printed form, Gori describes the origins of print production in Ethiopia and the international linkages that made it possible. In addition, his essay also provides some important insights in the continued production of manuscripts among Ethiopian Muslims well into the late twentieth century. Finally, Jeremy Dell's contribution shifts our view westward to modern Senegal. It recounts the history of early efforts to print the *xasida*,[42] of the Muridiyya Sufi order's founding saint Shaykh Amadu Bamba (1853–1927). In particular, it tracks the attempts of the movement's leadership to assert control over Bamba's legacy following his death by regulating its production in print. It is also a larger Muslim story, however, as he highlights the relationships that emerged between Murids in Senegal and publishers in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt as the leadership sought authoritative outlets for the great Shaykh's work.

The last two essays in our volume stay in West Africa but take us back to the world of lithography. While, as Dell's article illustrates, typographic print had its place among Muslim publishers in West Africa, it was not always the preferred mode. The contributions by Sani Adam and Andrea Brigaglia focus on the development of offset lithography[43] in the Nigerian city of Kano in the period after World War Two. Adam's contribution, 'Technology and Local Tradition' provides an overview of the development of Arabic and Hausa Ajami print in Kano. Among his findings is that while there were attempts to jumpstart an Arabic print industry in Kano prior to the 1950s the industry only really took off after the introduction of offset lithography. He holds there were several economic and political reasons for the late development. However, among the most important factors were aesthetics. It is this issue that Brigaglia takes up in his contribution, '"Printed Manuscripts": Tradition and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Nigerian Qur'anic Printing'. Much like in South Asia, Brigaglia finds that especially when it comes to the Qur'an, the notion of typeset holy scriptures

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42 Pronounced *qaṣīda*, these are praise poems often, but not exclusively associated with Sufism.

43 Sometimes referred to as offset printing.

was wildly unpopular. Instead, even while a market emerged for various kinds of religious texts printed typographically, local tastes continued to prefer hand copied Qur'ans in the local Sudanic Arabic script. This meant Qur'ans remained an expensive, luxury item. The introduction of offset lithography from the 1950s enabled the production of Qur'ans in a medium that local households found appealing. This had two important impacts. First, it made locally copied Qur'ans relatively affordable. While not cheap by any means, adoption of offset lithography meant that more people could potentially afford to purchase a Qur'an reproduced in the local style. It also created something of a renaissance for Kano calligraphers. Prior to the 1950s, calligraph was a stagnant if not dying profession. With offset lithography the profession experienced a massive revival with the work of masters coming into increasing demand and even injecting much need creativity with the introduction of new styles. As such, the machine age played a direct role in retaining and even energizing an important local element of the written Islamic tradition.

4 Conclusion

As noted earlier, the essays in this volume represent an early and ongoing effort to understand the complexities of the Islamic written tradition as it evolved in the age of print. The contributors and I hope that readers will take several things away from this book. This includes not only the diverse nature of mechanical print in the Islamic world, but also its emergence in dialog with the much longer written tradition.

One of the primary touchstones for this volume is the extension and application of the Asadian notion of discursive tradition in order to illuminate the existence of an Islamic tradition of the written word. The essays in this book argue that the adoption of print among Muslim societies did not represent a break from the past, but the continued evolution of a longstanding cultural practice: writing. The Islamic written tradition incorporated new technologies (e.g. moveable type, and lithography in its various forms) not simply as replacements of earlier scribal practices but in dialogue with and alongside established handwritten and calligraphic traditions. While new technologies dominated certain genres, handwriting and calligraphy did not disappear. On the contrary, these new technologies were just as likely to rejuvenate handwriting and calligraphy as displace them in particular arenas. Lithography, for instance, actually required the retention of advanced handwriting skills as evidence by Naval Kishore's workshops. Going a step further, as Brigaglia

points out, offset lithography seems to have spurred a renaissance of calligraphic studios in Kano.

Furthermore, Islamic print's progress was inextricably bound to its handwritten past. The Islamic written tradition employs visual and formal distinctions of genre and regional style. Printing certainly altered stylistic practices of written composition. However, this took place only to the degree that printing could incorporate previous structures of authority, genre, layout and appearance among other things. Thus, as in the case of Egypt and printed books – whether classics or new compositions – we see a continuation of many visual stylistic components of the manuscript tradition but also conceptual elements, such as the imposition of oversight by a qualified *ʿālim*.

Finally, and possibly most important, the Islamic written tradition was and is hardly a monolith. Instead, it is geographically and regionally diverse, spreading across Muslim societies from east to west. As a discursive tradition, it has not only responded to and incorporated new structures of technology; it has a much longer history of responding to and incorporating diverse structures of culture, politics, and regional knowledge. While Muslim societies certainly adopted many of the central structures of writing that had come to be recognised as part and parcel of the Arabo-Persian written tradition, this still left space for local structures and concepts. The development of the Kinawi script in Nigeria and Jawi (Malay written in Arabic characters) in Southeast Asia are only two of the most obvious examples.

In the end, the Islamic written tradition's historical success may be due precisely to its seemingly inexhaustible adaptability. The incorporation of printing, in this light, appears as simply the co-optation of one technique among many that has helped retain the tradition's vibrancy.

Transliteration

Arabic, Persian and Turkish transliteration in the following volume follows that laid out by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). However, some contributions include Islamic languages, such as Hausa and Wolof, that employ characters not appearing in other languages and thus have symbols unique to them. The authors of these contributions have been permitted to use such symbols in addition to those included in the IJMES system. Finally, as the question of transliteration's utility continues to be debated, authors have been allowed to exercise discretion with regard to the extent to which they use transliteration as long as internal consistency was maintained within each essay.

Acknowledgements

As this volume was going to press, our community of scholars was devastated by the sudden loss of Kathryn A. Schwartz. Over the course of putting this book together, all of us came to know Kathryn as a brilliant historian, who was poised to make enormous contributions to the fields of Book History and Middle Eastern Studies. We also got to know a bright, funny and charming person whose insight and wit always inspired us. In her short career, Kathryn had already produced a number of articles and studies of significant impact and import, and we can only guess at the knowledge she would have produced with more time. We are confident that the base Kathryn created will form the foundation of much richer scholarship to come, serving as a reminder of the impact her life had on the field even in such a short time. It seemed only natural that this book should be dedicated to her memory.

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Part I

Titus Nemeth

Overlooked: The Role of Craft in the Adoption of Typography in the Muslim Middle East

Abstract: This article seeks to contribute a new perspective to the recently revived discourse about the beginning of printing with Arabic movable type in the Middle East. The historiography of Arabic print has only tangentially engaged with the visual qualities of texts, and when it has done so it often failed finding an approach that does justice to the appearance of documents. The fidelity of the typographic representation of the script, and questions related to craft, formal conventions, and the reading process, are barely addressed in scholarship of Arabic print history. Yet writing and print are visual media and cannot be fully understood without investigating their material properties. This paper therefore emphasises the materiality of typography and aspects of typographic craft and reminds us that print is foremost a trade which must fulfil certain requirements in order to thrive. The argument investigates Arabic typography for its fitness for purpose, juxtaposing economic factors, typographic considerations, and cultural aspects. Relating these elements to the reading process, this paper argues that formal criteria of typography are an overlooked explanation for the long disinterest of the Islamic world in typography.

1 Introduction

In a recent paper, Kathryn Schwartz renewed the debate on the beginnings of print in the Muslim Middle East and fundamentally challenged established explanations and lines of argument.[1] Demonstrating the porous foundations of a frequently repeated rationale, namely the lack of evidence for an alleged ban of printing by Ottoman sultans, Schwartz forcefully argued for a reconsideration of the origins of print culture in the Middle East. In her narration, European experiences and historiography of print defined how scholars approached and

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1 Schwartz 2017. Although Schwartz was not the first to challenge established narratives, her critique is the most substantive of recent publications. Another contribution that cast doubt on the historiography of print in the Middle East is found in Sajdi 2009.

assessed the trajectory of print in the Middle East, failing to consider the specificities of the region. According to Schwartz, enquiries into the regional history of print were always grounded in comparisons to the role the technology had played in Europe, imbuing the entire discourse with an ahistorical bias. Her paper closes with a demand for more fine-grained analysis, consideration of specific locales, 'attention to practicality', and a more critical attitude to sources and precedent. In her reading, the question ought not to have been why did the Ottomans not take up print, but rather why should they have printed?

Conversely, Schwartz's paper, and most of the debate about the origins of printing in the Muslim Middle East, does not question why the Ottomans began to print when they eventually did. This leaves a considerable gap in our understanding of the adoption of the medium and does not appear to be fully consistent. Whereas fierce criticism is directed at the uncritical assumption that letterpress printing ought to have been taken up by every society that encountered it, this stance seems to soften once the Muslim Middle East adopted this Western import. Scholars largely seem to accept that by the nineteenth century printing had become inescapable, jettisoning the very arguments that are advanced to argue against technological determinism. Indeed, some of the evidence that is used to demonstrate the lack of interest of the Muslim Middle East in printing, could equally underline the puzzle of the late début. When Schwartz cites from the Ottoman writer İbrahim Peçevi's (1574–1649) 'Analysis of the Printed Writing of the Unbelievers', it is meant to demonstrate that the Ottomans did not need printing:

> The invention of printing by the unbelievers is a very strange art, and verily an unusual invention … [I]t was devised in the year 1440 in [Mainz] by a wise man called Aywan Kutanbark [i.e., Johannes Gutenberg] … [S]ince then all the books by the unbelievers are produced by printing … When one intends to print a book, it is as hard as handwriting to arrange the types in lines. But once arranged one thousand copies can be printed in less time than copying one volume by hand.[2]

Yet, in Peçevi's quote lies a compelling answer to the question that Schwartz poses: why print? Because 'once arranged one thousand copies can be printed in less time than copying one volume by hand'. Although falling short of an explicit recommendation to adopt print, the rationale shows that Peçevi understood the potential

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2 Schwartz 2017, 28. Onur Yazıcıgil suggests a slightly more nuanced translation of the last sentence, which underlines Peçevi's appreciation of the power of print: 'But once arranged, in less time – printing a thousand volumes wouldn't take as much trouble as writing (*khaṭṭ*) a single volume'. Personal correspondence with the author, 2021.

value and power of print. He appreciated that it allows for the multiplication of documents at a rate and volume that could not be matched by even an army of copyists, offering the key economic argument in its favour. Irrespective of the European experience of print, that the Ottomans and other Muslim societies could have seen relevance in this potential is apparent in Peçevi's account.

It also shows that its author had no qualms about comparisons with – and enquiry into – the ways of 'the unbelievers'. The juxtaposition of divergent trajectories of societies suggested itself to the contemporary observer, and why should it not attract historical investigation today? As Ami Ayalon argues in this context, 'grand comparisons between civilizations are too exciting and gratifying to avoid and should not be given up because of avertible methodological hazards'.[3] Reducing the motivations and questions of generations of scholars to superficial Eurocentric biases appears like a simplification itself. As Schwartz acknowledges, the tentative explanations that were advanced thus far were diverse. They featured numerous aspects beyond the alleged ban on printing, including considerations of economic and demographic circumstances. Notably, parallels in technological transfers raise legitimate questions. We know that other techniques and inventions were readily embraced and adopted by the Ottomans, whether they had come from the East or from the West. The existence of 'scores of able copyists' – alluded to by Schwartz when asking 'why print'? – does not itself provide a convincing reason for the Ottomans to forego this new medium. After all, bowmen existed and yet firearms were taken up without hesitation. As Ayalon paraphrases David Landes, 'why [...] would the Ottoman state and its subjects in the Middle East turn their backs for such a long time on a device which had proven to hold so many benefits in neighboring Europe?'[4]

But more importantly, and beyond the comparison to Europe's history, the juxtaposition of the region itself, over time, may lead to the same question. For we know that printing *did* take off eventually, and that it burgeoned in a manner most scholars consider revolutionary. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a rapid spread and increase of printing and publishing activities throughout the region. As Orlin Sabev concludes a recent paper, 'by the 1870s the Ottomans seem to have become quite accustomed to printed books and were determined to resolve the incompatibility between the cursive Arabic script, in general use from the seventh century, and printing with movable type, which started only in the 1720s, in favour of the latter'.[5] Yet how 'the Ottomans'

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3 Ayalon 2016, 4.
4 Ayalon 2016, 5.
5 Sabev 2013, 117.

became accustomed to this new medium remains unanswered, and without discussing this aspect any analysis of the late début will remain incomplete.

What had changed by this stage that made the medium and the technology not only acceptable, but a resounding success? The scribes, evoked to explain both, the rejection of typography as well as why letterpress printing was unnecessary, were still practising their trade; the sultan was still in power, and had to fear the power of a public sphere as much as his predecessors in centuries past; the readership was still minuscule, albeit growing slowly; the ʿulamāʾ's conservative tendencies probably were not wholly different; the technology still had European origins, and crucially, it was still much the same as when it first arrived in the Ottoman Empire: in 1800 type was cut and cast almost identically to how it was done in the fifteenth century; it was still composed by hand using a compositor's stick; and it was printed on manual presses using hand-made paper. Gutenberg would have recognised every part of an early nineteenth century print shop.

Thus, it appears to me that despite the revised perspective we must ask again why did Muslims in the Middle East not print with type, if the purpose of the medium and its potential were clearly appreciated, and why did they change their mind so comprehensively in the course of the nineteenth century? What was so different if many, if not all the circumstances that feature in the discourse about the genesis of print publishing in the Middle East had barely changed?

In her conclusion, Schwartz emphasises the applied aspects of printing, noting that 'although printing has acquired meaning as a civilizing force, it is in the first instance an act'.[6] Embracing her call for more detail and attention to practicality, I would like to add that printing is foremost a business. Whereas there are instances in which printing loses commercial aspects, which I will address later, as a mass medium of the public sphere printing is first of all a trade. In that context and role, it needs to fulfil specific requirements that may help us to better understand why printing was taken up eventually in the Middle East. In the present paper, I would like to approach these questions through the introduction of a concept that is largely absent from most contributions to this debate: it is fitness for purpose. In the context of print as a new medium, fitness for purpose has three aspects and only if all of them are fulfilled does it present a viable proposition. They are (1) economic, (2) cultural, and (3) physiologic, all of which are interconnected. In this paper I will discuss these aspects in the above order: section two argues that Arabic typography as practised in

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6 Schwartz 2017, 29.

Europe could not have been perceived as a desirable new technology in the Middle East and it queries the viability of printing in the Middle East before the nineteenth century. It emphasises the practical aspects that running a print shop involves, including the sourcing of equipment and trained staff, and that any *shop* ultimately must be profitable. Against this background, section three asks who pursued printing activities in the Middle East before the nineteenth century and discusses the circumstances and potential motivations of these pioneering efforts. Section four focuses on the quality of Arabic type as a key factor for the continued failure of typography to become accepted. It juxtaposes the typographic page to the manuscript page and identifies potential reasons for the shortcomings of early Arabic types. Section five continues this argument, emphasising that typography, like any other craft, is practised on a scale of accomplishment, challenging the implicit assumption in much of the literature that any Arabic typography was fit for its purpose. Section six provides a cursory digression into legibility research, arguing for an appreciation of typographic quality as a key determinant for the ease and pleasure with which a text is read, and in consequence, for the acceptance of letterpress printing in the Middle East.

2 Was it worth it?

Economic considerations of printing in the Middle East hinge on evidence from the period, and so far, little tangible information has been unearthed. In want of precise data, literature on the subject of Arabic print history often has to resort to historical texts. One such source is found in Antoine Galland's (1646–1715) introduction to Barthélemy d'Herbelot's (1625–1695) *Bibliothèque Orientale*. Galland's anecdote that a Medicean print edition of Avicenna (see Fig. 1), although priced lower than manuscript copies of the same text, remained unsold for a long time on the shelf of an Istanbul bookseller is frequently cited in the literature to demonstrate the rejection of typography.[7] But beyond the oft-quoted dislike of Arabic print, Galland's account also framed European Oriental

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7 Galland 1777. The contemporaneous account by the American James Mario Matra (1746–1808) relates generally prohibitive book prices. He was posted to Istanbul as a British diplomat in the 1790s, and in a letter to Sir Joseph Banks he wrote: 'As soon as I arrived here, I began to study the language of the country, and among the very many impediments I saw I must encounter, the scarcity, and extravagant price of Books was not the least: multitudes of the Natives, though very desirous of acquiring knowledge were prevented by the same cause' (quoted in Clogg 1979, 68).

publishing as a commercial endeavour. He noted that the Arabic publications of the Typographia Medicea could not possibly have targeted a European readership, which lacked grammars or dictionaries, making Arabic texts largely inaccessible.[8] According to Galland, instead 'one made this big investment in order to trade these books in the Levant, a plan that failed initially, because the Muslims did not want to take the volumes that were brought to them'.[9] Galland pondered explanations for the disinterest of the intended readership, amongst them the alleged Muslim fear that print may desecrate the Qur'ān, and the potential loss of livelihood for countless scribes and copyists. Puzzled, he noted that Arabs, Persians, and Turks cannot stand print despite its advantages, and that they prefer reading mediocre handwriting, no matter how well the print was done.

Ironically, Galland plausibly described a miscarried commercial endeavour but could not *see* the central reason for its failure. Galland's conviction of the advantage of print, and his lack of appreciation for the visual qualities of text, made the rejection of the medium incomprehensible.[10] A bias that is thrown into sharp relief by the apparent facts: one could not sell printed books to Muslim readers with type that was made in Europe, and there were glaring differences between the visual quality of manuscripts and Arabic typography. Even though the publications of the Typographia Medicea used Arabic fonts that had been commissioned from one of the most able and renowned punchcutters of his time, the resulting typography remained unacceptable to readers who were familiar with Islamic manuscript culture.[11] A contemporary of Galland, the German Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) reported similar observations from his

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8 The Typographia Medicea was part of the Catholic church's propaganda effort. Conceived in 1578 by Pope Gregorio XIII as the Papal Polyglot Printing Press, from 1584 it evolved into the Typographia Medicea with the financial support of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici. Both establishments had considerable financial and political support and sought to advance Catholic missionary activities through the making of religious publications in the native languages and scripts of the Near East and Slav countries. The most detailed account of its work in Arabic typography is found in Vervliet 2008.

9 'Mais, on fit cette grande dépenſe dans la vûe de faire commerce en Levant de ces Livres, deſſein qui échoua d'abord, parce que les Mahometans ne voulurent pas recevoir les Exemplaires qu'on leur porta' (Galland 1777, xxix).

10 Galland thus set a precedent for much of the contemporary scholarly debate that is largely reluctant to accept visual properties as a key determinant for the success – or failure – of typographic print.

11 Robert Granjon was a master punchcutter whose work in Latin and Greek scripts is widely regarded to rank amongst the most accomplished Renaissance types.

participation in the Danish Arabia Expedition (1761–1767). In his 1772 *Travels Through Arabia and other Countries in the East* he noted:

> The hand-writing of the Arabians in the common buſineſs of life is not legible. The orientals, however, value themſelves on their writing, and have carried the art of making beautiful written characters to high perfection. But the Arabians value chiefly a ſpecies of elegance, which conſiſts in their manner of joining their letters, the want of which makes themſelves diſlike the ſtyle in which Arabic books are printed in Europe.[12]

Thus the rejection of printed Arabic in the Middle East appears to have been well known, and Ottoman authorities, as well as potential local entrepreneurs, would have seen the commercial failure of European Arabic typography, making it an improbable role model to follow. If its products had no market in the region, why would one adopt it?

Setting the example of European productions aside, also the significant initial investments would have created a hurdle in the adoption of Arabic typography. In addition to presses, a prospective printer needed type, suitable paper, printer's ink, and various accessories. All of these investments in plant and consumables were locked until the books had been sold and could only ever be reclaimed through economies of scale. Multiplication constituted the central advantage of print over manuscript production, yet only if the books found buyers. For print to be viable, the edition had to exceed a minimal number of copies, typically a few hundred, which required a lot of paper – the most expensive consumable – and the produced volumes had to be stored too, adding to the costs.

Furthermore, sourcing the required equipment and consumables locally was difficult. Although we know of traces of a printing trade practised by minorities within the Ottoman Empire from the late fifteenth century, its extent was limited. Whilst Jewish refugees of the Catholic conquest of Spain brought their craft to Istanbul in the early 1490s, these printshops 'were largely closed from 1590 through the first three decades of the seventeenth century'.[13] Jewish publishing resumed on a moderate scale in the mid-seventeenth century, but activities remained limited as the economic and political standing of the Ottoman Jewry weakened, and by the nineteenth century Thessaloniki had replaced Istanbul as a centre of Hebrew publishing. The estimated 809 Hebrew titles that are known to have been printed in Istanbul between 1493 and 1860 – a yield of just over two titles per year – demonstrate that this minority trade happened on

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12 Niebuhr 1792, 261.
13 Shaw 1991, 145.

an exceedingly modest scale, arguably too small to have had significant influence beyond its confessional boundaries.[14]

Armenian printing began in Istanbul as early as 1567, yet the first workshop operated a mere two years, and only in the eighteenth century the centre of Armenian printing moved from Europe to the Middle East.[15] Meliné Pehlivanian identifies access to equipment and material as an important factor in the uptake of the technology in the region.[16] Only once the economic situation deteriorated for Armenian publishers in Europe did they settle in Istanbul and, according to Pehlivanian, they did so because the location was beneficial for their businesses: 'On the one hand it was close enough to Europe to make procurement of the necessary technical equipment, paper and printing ink possible, on the other hand it was close enough to the Armenian homeland to shorten significantly the transport routes to potential buyers'.[17]

Moreover, there was little local competence that could be used. A letterpress print shop relied on the skills of multiple specialists, including punchcutters, type founders, typesetters, and pressmen, all of whom required training. Where and how could this staff be found in an economically viable manner? From our contemporary perspective, the established workshops of religious and ethnic minorities in Istanbul again suggest themselves as a potential recruitment ground for skilled labour. Indeed, it has been reported that İbrahim Müteferrika (1674–1745) employed the help of Yonah ben Yakob Ashkenazi (d. 1745), a Polish Jewish migrant who became a central figure in the revival of Hebrew printing in the Ottoman Empire.[18] He has been credited with having 'designed and cast the Arabic letters' used by Müteferrika, and to have 'advised him on how the press should be operated'.[19] Yet, other sources also report that his printing endeavours relied on presses imported from France and trained staff that was hired in Vienna, indicating the reliance on foreign equipment and

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14 Tamari 2002, 46–47.

15 Kévorkian 2014, 123.

16 Pehlivanian 2002, 56. Pehlivanian stresses that 'because of [Armenia's] great distance from Europe the printers were faced with major supply problems for equipment and paper. At that time Europe alone offered the necessary prerequisites for book printing' (Pehlivanian 2002, 55).

17 Pehlivanian 2002, 56–57.

18 Shaw 1991, 146.

19 Shaw 1991, 146.

competence.[20] Even paper, a consumable that formed as much part of manuscript culture as of print culture, had to be imported.[21]

This dependency had not eased by the nineteenth century either, as is apparent from the state-sponsored reconnaissance missions of Mīrzā Ṣāliḥ (d. after 1841) and Niqūlā al-Masābkī (d. 1830) in the 1810s.[22] Further to their respective apprenticeships, and studies of Western habits, concepts, and techniques, they returned to Iran and Egypt, respectively, with European hardware, destined to initiate local workshops that were modelled on Western examples. This suggests that although extant, the printing trade that was run by religious and ethnic minorities in Istanbul was unable to provide in sufficient quantities and with reliability the plant, or the staff, or the training for any aspiring Muslim printer. New ventures thus relied on imported material and equipment for the initial setup, further driving up the necessary capital investment – an investment that did not promise many, if any, returns. As Nile Green argues, the invention of the mass-produced iron hand press in 1800, and the resulting availability of second-hand presses and a steep drop in prices, played a key role in enabling the adoption of letterpress printing in the Middle East and South Asia.[23] But prior to that, when even small quantities of imported books found no buyer in the region, how could anyone have hoped to make any profits from a printing business?

Here it is worth pausing and reflecting on the pioneers of Arabic print culture in the region. For who did, against the demonstrated odds, initiate printing ventures in the Middle East before the mid-nineteenth century?

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20 Duda 1935, 236. The Swedish diplomat Edvard Carleson related in a letter from 20 July 1735 that Müteferrika had 'acquired some indispensable workers from Germany together with some type founders, who made the characters, so he was able to start working immediately.' Carleson 1979, 21–26.

21 By the eighteenth century, papermaking had largely stopped across most of the Middle East. According to Bloom (2001, 216), 'Syria, Egypt, and North Africa […] had effectively stopped making paper and instead imported their supplies from Europe.' A situation that was echoed in the Ottoman lands, where 'the paper mills in Istanbul and Amasya that produced paper for the manuscript industry had long since been unable to compete with the European market and were no longer in use by the eighteenth century; thus, European merchants provided much of the paper necessary for the Ottoman manuscript and book market.' Gencer 2010, 159.

22 Mīrzā Ṣāliḥ was one of four students that the Persian Prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā sent to England in 1815 to learn about the new sciences and technologies of the Western world. See Green 2009. In the same year, Muḥammad ʿAlī of Egypt dispatched Niqūla al-Masābkī, a young Syrian Christian, to Italy to train as a printer and purchase printing plant to be used at the Būlāq press. See Ayalon 2016, 22.

23 Green 2010.

3 Who could be bothered?

Starting a print shop in the Middle East could not have appeared as a smart business idea to any Ottoman Muslim until well into the nineteenth century. The evidence available would have suggested that letterpress printing was an expensive, cumbersome, foreign technology. Moreover, as discussed above, for readers familiar with the Islamic manuscript tradition, its products were ghastly-looking, often error-ridden, and thus unsellable to the already minuscule potential market. As J.R. Osborn summarises more diplomatically, 'early Arabic types are frequently described as "unsatisfactory," "unrefined," and "inelegant"' [and] appeared "decidedly unlovely" to discerning eyes'.[24] Indeed, in this light Schwartz's question may be emphasised to *why would anyone in his right mind want to print?*

To examine this further, it is necessary to reflect on the potential motivations of individual pioneers of printing in the region. Whilst necessarily relying on conjecture, focussing on what we know about the actual agents of this change – human actors, as opposed to grand civilisational concepts – may contribute to forming a more complete general picture.

3.1 İbrahim Müteferrika

No one less than İbrahim Müteferrika, the celebrated pioneer of Arabic typography, suggests himself as our starting point. Müteferrika was not a businessman, at least not from the start. When he began the preparations for his printing endeavour around the year 1719, he was in his late forties, having had a successful career as an Ottoman soldier and bureaucrat.[25] As early as 1713 he served as a *sipahi* in the Imperial cavalry, and by 1716 he was appointed as *müteferrika*, a high-ranking position in the Ottoman bureaucracy.[26] During the same year Müteferrika was dispatched on a diplomatic mission to Belgrade, and became the liaison officer to Prince Ferenc Rakoczi (1676–1735) supporting activities against the Habsburg monarchy. After the beginning of his printing activities,

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24 Osborn 2017, 94.

25 Müteferrika appears to have moved to the Ottoman Empire in the 1690s when he was in his twenties.

26 Erginbaş 2013, 64. According to Joseph von Hammer, a 'Muteferrika Ibrahim' was sent as an envoy to the Habsburg court as early as 1715 (Hammer 1831, 193). However, more recent research questioned if the two Ibrahims were the same person. See Afyoncu 2001, 609–612.

we know of further diplomatic voyages that took him to Salonica (1731), Poland (1736), Romania (1738), and Dagestan (1738). Furthermore, he became the scribe of the Ottoman artillery in 1738 and was appointed official Imperial historian in 1744.[27]

In short, İbrahim Müteferrika had no need to set up a business. He was a respected and successful Ottoman official and easily lived off this activity. According to Sabev, as a *müteferrika* he earned between 300 and 360 kuruş per year, and as a liaison officer a further 600 kuruş.[28] To put this into perspective, we can refer to other data from Sabev's comparison of inheritance inventories. There we gather that a modest house in Istanbul was estimated to be worth 133 kuruş (in 1734), whereas Müteferrika's house was estimated at 2500 kuruş (in 1747), indicating considerable wealth: not only was his house worth 19 times that of a modest dwelling, he also earned as much in merely two and a half years, and that is prior to starting his printing activity. It therefore appears implausible that Müteferrika's motive to initiate the first Muslim printing press could have been based on economic considerations. Rather, it is likely to have been driven by loftier aspirations towards progress and modernisation, and by the emulation of European models, a recurring feature of the Tulip period.[29] Importantly, his comfortable economic standing meant that Müteferrika's printing enterprise did not need to create a profit, or break-even. Success indicators that would be used for a conventional business therefore do not apply fully to Müteferrika's endeavour. Whether he sold 50% or 70% of his print runs may have been only a tangential concern, if other sources of income could be relied on to cover lifestyle and subsidise the print shop.[30] Moreover, the trickle of books that were produced during Müteferrika's lifetime, in combination with known biographical details of his continued diplomatic career, suggest that for him printing was a leisure activity, not a necessity.[31] Seventeen publications over the course of twenty-four years is a meagre output by itself, and the selection

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27 Erginbaş 2013, 65–66.

28 Sabev 2009, 185.

29 A parallel has been identified by Sebouh Aslanian in the emergence of Armenian printing activities. He notes that profit motives were the exception in the history of the Armenian book, and that the small reading market and literacy rates precluded pursuing printing as a capitalist enterprise. Instead, sponsors supported printing presses 'as a form of cultural patronage for both Church and "nation"' (Aslanian 2014, 60).

30 At the beginning and for the initial establishment of the print shop Müteferrika also enjoyed the financial support of Said Effendi, another high-ranking Ottoman official.

31 Books published per year: 1729 (3), 1730 (5), 1731 (0), 1732 (3), 1733 (1), 1734 (1), 1735–40 (0), 1741 (2), 1742 (1).

of titles, overwhelmingly directed at an intellectual elite rather than a broad audience, contribute to a picture of an ideologically driven private pursuit, not that of a pioneering business.[32] Indeed, a professional full-time printer does not halt operations for more than four years, and if he does, he finds it difficult to resume his work afterwards for a lack of funds.

Whereas Sabev has argued that Müteferrika's pioneering effort was not the commercial disaster that earlier scholarship made it out to be, his conclusion was primarily based on the percentage of books sold.[33] However, this reading does not factor in whether the initial investments were amortised, whether employees could be paid, and whether Müteferrika could make any profits at all, or indeed, whether he could have lived from this activity. Unfortunately, although we know from the figures reported by Sabev that the average value of a book in Müteferrika's estate was estimated to be around 7 kuruş, we have no evidence that would allow us to gauge the profit that Müteferrika could make from a sale. Whereas it is well established that paper was the principal cost of book production, locking up considerable capital, there are too many unknown factors to even guess what the profit margins of Müteferrika's books were.

Yet, taking the perspective that printing was principally a commercial activity may also provide a clue to the abandoning of the print shop after Müteferrika's death. Whereas for Müteferrika – a high-ranking court official with a secure regular income – the performance of his print shop may have been satisfactory, few others could have shared this position. For prospective Ottoman printers who were not as ideologically committed and economically secure, Müteferrika's example may have been more of a deterrent than a model to follow, as was suggested by a contemporary source as early as 1732. In one of his letters from Istanbul, César de Saussure noted:

> It is to be feared, he says, that this printing house will fall when Ibrahim Effendi dies, because he says that the profits are so small, that there is reason to believe that no Turk wants to take charge and will only continue new establishments if they can make big profits there. They are too interested [in making money].[34]

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32 On this aspect see Kunt 2008.
33 Sabev 2007.
34 'Il est à craindre, dit-il, que cette imprimerie ne tombe, lorsque Ibrahim Effendi viendra à mourir, parce qu'il dit que les profits sont si petits, qu'il y a lieu de croire qu'aucun turc ne veuille s'en charger et à continuer de nouveaux établissements que les gros profits qu'ils y peuvent faire. Ils sont trop intéressés' (de Saussure 1909, 95; cited in Gdoura 1985).

After Müteferrika's death, the print shop was closed. It nominally reopened in the mid-1750s, yet only to publish a reprint of the *Lugat-ı Vankulu* and close again.[35] When Carsten Niebuhr, the German explorer whom we have encountered before, travelled the Ottoman lands in the 1760s, the impression that Müteferrika's legacy made on him appears unambiguous in its assessment:

> Books are ſcarce in Arabia, becauſe the Arabs have a diſlike of printed characters. Their intricate alphabetical writing is beſt performed with the hand; they can hardly read books from our preſſes. It was for this reaſon, that the attempt of *Ibrahim Effendi* to introduce printing at Conſtantinople failed of ſucceſs, and the renegado was ruined by the project.[36]

In 1784 a new initiative sought to revive Müteferrika's enterprise under the helm of two Ottoman officials, Ahmet Vāsıf (*c.* 1735–1806) and Meḥmet Raşid.[37] Yet merely a handful of editions were printed, and in 1797 the remainder of the first Ottoman Muslim printing house was bought by the state and turned into a government press, heralding the coming of the next pioneering force of Arabic print culture in the Middle East.

3.2 Government presses

State presses, first in Istanbul and later in Cairo, became forerunners of the Middle Eastern print revolution that was to unfold half a century later. Yet, the beginnings of their activities were slow and limited. Initially the publications of the Ottoman Imperial press were restricted to texts of law, propaganda material, and teaching manuals. Over the course of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the breadth of genres gradually increased and began to include literature as well, yet the state press did not demonstrate aspirations to reach a wide audience, but rather sought to further cement its publishing monopoly.[38] The modest output of 73 titles before 1823 testifies to the limited reach and vision of the Ottoman Imperial press, which is also related by contemporary accounts. In a letter of October 1830, Baptistin Poujoulat recorded that the director of the Imperial press told him that there was little activity because the government rarely ordered anything to be printed, and that only a single publication made

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35 For details see Gdoura 1985.
36 Niebuhr 1792, 92.
37 Gdoura 1985, 236–237.
38 See Neumann 2002, 232–233.

some sales. In conclusion Poujoulat noted: 'The government does little more for this establishment that what it does for many others, it allows them to exist.'[39]

The renown Cairene Būlāq press, founded in 1820 at the behest of Muḥammad ʿAlī, at first followed a similar trajectory. It was conceived and implemented as a top-down initiative aimed at modernising state and society, and at the beginning its publications were hardly meant to be popular. Designed as a tool of the administration, Būlāq primarily produced textbooks, military manuals, and state publications such as administrative circulars, public notices, and the official bulletin *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*. The latter merely had a circulation of 600 copies per issue, despite the compulsory subscription for senior officials whose salary was above a certain threshold, which underlines the prescriptive function of Būlāq in the first decades of its existence.[40] Muḥammad ʿAlī (1805–1848) saw the press as a prestige project, and provided ample funds, assigned competent staff to run it, and took close personal care of its development. Yet, as Ami Ayalon notes, 'state publishing under the Pasha was primarily designed for a select circle of consumers, mostly officials and graduates of the new government schools. Save for a small group of educated men, the general populace, vastly illiterate, was left out of it'.[41] As a consequence, the publications did not have to win anyone over, and the press did not need to sell what it produced to keep running. Indeed, the account by Poujoulat, written upon a visit of the establishment in April 1831, suggests as much. Wondering whether the publications of the Būlāq press achieve the potential of the printing house, he came to a dire assessment:

> [...] the Pasha's printing press would perhaps have rendered greater services if it had reproduced elementary works on the geography and on the history of Egypt, books for the training and education of the people, the most renowned masterpieces of Arabic literature; books on tactics and medicine may have their uses, but address themselves to only a tiny number of readers. None of the others, with few exceptions, have any market or any circulation. They are multiplied by the press only to be stacked up in warehouses where it seems they are condemned to an eternal oblivion. No-one buys them, no-one reads them, because they do not accord with the needs of the present, nor with the spirit of the populace who require instruction and enlightenment; even at first glance it is easy to see how it

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39 'Le gouvernement ne fait guère pour cet établissement que ce qu'il fait pour beaucoup d'autres, c'est de leur permettre d'exister' (Poujoulat 1834, 58).
40 Ayalon 1995, 14–16.
41 Ayalon 2016, 23.

stands with this printing press, set up at such great cost, like so many other industries imported from Europe with insufficient care taken to adapt them to the country.[42]

For the first few decades of their existence, the Ottoman Imperial press and the Būlāq press thus operated under conditions that had little in common with the circumstances of private commercial publishing.[43] Similar to Müteferrika's endeavour, these entities did not produce for a market of discerning customers, but published works that corresponded to the convictions and ideologies of the men in charge. Commercial considerations that hinged on actual demand, or at least the potential demand for publications, seem to have been a negligible factor in the working of these printing houses. This atypical characteristic was shared by the third force that pioneered typographic print in the Middle East: Christian missionaries.

3.3 Christian missionaries

Against the backdrop of the Evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, missionary activities proliferated, spawning numerous mission presses around the world.[44] In the Mediterranean, the British Church Missionary Society (CMS) was the first such institution to establish a mission press that printed in Arabic. It began its activities in 1822 on the island of Malta

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42 '[…] l'imprimerie du pacha aurait rendu peut-être de plus grands services, si elle avait reproduit des ouvrages élémentaires sur la géographie et sur l'histoire de l'Égypte, des livres propres à l'instruction et à l'éducation du peuple, les chefs-d'œuvre les plus renommés de la littérature arabe; les livres sur la tactique et sur la médecine, peuvent avoir leur utilité, mais ils ne s'adressent qu'à un très petit nombre de lecteurs; tous les autres, à quelques exceptions près, n'ont point de débit, point de circulation, et ne sortent de la presse qui les multiplie, que pour être entassés dans des magasins où ils paraissent condamnés à un éternel oubli; personne ne les achète, personne ne les lit, parce qu'ils ne répondent ni aux besoins du temps présent, ni à l'esprit de la population qu'il s'agit d'instruire et d'éclairer; il est aisé de voir au premier coup d'œil qu'il en est de cette imprimerie établie à grands frais, comme de beaucoup d'autres industries qu'on a importées d'Europe et qu'on a trop négligé de mettre en rapport avec le pays' (Poujoulat 1835, 298–299).
43 Ian Proudfoot highlights a disparity between the reputation of the Būlāq press and its early output: 'The later fame of the Būlaq press may lead to an overestimate of its early scope and impact. Only after its disbandment and relaunching in 1861 did it take up large scale printing of books on history, language, literature and religion, in addition to technical works. Most of the Būlaq editions of Arabic classics date from the last thirty years of the nineteenth century' (Proudfoot 1997, 162).
44 For the activities of one evangelical organisation alone see Coakley 1998.

and printed its first Arabic volumes in 1825.[45] Yet the printing of Christian propaganda in Arabic was not new. From the first extant case of a letterpress-printed Arabic book, the 1514 *Kitāb ṣalāt al-sawāʿī*, commissioned and funded by Pope Julius II (1443–1513) and intended for distribution amongst Christians in the Middle East, Christian propaganda was one of the primary forces that drove Arabic typography in Europe.[46] The renown Arabic publications of the Typographia Medicea in the late sixteenth century were part of Pope Gregory XIII's (1502–1585) mission that aimed at 'reuniting the non-Roman Christians, particularly those of the Near East and Slav countries, and providing books in their own languages and scripts';[47] and the Propaganda Fide press, established in 1626 in Rome as a tool of the Counter-Reformation, was one of 'the main exporters of Arabic books in the seventeenth century. [It] published a long series of Arabic books: catechisms, devotional and doctrinal tracts [...] and, most important of all, the complete Arabic Bible'.[48] From the eighteenth century the influence of Christian Arabic texts printed in Europe led to the establishment of the first Arabic printing press in the Middle East, namely in Aleppo in 1706 under the guidance of the Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius Dabbās. It was run by ʿAbdallāh Zākhir, who in 1733 went on to set up another print shop in the Greek Catholic monastery al-Šuwayr in the Lebanese mountains.[49] The scope and influence of the local Christian presses remained, however, marginal, and Christian books printed in Arabic continued to be exported from Europe. According to Roper 'these were sent in considerable quantities throughout the 17th century [and] in the 18th century renewed efforts were made to supply such texts despite the emergence of local presses'.[50]

A commonality of these diverse printing endeavours were their aim – proselytism – and source of funding: religious authorities. As in the aforementioned examples of pioneers of Arabic typography in the Middle East, Christian printing presses, European and local alike, were not set up or run as commercial entities. They received the means for their operations from Church or theological patrons and produced their publications without market demand. Commercial success and profitability, key drivers of mass print culture, were no factors in missionary operations, and the fact that sources tell of the number of publications

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45 For an extended account see Roper 1988.

46 Krek 1979.

47 Vervliet 2008, 433.

48 Roper 2009, 78.

49 Glaß and Roper 2002, 178–179.

50 Roper 2009, 77.

that were 'distributed', rather than 'sold', qualifies the sometimes impressive quantities.[51] Here, as in the case of Müteferrika and the centralised government printing works, was not a model for private entrepreneurs and mass publishing. The subjects chosen for publication were largely unaffected by the potential audience, but determined by ideology and an elitist, top-down attitude towards the readership. The publisher, whether government, private press, or mission press, did not strive to publish titles with the widest possible appeal, but pursued their own agendas. Whether with largely technical and utilitarian aims as in Muḥammad ʿAlī's prescribed printing endeavour, or the more metaphysical goals that were pursued by Christian missionaries, what the potential readership, however minuscule, wanted to read appears to have been of secondary concern. Indeed, this stance was reflected in the visual presentation, which did little to convince anyone to buy or read the publication.

4 Hurdles for success? The first Middle Eastern Arabic fonts

None of the pioneers of Arabic letterpress printing in the Middle East produced publications that matched the level of aesthetic achievement found in contemporary manuscript production (see Fig. 2). As asserted by Emanuela Conidi in her conclusion to the most in-depth enquiry of the subject, 'the development of Arabic typeforms resulted in a divergence from the Islamic calligraphic tradition and established a typographic image of the script that discontinued that of manuscript practice'.[52]

As Conidi demonstrates, the exact reasons for this shortfall of typography were manyfold and varied from case to case. In the present context suffice it to point out some of the potential factors, amongst them competence in the Arabic script. As mentioned before, İbrahim Müteferrika relied on the skills of Yonah ben Yakob Ashkenazi for his Arabic fonts. Ashkenazi, however, was of Polish origin. He had fled Galicia shortly after the Khmelnytsky massacres (1648–1657)

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51 Roper relates that when in the 1720s the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge issued a Psalter and a New Testament, 'within six years, 5498 Psalters and 2512 New Testaments had been distributed in the Levant, and many more were sent in subsequent years' (Roper 2009, 79).
52 Conidi, 2018, 625.

and established a Hebrew press in Istanbul in 1710.[53] There is no record of Ash-kenazi printing in Arabic, and his renown is based exclusively on his works in Hebrew. Arabic appears to have been at least the third script he had learned (after Latin and Hebrew), and there is no evidence of him having had experience in cutting Arabic type when Müteferrika engaged his services. Although prior type-making may in principle have qualified Yonah ben Yakob Ashkenazi for the task, his limited exposure to the Arabic script and lack of experience in making Arabic type may have had a negative influence on the quality of the fonts.[54] Although Müteferrika's typography was significantly better than any Arabic letterpress print that had been produced before, it remained far removed from the aesthetic norms of Ottoman manuscript practice (see Fig. 3). The column is too wide, interlinear space is insufficient, lines are poorly aligned, individual letterforms lack definition, and numerous sorts are smudged with ink. In combination these aspects result in overly dense, dark, and cluttered pages, and the text gives a patchy, irregular impression that does not invite to read. Comparing Müteferrika's edition to a contemporaneous manuscript (see Fig. 2) shows that the type lacks the even rhythm, has none of the forward-leaning dynamism, and, crucially, is significantly less clear than the handwritten text.

The Būlāq press also initially lacked expertise for Arabic type-making. Niqūlā Masābkī, introduced above, was the man responsible for the first Arabic fonts of the press. He was a Syrian Christian and learned his trade first at the French press in Cairo and later in Milan. Although of Middle Eastern origin, his cultural environment was removed from Islamic manuscript culture, and his training in French and Italian workshops could hardly have advanced his competence in the Arabic script. Masābkī's Arabic fonts that were used for the first publications of Būlāq were clumsy and were replaced within a couple of years by type that originated from Istanbul's Imperial press (see Fig. 4).[55]

There a copy of the Arabic *naskh* type made by Bōghos Arabian (1742–1835), an Ottoman Armenian type-maker, was in use since 1797.[56] It constituted a substantial improvement over Müteferrika's type and remained in use for decades.

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53 Shaw 1991, 145–146.

54 Contemporary practice demonstrates that a type designer who excels in one script may not have any success with type for another script, and there is no reason to believe that this would have been different in the eighteenth century.

55 J. Heyworth-Dunne notes in relation to Masābkī's type that the fonts displayed a 'total disregard of the Oriental idea of beautiful calligraphy' and that 'the need for type more in keeping with the rules of calligraphy and the taste of the Turks was soon felt, for they used to pay more attention to calligraphy than the Egyptians' (Heyworth-Dunne 1940, 330).

56 See Öskal and Yazıcıgil, 2015.

It became the model for the fonts that were used for most books made at Būlāq in the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, it had fewer ligatures and letter variants, and for justification it relied on a single swash variant of the letter *kāf* and a handful of sorts with elongated joining strokes, lending it a distinctly typographic look.[57]

We lack explicit evidence about the making of Müteferrika's types, as well as for those that were used at Būlāq. Christian missionary presses, however, left traces of their operations, some of which provide stark insights into prevalent attitudes to printing in the vernacular. In the context of India, Graham Shaw has shown the contempt for indigenous cultures by Western missionaries. Not only did Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century print Christian texts in the Konkani language using Latin characters for lack of a suitable Devanagari font, but some even anticipated Indian scripts to disappear altogether in favour of Latin:

> The vernacular characters are not adapted to the progressive spirit of the age. As the native mind begins to rise to the level of western civilization, it will demand a literature coextensive with its new wants. This can never be furnished in any of the barbarous characters now in use.[58]

Whilst an individual testimony that may not be representative of all missionaries, it remains indicative of a mindset in which notions of Western and Christian superiority over the 'uncivilised' heathens formed part of the missionary calling. Considering the intrinsic relation of form and content, it is hard to imagine that this attitude would not have had a bearing on the appearance of Christian missionary publications. For indeed, until the mid-nineteenth century Christian Arabic publications relied on barely legible and culturally alien type that situated them squarely outside the canon of Islamic manuscript culture (see Fig. 5). As a consequence, early Christian Arabic typography appears to have remained

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57 In printing, ligatures are combinations of more than one letterform on a single typeform, typically creating a new, composite shape. In the European typographic tradition, ligatures were developed for letter combinations that created difficulties during composition (for example to resolve the collision between a wide f and the dot of the i). Because most Arabic letters join and may adopt numerous forms that depend on the surrounding letters, the concept of ligatures does not provide an adequate technique to reproduce this characteristic of the script. Whereas Latin ligatures were made for odd combinations, the merging and transformation of Arabic letters is the norm. For Arabic this inverse quantitative relationship makes ligatures inefficient, and their use for a small selection of letter combinations results in formal inconsistencies.

58 Cited in Shaw 2012, 27.

in a bubble, with little bearing on the wider Islamic culture within which it operated.

This changed only once a culturally more sensitive, and a more reader-minded stance emerged, that was expressed through more suitable typography. From the moment that Christian presses used Arabic text fonts that aimed to reproduce the *naskh* manuscript hand faithfully, notably the 'American Arabic' fonts that were developed for the press of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Beirut, they began to play a more relevant role in the emergence of a local print culture.[59]

Although the three pioneering forces of typography in the Middle East – Müteferrika's private press, government print shops, and Christian missionary publishing – operated under diverse circumstances, they shared the fact that their typography was largely inadequate and unsuccessful. The typefaces did not reproduce accurately the forms, proportions and characteristic features of manuscript hands, and the resulting typography remained far removed from the aesthetic achievements of manuscripts. In this regard the first tentative steps of Arabic letterpress printing in the Middle East were markedly different to those made in sixteenth' century Europe. As Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin observe, there 'the earliest incunabula looked exactly like manuscripts', and Gutenberg's 42-line Bible 'faithfully reproduced the handwriting of the Rhenish missals'.[60] Febvre and Martin even argue that 'the first [European] printers, far from being innovators, took extreme care to reproduce exact imitations', and that they were so successful at it that 'the layman sometimes has to examine a book very carefully before deciding whether or not it is printed or handwritten'.[61]

Against this background we may ask whether Gutenberg's invention would have had the same success, if its typography had been as far removed from manuscript aesthetics, as early Arabic typography was? Or inversely, we may wonder what would have happened, if the Arabic typography of the Typographia Medicea would have been such an accurate reproduction of prevalent manuscript practice that laymen would not have noticed the difference at first sight? Knowing that Arabic letterpress printing provided no aesthetic match for copying by scribes, and that a comparable quality was not achieved for Arabic typography

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59 See Glaß 1998. William Jowett, the Superintendent of the CMS press in Malta, realised that the appearance of books was critical for their acceptance. He knew that in order to stand a chance to be accepted, missionary books 'should bear, as much as possible, a native aspect. The kind of paper and typography to which the eye is accustomed, will give more ready acceptance to Books (sic)' (cited in Roper 1988, 108).

60 Febvre and Martin 2010, 77.

61 Febvre and Martin 2010, 77.

until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the time of the large-scale adoption of letterpress printing, it is difficult to imagine that the fidelity of the typographic image to its manuscript model was anything but central in the acceptance of the medium in the Muslim Middle East.

5 Not every piece of typography is good typography

In the discourse on the beginning of Arabic typography in the Middle East, considerations of the visual and aesthetic aspects of typography are few and far between. Whilst most scholars note in passing that the look of typography may have had some influence on the emergence of print culture, there appears to be reluctance to fully engage this aspect.[62] This hesitation dates back to Galland, and his blind spot for the importance of the quality of type in the medium of print was shared by generations of Oriental scholars after him. Despite numerous accounts from various parts of the Arabic script world that describe the rejection of print based on aesthetic grounds, it is yet to be accepted as a key factor in the disinterest of the Muslim world in typography.

 Examples for this aversion abound in the literature: when Lutz Berger references Galland's account that Arabic volumes of the Typographia Medicea were not sold because of their ugliness, he hastens to add that close scrutiny of the title page reveals an 'ugly grammatical error', projecting the description of a visual characteristic on the textual integrity instead;[63] when Geoffrey Roper acknowledges the commercial failure of these publications, he attributes it to the 'firm resistance of Middle Eastern Muslims to such an alien innovation', turning what may be a discrete choice on aesthetic grounds into a general (and irrational) rejection, ignoring the explicit sources;[64] and when Ami Ayalon refers to the 'dislike of printing on esthetic grounds', he qualifies it as 'rather

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62 Exceptions are Ian Proudfoot and more recently J.R. Osborn. Proudfoot explicitly identifies aesthetics as a key component in the rejection of typography in the Muslim Middle East and underlines the profoundly different reaction to lithographic printing (Proudfoot 1997); Osborn highlights the functional difference that arises from the visual disparity of European type, and its negative influence on the acceptance of the medium: 'Literacy not only teaches readers to recognize shapes; it leads to expect patterns of similarities and contrast.' (Osborn 2017, 94)

63 Berger 2002, 17.

64 Roper 2009, 77.

nebulous'.[65] Visual aspects, it appears, are an awkward terrain for experts of textual enquiries, as recently acknowledged by Dagmar Riedel:

> One of the unintended side effects of the vigorously championed digitization of Islamic books is the proliferation of a seemingly decorative use of manuscript pages on academic websites and publications, since the widespread use of digitization has made it so much easier to obtain affordable high-quality scans [...] I suspect that the use of undocumented images as illustrations most likely reflects a learned lack of interest for the materiality of written texts. As long as graduate education in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies is centered on teaching scholars how to base their arguments on the meaning of words only, the text's embodiment in any particular medium is perceived as secondary and illustrations, as nice as they may be, are accidental.[66]

The apparent hesitation to discuss visual aspects and aesthetic accomplishments may thus be the well-placed caution of scholars trained in other aspects and techniques who are fully aware of the limits of their competence.[67] Alternatively, it may suggest an implied assumption that all typography is good typography, making any in-depth discussion unnecessary. Either standpoint is likely to reflect a fear of veering too far from 'scientific' methods, and into the dangerously subjective area of aesthetics that any discussion of visual characteristics may entail.

To alleviate these concerns, it may help to recognise typography as an applied craft, rather than the 'civilizing act' that Kathryn Schwartz has identified as a recurring theme in the literature. This means that like any other craft, typography features a wide gamut of performance, from abysmal to superb; from barely intelligible, to sublimely clear. Recognising that not every instance of typographic work is a successful example of this craft may help to further illuminate the adoption of the medium. It means that just because someone printed something in Arabic, it was not necessarily a shining model for others to follow and imitate.

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65 Ayalon 2016, 12–13.
66 Riedel 2012.
67 When this caution is not maintained, limits of judgement become apparent. Roper, for example, qualifies the Arabic types of which Galland reported that they were too ugly to sell books set in them, as of a 'high technical and aesthetic standard' (Roper 2002, 142); in another paper Roper describes the Arabic types made by the English type founder Richard Watts for the Church Missionary Society press in Malta as 'quite elegant in appearance', even though the mission's Superintendent had already rejected them as unusable in the 1820s (Roper 2004, 112).

It also means that there are tangible criteria of typographic quality that are independent of subjective preference or fashion.[68] As in any métier, there are recognised marks of accomplishment and craftsmanship which, in their totality, determine the fitness for purpose of a typographic work. Indeed, we may remind ourselves that typography – as well as type-making, typesetting, printing, etc. – owes its standing as a distinct profession to the existence of such criteria. Only verifiable parameters enable the emergence of a model of training in which mastery can be achieved by the apprentice – historically the central route of transmission in the printing trades. Moreover, this is what distinguishes typography as a craft from related domains such as calligraphy and other artistic pursuits which, unlike typography, may be pursued for their own sake and outside of frameworks of evaluation.[69]

If we understand typography as a communication device, it becomes readily apparent that its success and usefulness can be judged, and to some extent, measured. In order to communicate, and thus achieve its fitness for purpose, typographic practice must adhere to norms. Just like a child's made-up language struggles to convey meaning to anyone else, typographic design that does not heed visual conventions fails to achieve its principal duty: to communicate content. An early proponent of the idea of 'transparent' typography as a conveyor of meaning was Beatrice Warde (1900–1969), who expressed that 'type well used is invisible *as* type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas.'[70] Whereas Warde's framing may appear too narrow today, in the context of the introduction of typography in a culture that is unaccustomed to letterpress printing, it remains apposite.[71]

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68 By typographic I mean that which relates to type-making as well as to typography, i.e. the use of types in the composition of texts.

69 Note that this refers to calligraphy as an expressive art form. There are of course calligraphic cultures which employ such objective criteria. Notably classical Islamic calligraphy is governed by strict rules, and the transmission follows a master-pupil model in which explicit certificates of mastery of individual writing styles are issued.

70 Warde 1955, 13.

71 Most contemporary commentators consider Warde's framing as overly simplified. A key criticism is that Warde's text seems to gloss over the active role that type and typography play in conveying *and* modifying the content. Because typography organises the content, and ideally amplifies its structure, emphasis, and character, critics argue, it cannot be transparent. This overly literal reading (see e.g. Lussu 2018) can in turn be criticised for a rather self-conscious stance that assigns undue importance to the intention of the designer at the expense of the perception of the reader. A more charitable and measured re-reading is found in Kinross (2018), which, fairly, identifies Warde's text as ultimately concerned with the reader, rather than the maker of typography.

Type that deviated from the expected norms of letter shapes, proportions, and word formation, and typography that was far removed from established document appearance could hardly have been recognised and accepted as a replacement of manuscript writing, a highly successful communication device. As Niebuhr testified already in 1772, '[the Arabs] can hardly read books from our preffes', which would have made typography rather unappealing.[72]

Indeed, the tension between reader expectation, visual convention, functionality, stylistic expression, and physical implementation is at the heart of typography. Key to making a successful type for reading, and a central challenge for the designer, is the need to create within a narrow margin of formal variation. In the words of Walter Tracy (1914–1995), for many years the Typographic Adviser of the British Linotype company:

> It is a matter of constant interest that new text types continue to be created and added to the substantial list of those in current use [...] yet in all of them the characters conform to certain rules of shape and structure which, it might be thought, would severely limit the possibility of new invention and individuality.[73]

This constraint can be assumed to be particularly severe when typography is introduced for the first time in a manuscript culture where formal expectations are closely attached to the appearance of established writing practice. In the context of the first European attempts to make Arabic types, and their comprehensive failure in the Middle East, it is worth recalling Fiona Ross's first criterion in the assessment of a typeface: 'An understanding of the writing system to be represented and an appreciation of typographic traditions are fundamental to a satisfactory design'.[74] Although Ross grants some stylistic elements to be founded in taste, she notes that 'the clarity and constancy of the image they produce contribute to the quality of a typeface', and that 'observance of proportional relationships and evenness of texture' are central for a sound typeface in which 'all the lettershapes of the fount should be readily differentiated and yet form a cohesive whole'.[75] Regarding the functionality of typefaces, Ross lists 'readability at small text sizes and good character fit at display sizes' as two

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72 Metin Kunt argues along similar lines when he calls the disinterest of the Ottomans in typographic print 'a classic case of old technology too efficient to be easily displaced by new technology too cumbersome and too expensive to become an immediate alternative' (Kunt 2008, 97). He ignores, however, the role of visual accomplishment.

73 Tracy 1987, 56.

74 Ross 1999, 2.

75 Ross 1999, 2.

typical examples.[76] To this one may add type made for specific media, type for output in discrete technical conditions, type for reading under certain circumstances, type made for particular textual genres, and many more.[77]

Further to these considerations of type-making, there are criteria that determine the quality of typography. The position of the column on the page, the extent of the margins surrounding it, the relation of type size to line width and interlinear space, the arrangement of navigational aids like page numbers and running headers, the visual distinction of various textual elements, etc., all contribute decisively to the success of a typographic design. Moreover, all of them can be defined better or worse, with a narrow spectrum that may be called ideal, framed by the task and the circumstances at hand. In the Western context, there is a host of guidebooks, manuals, and reference works that set out the corresponding rules, conventions, and best practice examples for typographic composition.[78]

6 Can it be read?

In many cases this tacit craft knowledge, founded in five hundred years of European trade transmission, is confirmed today by experimental research. As Timothy Slattery concludes in a concise overview of psycholinguistic studies of typographic parameters, 'eye movement recording, in conjunction with appropriate experimental design, has helped dispel the assumption that typographical variables can only have a main effect on reading performance', and that 'these studies have not only found reliable typographic effects, they have also shown that these effects differ for different words and different readers'.[79] In 2005, for example, Kevin Larson and Rosalind Picard were able to demonstrate that better typography led test participants to greatly underestimate the time that they had spent reading. According to the researchers, this 'indicates that

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76 Ross 1999, 2.

77 The latter has a parallel in Islamic manuscript practice that was already identified by Niebuhr: 'The Arabians, Perſians, and Turks, write Arabic in ſets of characters differing in ſeveral particulars from one another. They have alſo different modes of writing for different forms of buſineſs, each of which has its particular name' (Niebuhr 1792, 261). This parallel was recently elaborated on by Osborn (2017).

78 See for example Bringhurst 2019; Hochuli 2011; Luna 2018; Mitchell and Wightman 2005; Willberg and Forssmann, 1997.

79 Slattery 2015, 70.

good quality typography is responsible for greater engagement during the reading task'.[80] Moreover, Larson and Picard showed that better typography 'appears to induce a positive mood, similar to earlier mood inducers such as a small gift or watching a humorous video' – a momentous finding when considering the role of typographic quality in the rejection of letterpress printing in the Muslim Middle East.[81]

Whereas scientific research into reading the Latin script dates back more than 100 years to the experiments of the Frenchman Louis Émile Javal (1839–1907), the typographic trades have only recently taken an active interest in its findings.[82] Vice-versa, in comparison to general research using eye-tracking techniques to investigate reading, 'there are very few studies of eye movements designed to examine aspects of typography', and there remain many open questions about the reading process, and the influence of typographic parameters.[83] Today, however, the design community generally accepts psycholinguistic research as a means to inform and underpin craftsmanship with experimental evidence.[84] According to Slattery, 'the field now seems primed to explore reading from the viewpoint that it represents a complex interplay between language, typographic display, and reader ability'.[85]

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80 Larson and Picard 2005, 9.

81 Larson and Picard 2005, 11.

82 Walter Tracy was notoriously suspicious of academics: 'Not long ago it was taken for granted that the people most interested in type faces were those who used them, or actually created them [...] but in recent years another set of people, quite different from those with direct involvement, have developed an interest in printing types. They are the academics [...] who found it worth their time to theorise about the nature of letter forms as a human creation, one of the things that other animals do not have.' On the findings of legibility research in the 1950s Tracy commented: 'it cannot be said to have had much influence or practical effect'; arguing along similar lines as the present paper, Tracy also emphasised the acquired visual competence of professional typographic designers: 'their knowledge of types usually begins with technical or design school training. It develops with working experience, and it is the range of that experience that nurtures the perceptions about types which become almost innate in the typographer and type designer, but which are not present in the academic observer, because of the difference of vocation' (Tracy 1987, 26–27).

83 Slattery 2015, 63.

84 In the development of the typeface Sitka, Microsoft turned this into its most deliberate form yet. Here a team of designers and researchers tested the legibility of individual letterforms and features during the making of the type. In an iterative process, in which design variations were compared for their relative merits, experimental research thus directly influenced design decisions. Larson and Carter 2015.

85 Slattery 2015, 70–71.

In a recent publication the typographer Martin Tiefenthaler has argued that reading should be seen first as a bodily aptitude, and typography thus understood as an exercise in ergonomic design.[86] Although not based on experimental research, Tiefenthaler has made the case with reference to well established knowledge about the visual and cognitive processes involved in reading. Tiefenthaler argues that reading as a recent civilisational attainment requires our eyes to perform a highly unnatural activity.[87] Rather than scanning the field of vision in various directions without apparent aim, reading forces the eyes into a linear movement inside a narrowly defined area, scanning a text word for word and line for line. According to Tiefenthaler it therefore takes exceptional 'persuasion' to make our eyes adopt the necessary activity, and this persuasion is the central task of typographic design. For Tiefenthaler tacit craft knowledge and typographic rules and conventions therefore evolved to make the unnatural activity of reading as palatable as possible for human visual and cognitive processing.

In comparison to studies concerned with European languages, legibility research of Arabic looks back at a shorter history. Nonetheless, over the last two decades experimental research has begun to shed some light on reading Arabic. Importantly, there is a growing body of evidence showing that the specificities of Arabic language morphology and script orthography result in significant differences to those found in the reading of other languages. This should not be surprising given the visual distinctiveness of Arabic, and it corresponds to what is known from other scripts. For example, typical saccades in English are about 7–9 characters, whereas in Chinese most saccades are only 2–3 characters wide.[88] This corresponds to the average word length in Chinese and suggests that saccade length is bound by cognitive limits, rather than visual processing.[89]

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of Arabic vocalisation on reading speed and comprehension amongst children. Whereas early work by

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[86] Tiefenthaler 2019.

[87] Recent by evolutionary scale. Whereas the default gaze has evolved over millions of years, reading only dates back a few thousand years and is even much more recent when we consider general literacy.

[88] Saccades are the jumps that the eyes perform whilst reading. Rather than advancing in a continuous motion, the eyes jump over multiple letters, stop during a so-called 'fixation', before jumping again. For a concise overview of legibility studies and a summary of the current theories of reading see Beier 2012.

[89] Slattery 2015, 55. Furthermore, Slattery notes that the oculomotor system is highly capable to adapt to reading conditions, making wider saccades when reading expanded typefaces than when reading narrow typefaces.

Salim Abu-Rabia found positive effects of short vowels on reading speed and comprehension, more recent work largely contradicts these findings.[90] Contrary to expectations and a widely accepted hypothesis,[91] a number of unrelated studies demonstrated that unvocalised text was processed faster by all Arabic readers but the very beginners.[92] In a study by Raphiq Ibrahim, a word-superiority effect was identified, leading to the interpretation that experienced readers of Arabic employ a reading strategy that is 'primarily visual-orthographic rather than phonological', meaning that whole words are identified, rather than their constituent parts.[93] The additional information provided by vowels therefore becomes superfluous and acts as a distraction, rather than an aid to reading. Haitham Taha produced similar results and relates the findings to the higher visual density of vocalised text. He draws a parallel to studies of other scripts, namely Japanese Kanji and Kana, as well as vocalised Hebrew, which have shown that higher density leads to longer processing times. An investigation by Ibrahim Asadi reproduced comparable results as Ibrahim and Taha. In an experiment with 1516 pupils, unvocalised text performed better in terms of accuracy and fluency in all but the youngest age groups. Similar to Taha, Asadi suggests a connection between the 'visual density and complexity of Arabic orthography' in vocalised text, and inferior reading performance.[94]

As demonstrated in the above examples, visual complexity and the orthography are central recurring themes in much of the Arabic legibility literature. Yet, experimental setups and discussion of results suggest that the scholarly community has yet to take note of the potential influence of typographic parameters on its works. Typographic choices are consistently poor, with uncritical reliance on Arabic fonts installed on mainstream software packages and a lack of sensitivity to various visual aspects.[95] Point size, for example, is frequently taken as a constant, leading to recommendations of 'ideal point size' for

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90 Abu-Rabia 1998; Abu-Rabia 2001.

91 The orthographic depth hypothesis postulates that readers of orthographies with a direct correspondence of spelling and sound (shallow or transparent orthography) have a learning advantage over readers of orthographies in which the correspondence of spelling and sound is irregular or not directly apparent (deep or opaque orthography).

92 Ibrahim 2013; Taha 2016; Asadi 2017.

93 Ibrahim 2013, 251.

94 Asadi 2017, 143.

95 A 2012 PhD thesis tested five nominally different fonts for their comparative legibility in Arabic: Arial, Courier New, Simplified Arabic, and Times New Roman. Strikingly, the researcher and supervisor appear to have been unaware that the Arabic glyph complements of three of the five tested fonts are identical. Abubaker 2013.

Arabic.[96] This, however, is ill-informed, because the actual size of the type's image in a nominal point size is arbitrarily determined in type-making, leading to substantial differences of actual size between different fonts that are displayed in nominally identical point sizes (see Fig. 6).

PhD research by Nadine Chahine is a rare example of Arabic legibility research that takes typographic design aspects into account.[97] It tested three versions of a typeface designed by Chahine and compared the respective reading performance by means of eye-tracking equipment. Its conclusions added to interpretations also found in the literature, identifying visual complexity as a negative factor in reading speed.[98]

7 Conclusion

The apparent indifference of the Muslim Middle East to the introduction of letterpress printing has elicited reactions of surprise and wonder from commentators from diverse backgrounds and over a few centuries. Although various explanations were advanced to explain this puzzle, all of them were rooted in an assumed supremacy of print over manuscript production, and the expectation that any society acquainted with print would adopt it as enthusiastically as those of fifteenth-century Europe. As Schwartz has argued, this perspective betrays a Eurocentric bias that predicates all interpretations on a specific historical experience that is not generally applicable, a stance that resonates strongly with current discourse. The present paper was inspired by Schwartz's critique, and largely embraces her call for a more fine-grained and localised analysis. Yet, it does not follow Schwartz's suggestion that scholars no longer ought to ask certain questions. This contradiction is on one hand based on principle – no meaningful questions should be excluded from scholarly enquiry – and on the other it is prompted by the specificities of the query.

As I argued in the introduction, it does not take the European experience to interrogate 400 years of Ottoman indifference to typography, when in the nineteenth century letterpress printing was adopted enthusiastically by the very

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96 See e.g. Alsumait and Al-Osaimi 2009, and Al-Dosary, Al-Salloom and Al-Rashid 2010.
97 Chahine 2012.
98 Whether an experimental setup in which the researcher creates the type that is tested provides ideal conditions is debatable. Further research that tests established and generally recognised typefaces of high quality, representing different genres, could shed light on this question.

societies that had shunned it before. Rather, more in-depth investigations of the conditions that first precluded, and then enabled Arabic typography in the Middle East are called for. Whereas we do not know of explicit evidence to prove why letterpress printing was not taken up by the Muslim world, the informed interpretation of existing evidence and established facts should enable contemporary scholarship to provide compelling explanations.

In that vein, this paper has argued that prior to the mid-nineteenth century Arabic typography was unfit for its purpose. Although there were some earlier presses and exponents of what eventually became a print culture, scholarship has assigned disproportionate relevance to them in what Schwartz described as a 'search for isolated instances of printing irrespective of parameters of time, space, and culture'.[99] By contrast, when applying the concept of fitness for purpose to early Arabic typography in the Middle East, the question of the late début loses much of its enigma.

As a trade, letterpress printing in Arabic evidently did not offer a viable alternative to manuscript production. We know that European forays into commercial Arabic publishing failed despite prolonged and substantial efforts by some of the mightiest institutions of their time – an indication that culture weighs heavily, even in the face of economic clout. The pioneers of Arabic typography in the Middle East also operated outside of conditions of commercial viability. This allowed them to experiment with the technology and the medium free from economic pressures, but whether this made them trailblazers of print culture, as proposed by some scholars, is debatable. Although setting an example that Arabic typography could be practiced in the Middle East, the printing activities of Müteferrika, government print shops, and Christian missionaries before the mid-nineteenth century may equally have been a deterrent for the trade to evolve. None of these pioneers succeeded in emulating the quality of manuscripts, demonstrating that the technology was not suitable to supersede this central element of Muslim cultural production; they all produced publications for a minuscule minority; and not one of them is known to have been profitable.

As a medium, the fitness for purpose of typography relates to its ability to communicate. This hinges first on the ability to engage readers through visual appeal, and second on the fidelity to established conventions and reader expectations. A document that is considered ugly and typography that appears impenetrable do not invite the reader to read. In this case form and function are inseparably entwined as aesthetic appeal and communicative ability largely

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99 Schwartz 2017, 2.

depend on adherence to expectations. As in any sign system, fidelity to convention in the making of a mark is a prerequisite for the subsequent deciphering and processing of the message. The further a typographic sign is removed from its conventional appearance, the more difficult its processing by the reader becomes. Thus, Arabic type that was culturally alien because its formal qualities were removed from conventional, i.e. manuscript forms, was not only perceived to be ugly, it also constituted an obstacle to successful communication.

Incidentally, on this level the diffuse sphere of cultural preferences overlaps with physiologic aspects of the human visual and cognitive abilities. For although we do not have comprehensive experimental evidence about the influence of typographic parameters on reading, especially with regards to the Arabic script, there is strong evidence that divergence from a relatively narrow spectrum of 'ideal' characteristics has a negative influence on our capacity to read. Beyond the obvious effect of letter size, experimental evidence has demonstrated that aspects which are central to typographic design can have a significant bearing on our ability to read, on our processing of the information, on our capacity to retain it, and on our pleasure in the act of reading. Amongst them are the space between letters, divergence from typical stroke-weight (as found in very thin or bold type), divergence from canonical proportions (e.g. an increased risk of confusability when the ascender of h is not tall enough), and the distortion of letterforms.[100]

Against this background, the correlation between the emergence of more competent Arabic typefaces, paired with higher quality typography, and the wide-spread breakthrough of letterpress printing in the mid-nineteenth century appears significant. This is particularly noticeable when considering the emergence of private print shops. Whilst barely extant before the 1850s, the second half of the century saw a rapid proliferation of private, for-profit printing enterprises across the Middle East. Critically, their success and livelihood depended on Arabic typography as a viable proposition, and from mid-century more aspiring printers than ever before felt that the circumstances were such that a newly founded print shop appeared like a promising business prospect. This was a fundamental break to the preceding 400 years, and whilst the quality of Arabic typography was only one aspect of this change, it is hard to fathom that its influence was anything but central to the success of letterpress printing in the Middle East.

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100 See Beier 2012.

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Fig. 1: Double page spread of Avicenna's *Canon medicinae*, printed by the Typographia Medicea in Rome in 1593. 350 × 240 mm, reduced, enlargement on the right. Courtesy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, BV004226485, <https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/title/BV004226485>.
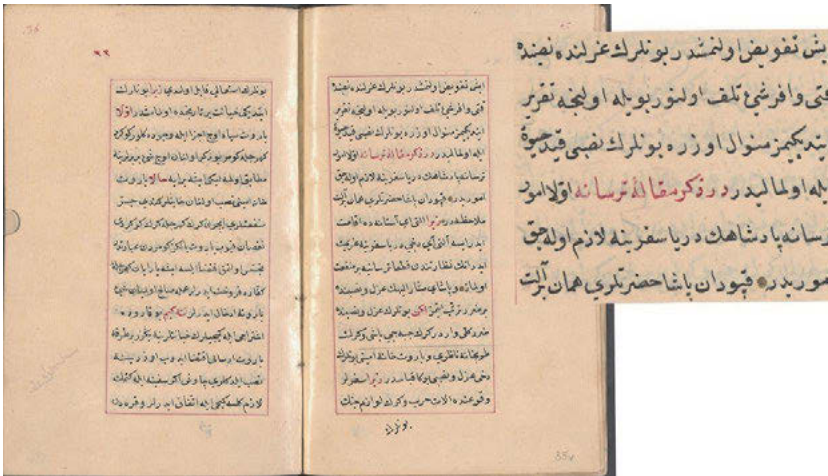
Fig. 2: Double page spread of *Tedbīr-i Ğedīd* by Hacı Ali Paşa Canikli, Istanbul, 1777–1810. 205 × 130 mm, reduced, enlargement superimposed on the right. This manuscript exemplifies Ottoman manuscript production. It features a competent, fast *naskh* hand that adheres to the rule-based morphology of the style. Note, however, that it is not calligraphic in the sense of an artistic visual expression in which the appearance takes precedence over the content. Rather, this manuscript is intended and used as a means of communication, in which the script is but the vehicle of the content. Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, <https://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC14004993>.
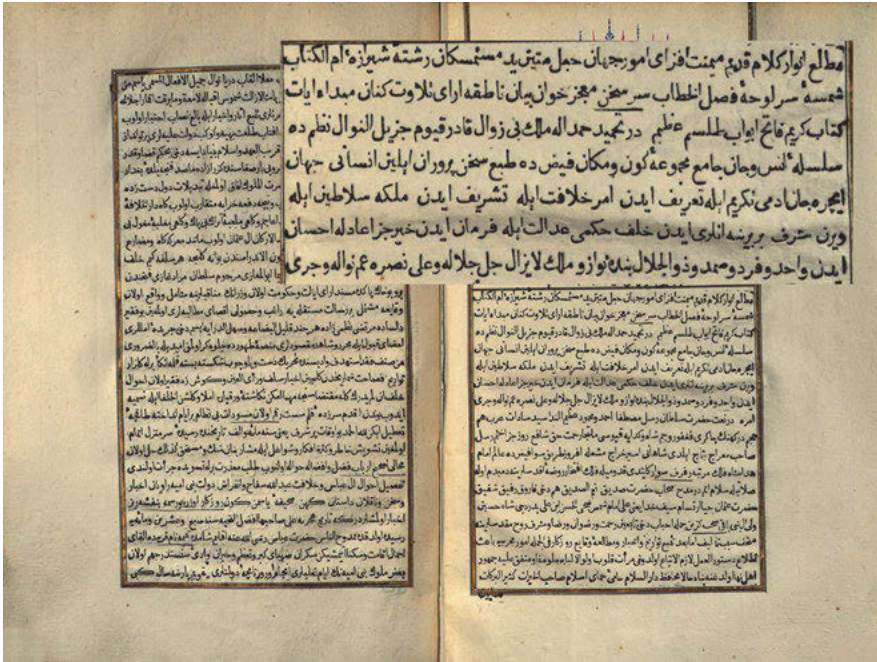
Fig. 3: Double page spread of *Gülšen-i ḫulefā* by Nazmizade Murtaza, printed by İbrahim Müteferrika, Istanbul, 1730. 384 × 290 mm, reduced, enlargement superimposed on the right. The gilded margin around the column suggests that this publication was produced with the intention to excel visually, yet the typography falls short of this ambition. The lines are poorly aligned and lack sufficient interlinear space, the typeforms are frequently smudged with ink, creating dark spots on the page and rendering individual letters illegible; in other instances individual letters are barely inked and difficult to see at all. The spaces between letters and words are inconsistent, and vertical strokes show a wide variety of angles, handing the text a haphazard appearance. Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, <https://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC10152763>.

Fig. 4: Double page spread of *Mablaġ al-rāḥ wa-ġāyat al-ḥadd fī fann al-ğarrāḥ* by Louis Bégin, printed at the Būlāq press, Cairo, 1836. 192 × 188 mm, reduced, enlargement below. Although Arabian's type is considerably better aligned than Müteferrika's, creating a much more orderly impression that contributes to greater clarity, it has none of the vigour, fluency, and dynamic that set contemporaneous manuscripts apart. Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, <https://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC09692145>.

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والرزايا • فالله ما تركه وخذله.لكنه حرضه الي التوبة
وايقظه ليرحضه. وجعل ضميره بوبخه ويقلقه. وبقلبه
سهاما يرشقه فيشفقه • فخطرت علي باله العنابات
الجهنمية. والقصاصات الجحيميةالاليمية• فبالاثناراي حلا
مهولا. واضطر منه وصار مذهولا وموجولا• فهني في
يوم الحشر وعقابه. وما يقاسي من قلة اجره وثوابه .
فهطل دمعا يضاهي الوبل حال مصابه. اوكحكم
وبجروم اذا حل القضا به• فتعطف عليه رب الارباب
المرتبه. ورهب له العون في الامور الصعب • فنقذه
نقذة الظبي من القناص. وفتح ذهنه الملوث المنعاس •
وخلصه مرارا عديدة من الحمام. وصار لذلك شهرة
واعتصام • تارة سقط في نهر طيار في اخر النهار.
فبالكد كان ينظر بمعار من الاكدار والاهدار• وتارة
وقع في البحر الرجاج المعجاج المتلاطم في الامواج .فحدر
الي الحضيض وقحف قحفة الثاج • وظن انه يموت
موتة الكابة والشقاوة. ولا يصل علي ادني نفارة• فلهج
بكل جده وبدعه. وفاز وماج بمجحدة طبعه• فدني من البر
بالسلامة. بعد ان اخلته الوهامة. وذهبت منه للجهامة
والشهامة. وصار في حالة العمامة والرمامة • ثم بعد
مدة من الزمان. وبرهة من الاوان • لما كمل من العمر
سبع عشر سنة كاملة. وقابلياته بصارت الي الاختيار قابلة •
استصوب رايا باجتهاد. ان يبصر نفرا من الانفار •

ويبعد مع عساكر للحرب. ويمارس طرايق اللعب. مع
الصفوف كانها غيام وصعب. فاتفق الامر ان جردته
الشديدة. كي تسافر الي بلدة بعيدة • فخرجوا من
الابواب. واماطوا للجلباب. وسحبوا الاطواب. بعد ما
نضت النقاب. واكملوا الرهاب. وتودعوا الاحبا من
الاحباب• فباختصار الكلام. ساروا في النظام. بكد
وازدحام. واتوا وحلوا في المقام. ونشروا العلام. ورتبوا
امكنة لكل غلام • فلما ملاوا السري.وموالوا الي الكري •
دعوا بنين الذي نحن في صدده.ليقوم غفيرا ويعسس
بكل وجدة• فاستقام مدة يسيرة. وبرهة قصيرة• ثم
اتت النوبة علي زميل من ربعه. فقام عوضا عنه
عنّا وهولابس درعه. فكانت ليلة فتية الشباب.
غدافية الاهاب • فمرعابر طريق عدو حريف.
وطالعته كانت كطلعة ناسك شريف• فخان به وضربه
ضربة الهمة. والقاه علي الارض لقية جسيمة• وجرعه
كاس للحزاع. وهوثابت لايجرع ولا يراع • قال فلما شاهد
بنين الوقيعة. توحش منها وحشة مريعة • فاستبشع
جدا لما شاهد القتيل. واستبشع من خدمته وصار
مليل • فكشفت له حينين اسرار الغازي • وبدايع
اعجازه • وهذا اول ما بدي يجعله يرتد من معاصيه
الثقيلة• ويلتفت الي طلب المعونة للجليلة. ثم بعدذلك
تزوج بامراة رقيقة القد • شقيقة لخد . حسنها لايجد

Fig. 5: Double page spread of *Kitāb Siyāḥat al-Masīḥī* by John Bunyan, printed by the Church Missionary Society, Malta, 1834. 240 × 200 mm, reduced, enlargement below. The font in use is a typical exponent of pre-twentieth century Arabic type made in Europe. It arbitrarily mixes stylistics elements of various Arabic manuscript hands, amongst them *naskh*, *thuluth*, and *maghribī*. Numerous proportions are compromised, e.g. the ascending strokes of letters like *alif* and *lām* are atypically short and have inconsistent angles, and *rā'* is too big. Curves are poorly executed, and the overall impression of the page is spotted, alternating between exceedingly dark and unnecessarily white areas. This publication demonstrates the kind of typography that was considered too ugly for reading by Arabic readers in the Middle East. Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, <https://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC11874944>.

Fig. 6: Apparent size differences in nominally identical point sizes. In this illustration the two fonts Adobe Arabic Regular and LL Akkurat Arabic Regular are set in the exact same point sizes, but divergent technical configurations result in pronounced actual size differences. The large letters on the right demonstrate how various fonts may define the body, i.e. the area in which typeforms are displayed, very differently.

J.R. Osborn
The Ottoman System of Scripts and the Müteferrika Press

Abstract: This paper argues that Ottoman print adoption aligns with the timeframe of Raymond William's 'long revolution'. 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. These changes represent a shift in what Williams has labeled 'structures of feeling', and they reflect the broad societal changes that we now associate with print culture.

1 Introduction

Ottoman textual practice was multi-scripted, multi-linguistic, and stylistically diverse. Separate Ottoman religious communities (*millets*) utilized different scripts, and Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin letters circulated side by side. Within the Ottoman Muslim community, stylistic variation of Arabic scripts served to differentiate textual forms and genres. The co-existence of manuscript and print cultures was also prevalent. Whereas the Ottoman Jewish *millet* began printing before 1500 CE, and other religious communities followed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Ottoman Muslims did not begin printing until the early eighteenth century.

From 1726 to 1746 CE, İbrahim Müteferrika operated the first Ottoman-sanctioned printshop, with a particular focus on books beneficial to state administration. Prior to this, Ottoman Muslim society employed a well-regulated and efficient system of manuscript production. This paper rereads these developments in light of Raymond Williams' concept of the 'long revolution', a radical transformation of social, cultural, and technological practices which unfolds over a few centuries. The term highlights the revolutionary aspect of societal changes while specifically challenging the notion that social revolutions only occur in a short or accelerated timeframe. Although printing ultimately had a significant effect on Ottoman society and textual practices, these revolutionary changes unfolded over time. After observing the spread of print in Europe, Ottoman society incorporated new technologies, new genres of text, and what

Williams describes as new 'structures of feeling'. This essay explores the Otto-
man system of script variation as a method of information and textual manage-
ment, and how İbrahim Müteferrika interfaced with this textual system in his
calls for print adoption and administrative reform.

2 Rereading the 'Long Revolution'

Orlin Sabev's useful body of work asks why print technology, which spread
rapidly across Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was not
adopted by Ottoman Muslims. Instead, actors on the Ottoman stage were left
Waiting for Müteferrika until the early eighteenth century.[1] Ottoman printing
was initiated in the 1720s CE, when İbrahim Müteferrika drafted a formal
petition, received a favorable religious judgement and royal permission, and
subsequently opened the first Ottoman Muslim print shop. These developments
occurred over 250 years after the printing of the Gutenberg Bible, and even
Müteferrika himself was initially an outlier. Ottoman society did not fully
embrace print culture for almost a full century after the closing of the
Müteferrika press in the 1750s CE.[2] Focusing on the personal innovations of
Müteferrika himself, Sabev concludes that whereas İbrahim Müteferrika was an
agent of change, he was not an agent of *immediate* change.[3]

   While pondering the relation of the Müteferrika press to the 'print revolu-
tion', Sabev points to Raymond Williams' concept of the 'long revolution'.[4]
Sabev makes the comment in passing, and does not develop its ramifications.
But Sabev does situate Ottoman print adoption within 'a time of slow but irre-
versible institutional and social transformation', which compares favorably to
Williams concept.[5] Müteferrika, moreover, sits squarely in the middle of
Williams' long revolution timeframe. Williams posits that a long revolution
unfolded in England from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, and it
drastically altered patterns of political organization, economics, education, and

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1 Sabev 2018. All of the Sabev references in this article refers to his 2018 book. This book syn-
thesizes and updates a number of earlier articles (e.g. Sabev 2007a; Sabev 2007b; Sabev 2014).
2 Press operations ceased with the passing of Müteferrika in 1747, although a second edition of
the press' first dictionary, *Lugat-i Vānkūlu,* was reprinted in 1756 by two of Müteferrika's
apprentices (Sabev 2018, 92–93). After that, Ottoman printing was not revived until the 1780s.
3 Sabev 2018, 91.
4 Sabev 2018, 89.
5 Sabev 2018, xii.

communication. In hindsight, these drastic changes appear evident, but it is much more difficult to pinpoint precise moments or agents of historical change. Williams states:

> If we find [...] that a particular activity came radically to change the whole organization, we can still not say that it is to this activity that all others must be related; we can only study the varying ways in which, within the changing organization, the particular activities and their interrelationships were affected.[6]

Printing, which has come to be appreciated as 'radically [impacting] the whole organization' of society, is one such activity. The radical impact of print, however, unfolded differently across the globe. The rapid spread of moveable type printing in Christian Europe contrasts with the slower inroads of print into Ottoman lands. Or, to use Williams' phrasing, even if Müteferrika did not quickly shift patterns of Ottoman society, his 'particular activity' planted a seed of change to which subsequent Ottoman printing activity is often related. Adapting Williams' insight to the Ottoman context, this paper asks: How, within the changing organization of Ottoman society, did İbrahim Müteferrika's particular activities affect the interrelationships and patterns of Ottoman textual practices?

Kathryn Schwartz has rightly warned against projecting Eurocentric models of print development onto the Ottoman case.[7] Such projections normalize the European trajectory, and thereby frame Ottoman print adoption as somehow 'delinquent' or 'delayed'. In making such arguments, the burden rests on explaining the reasons for this delay, and scholars may draw upon unverified claims, such as the persistent rumor of Ottoman printing bans.[8] As Schwartz convincingly argues, archival sources do not support an official Ottoman resistance to print.[9] To rectify this situation, Schwartz suggests that scholars 'ought to explore Ottoman printing with the same localized historical detail, attention to practicality, and freedom from precedent that Europeanists enjoy'.[10] Admittedly, the current article does not fully rise to this challenge. Indeed, the

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6 Williams 1961, 45–46.

7 Schwartz 2017, 1–5.

8 Although the alleged bans are yet to be located, and their exact wording remains unknown, mention of such bans remains common in secondary literature. The citation trails for these bans often point to Günay Alpay Kut's article entitled 'Matba'a: In Turkey' in Brill's *Encyclopedia of Islam* (1960). Kut's article mentions the alleged bans, but it references neither specific archival documents nor further studies that support of these claims.

9 Schwartz 2017, 5–6; Sabev 2018, xvi.

10 Schwartz 2017, 29.

adoption of William's 'long revolution' is yet another transfer of Eurocentric cultural scholarship to the Ottoman case, and the current article continues to operate on the level of cultural models rather than particularities.[11] However, I argue that the usefulness of Williams' model is its extended duration. Ottoman print adoption does not appear 'delayed' in a long revolution model. Rather, a long revolution lens posits Ottoman and European developments as part of a shared trajectory that transformed both societies. As diverse as those individual societal trajectories remain, the long revolution led to a similar endpoint in both Christian European and Ottoman lands: the current system of modern nation states.

Furthermore, if Ottoman printing is not perceived as delayed, there is no need to explain its 'tardiness'. Scholars can, instead, focus on how printing arrived in Ottoman lands and how the Ottomans managed a wealth of textual information both before and after its adoption. Ottoman rulers were aware of printing as early as the reign of Sultan Mehmed II, and Ottoman religious communities (*millets*) began printing as early as the fifteenth century.[12] But Ottoman Muslims neither adopted the technology, nor did they express a need for it.[13] As Orlin Sabev notes, 'there is no evidence that the Ottomans experienced a dilemma about whether to print or not to print'.[14] Even the Ottoman intellectuals who commented on printing – such as İbrahim Peçevi and Katip Çelebi – referred to printing as a 'strange art' rather than a necessary invention.[15] During the early centuries of moveable type, this 'strange art' spread quickly across Europe and even into Ottoman lands, but it did not appeal to Ottoman Muslims. Rather, a large community of scribes effectively answered local demands for popular, religious, classical and, bureaucratic texts.[16] As Muhsin Mahdi notes: 'scribal tradition flourished with standards of accuracy that could not be assured in printed works, especially when printing was done outside the Islamic world by printers and artisans with limited knowledge of the language'.[17] During the first centuries of European printing, Ottoman influence was in ascendance,

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11 In the model of comparative histories offered by Skocpol and Somers (1980), this shift of emphasis moves the focus of examination from a 'contrast oriented comparative history' to a 'parallel comparative history'.

12 The Jewish *millet* was the first to print in Ottoman lands, followed by the other *millets* (Osborn 2017, 104–108). The first Hebrew printing in Constantinople is dated 1493 CE.

13 Abdulrazak 1990, 80.

14 Sabev 2018, xvi. He makes similar statements on pages 36 and 112.

15 Sabev 2018, 2–13.

16 Sabev 2018, 53.

17 Mahdi 1995, 4.

and Ottoman civilization was nearing its peak. Since literary and administrative needs were met without recourse to movable type, Ottoman administrators may not have wished to disrupt time-tested practices of textual authority.

The Ottoman shift from a manuscript-dominant society to the adoption of print took time; it was a long revolution. In addition to historical occurrences, such as İbrahim Müteferrika's particular innovations, a slow attitudinal shift occurred among Ottoman elites and administrators. Applying another useful term from Williams, this attitudinal and behavioral shift marked a change in Ottoman 'structures of feeling'. Williams' deliberately ambiguous term combines a concept as 'firm and definite' as 'structure' with the something as 'delicate' and difficult to pinpoint as 'feeling'.[18] Structures of feeling are noticed across resonances, patterns, and relationships, and the term can therefore accommodate a great variety of cultural experiences. In *The Long Revolution*, Williams defines 'structures of feeling' as 'the culture of a period: the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization'.[19] Elsewhere, he notes: 'It is thus a specific structure of particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions, and in what are often its most recognizable forms, particular deep starting-points and conclusions'.[20] In these terms, the Müteferrika press may be seen as a 'deep starting point', and its structure of feeling 'facilitated consideration of new and emergent elements in the social formation'.[21] Within the broader system of Ottoman textual practice, the Müteferrika press offered what Williams refers to as a novel 'structure of particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions'.

3 Ottoman script variation

Prior to Müteferrika, Ottoman textual practices emphasized a set of relationships and linkages that differ from those that later became associated with print culture. One pattern of this general manuscript organization, which might be labeled 'a structure of feeling', is script variation: a textual practice in which visual and aesthetic differences of script, or styles of script, signify meaningful distinctions of textual genre and audience. As a structure of feeling, the practice

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18 Williams 1961, 48. Matthews (2001) offers a useful discussion of 'structures of feeling' as a theoretical concept for discussing social and historical change.

19 Williams 1961, 48.

20 Williams 1977, 134.

21 Matthews 2001, 189.

is not specifically defined. Rather, it collects a series of linkages and connections that resonate across particular activities of Arabic script history and Islamic tradition. Ibn al-Nadīm, for example, begins his tenth century catalogue of books, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, with a discussion of notational systems, scripts, and scribal styles, including over twenty varieties of Arabic script, as well as multiple styles of Syriac, Persian, and Greek, among other writing systems.[22] These diverse styles are differentiated according to aesthetics, function, technology, and the genres of text for which they are used. Similarly, Beatrice Gründler, in her developmental study of early Arabic writing, notes that stylistic differences and the presence or absence of diacritical markings connoted genre distinctions.[23]

In the tenth century, the development of *al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb* (proportional script) layered additional structure upon feelings of Arabic script variation. Not only did *al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb* formalize the geometric construction of Arabic script, it introduced a proportional key through which differences of style became measurable, distinguishable, and recognizable. Art historian Oleg Grabar suggests that standardization created repeatable Arabic 'types' long before the invention of moveable type printing:

> It [*al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb*] did not consist in the establishment of what has come to be called calligraphy, of writing for its own sake and for a primarily esthetic purpose. Possibly much more like the typographic inventions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in western Europe, what was created is a series of 'types', both in the scientific and in the printing sense of the word. A new standard was elaborated that allowed for variations, as any type would, and the proportions defining each letter gave to the process of writing a mechanical side, which, as in printing, guaranteed quality and consistency.[24]

A variety of script styles – most notably the six classical scripts of *al-aqlām al-sittah* – became recognizable and repeatable types. Scribes were instructed to write in specific styles, and readers learned to decipher styles as a secondary code.

These repeatable types, moreover, *did specific work*. Recognizable script varieties organized, classified, and differentiated textual material. One style might carry religious connotations, another style might be used for poetic verse, and a third style might signify administrative decrees. Much like current dropdown menus of digital fonts, script variation offered a plethora of design options. But

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22 Ibn al-Nadīm 1970, 6–40; Osborn 2017, 16–20.
23 Gründler 1993, 132.
24 Grabar 1992, 76.

whereas current practice informally pairs certain fonts with broad differences of connotation (e.g. **Comic Sans** is ridiculed in scientific presentations, whereas **Caslon** appears more stately), readers rarely decipher font differences as deliberate strategies of information organization. Contemporary readers tend to interpret font choices idiosyncratically, as matters of branding or personal preference.

Ottoman readers, and manuscript cultures more generally, were much more likely to decipher the visual appearance of scribal styles as meaningful markers.[25] And Ottoman society built upon these structures of feeling for administrative purposes. The scribal varieties of Ottoman manuscript production were conventionally linked with particular genres of content and import. A primary distinction separated the classical Arabic scripts of *al-aqlām al-sittah*, which adhered to traditional rules of *al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb*, from alternative measurements, which signified Persian or Turkish connotations. Ottoman manuscript production was not a monolithic practice with a single script. Different communities of scribes produced different genres of text, and they employed different varieties of script as useful markers of textual difference (see Fig. 1). To wit:

– *Thuluth* (Turkish: *sülüs*) was celebrated as a display script for headings, titles, and decorative pieces, but it was rarely used for copying the body of text.
– *Naskh* (Turkish: *nesih*), which emphasized clarity and legibility, became the preferred bookhand for running text. It transcribed a wide range of legible material: from Qur'anic *maṣāḥif* to scientific, philosophical, and educational content.
– *Muḥaqqaq* (Turkish: *muhakkak*), another grand display script, conveyed particularly strong religious and sacred connotations. It was never a common copyist style, and it was rarely used as a display style for nonreligious material.
– *Taʿlīq* (Turkish: *talik*) transcribed poetry, devotional texts, and popular religious materials, as well as official religious decisions of the *Sheikh ül-Islam*. But its religious role was devotional rather than hieratic. It was not utilized for the transcription of Qur'anic *maṣāḥif*.
– *Dīwanī* (Turkish: *divani*) signified the administrative and temporal order of the Ottoman state. It served as the official style of the royal bureau, and it was only used for officially-sanctioned communications of state.

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25 For discussion of similar practices in non-Ottoman contexts, see Febvre and Martin 1958, 78–81; Clanchy 1979, 103–105; and Ingold 2007, 128.

–   *Siyāqah* (Turkish: *siyakat*), or *qirmah* (broken script), was marked by unorthodox ligatures and orthography. It was used for accounting purposes, record keeping, and land registers. Its role was purely bureaucratic, and it was not used for textual copies.

This brief list belies the full complexity of the system, which grew to include well over thirty different stylistic varieties.[26] The diverse styles were visually identifiable and recognizably distinct. They offered repeatable 'types' – a term consciously chosen (per Grabar) to emphasize the consistent reproduction of forms across a multiplicity of individual texts.

Within this system, broad design practices, such as visual pairings (e.g. the *thuluth-naskh*, *muḥaqqaq-rayḥānī*, and *tawqīʿ-riqāʿ* pairings of *al-aqlām al-sittah*) and the repetition of specifics layouts (e.g. the Ottoman *hilye* template), created a structure of particular linkages that connected scribal design, communicative intent, and textual role. For example, the visual uniqueness of *dīwanī* played a particularly significant role. The script's dense structure and complicated appearance differentiated official royal pronouncements from other genres of text.[27] *Dīwanī* visually identified enforceable orders of permission, privilege, and accountability. The precise logographic form of the *tuğrâ* signature, which marked the terms and decrees of distinct sultans, further reinforced the import of these communications. Taken together, these cultural patterns point to a textual literacy that was both linguistic and visual. Aesthetic differences of scribal design were *read* as meaningful markers of genre, permission, and order.

Script variation as a structure of feeling survives – albeit obscurely – in art historical surveys. Introductions to Arabic calligraphy often contain cursory lists of scripts and sample uses, similar to the one provided above.[28] Specific studies have also focused on the role of particular scripts or the design of specific textual genres.[29] But script variation is rarely examined as a broad cultural pattern or a general system of communication. Cultural, social, and media historians – less attuned to visual and aesthetic differences – emphasize textual content or the impact of texts rather than the diverse styles in which those texts were written. Art and design historians, in contrast, offer fine-grained aesthetic analyses of specific works and specific styles, but they rarely compare styles in

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26 Ülker 1987, 59–62.

27 Blair 2006, 508.

28 See for example Ali 1996, 44–45; Ekhtiar 2018, 29–32.

29 E.g. Fekete 1955.

systematic fashion as meaningful sociological markers of content. Appreciating script variation as a structure of feeling requires a blending of these disciplinary divides, and a pairing of visual acuity with textual discourses. Williams' term usefully indicates that even our own disciplinary and academic divisions are influenced by 'structures of feeling', which may not align with the foreign or historical cultures under investigation. Much like the umbrella term 'print culture', scribal cultures operated as a series of interrelated phenomena, bridging content, design, production, distribution, audiences, educational structures, and claims of textual authority.

Script variation was not formally delineated as a series of systematic rules. It hovers at the edge of full articulation, hence the utility of referring to it as a 'structure of feeling'. But stylistic variations are visually recognizable. Recognizable differences of scribal 'types' (e.g. styles of script) were communicatively and meaningfully significant, and Ottoman textual management applied these differences toward administrative ends. In *The Proper Order of Things,* Heather Ferguson illustrates how the formalization of writing into disparate genres operated as a means of organizing Ottoman bureaucracy into a new imperial order.[30] Genre distinctions played a crucial and critical role in information, textual, and bureaucratic management. Scribal variety resonates with, and parallels, the diversity of genres though which Ottomans bureaucracy organized the realm.[31] If genre distinctions did indeed play a functional role in Ottoman textual practices, script variation likely contributed to this broader system of textual authority and scribal production. Script variation may have operated as a visual analog to what Ferguson describes as the Ottoman 'grammar of rule'.[32] Scribal variety provided an organizational strategy for differentiating and authenticating genres of textual content.

4 The aims of the Müteferrika Press

The Müteferrika experiment with moveable type entered the Ottoman textual system as a technological transformation and a reformist suggestion. On one hand, moveable type offered a novel method of replicating texts, which differed both technically and visually from scribal production. On the other hand,

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30 Ferguson 2018, 48–49.
31 A contemporary parallel can be drawn with the bureaucratic importance of specific file formats, such as the significant difference indicated by '.doc' and '.pdf' as file extensions.
32 Ferguson 2018, 1–22.

Müteferrika carefully situated these new developments in relation to Ottoman practices of textual and genre differentiation. Both Müteferrika's writings and the corpus of his printings posit a new textual genre, with particular aims and foci, rather than a complete replacement for manuscript production. İbrahim Müteferrika deployed the press as a means of scholarly and administrative reform, and the printed corpus organizes a novel space of Ottoman intellectual exchange, with particular benefits for state administration, navigation, trade, and military organization. But these newly printed texts did not fit nicely into any of the textual genres associated with specific scribal styles. Therefore, the Müteferrika press introduced both a new genre of state-oriented text, as well as a new 'style of script' (i.e. movable type) with which to represent these novel texts.

As a theoretical category, 'structure of feeling' can usefully indicate generational change, and Müteferrika's position differed from many of his contemporaries.[33] But he was not alone in this generational shift. Müteferrika's ideas mirrored those of certain Ottoman predecessors, most notably Katip Çelebi, as well as some influential peers, such as Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Paşa. These intellectuals shared the perspective that Ottoman society would benefit from the incorporation of European science, technology, and political ideas. Ottoman scholarship and society, they argued, were losing ground to European technological developments. Their shared focus pointed toward what we might now label modernization, and which Müteferrika himself identified as 'niẓām-ı cedīd' (a modern order) in his tract on political organization.[34] As a structure of feeling, niẓām-ı cedīd aligns with many of the changes attributed to the 'long revolution' of modernization and print adoption. And these changes included – among other suggestions – the tactical adoption of print technology.

Tactical adoption did not imply a replacement of scribal production. Müteferrika did not print popular works, nor did he aspire to. Rather, his tactical adoption targeted books that were not in wide circulation at the time. The Ottoman scribal community adequately addressed Ottoman needs for classic and popular texts, and it continued to fulfill these needs until the middle of the nineteenth century, even as newspapers and other hallmarks of a developed

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33 Williams 1961, 65; Williams 1977, 132–133. Many commentators on Müteferrika emphasize his Hungarian and Unitarian history, shifting this generational difference to one of geographic origin and religious disposition.

34 Müteferrika's *Usūlü'l-hikem fī Niẓāmi'l-ümem* ('The Ordering of Nations') was the first printed appearance of the term *niẓām-ı cedīd* (Sarıcaoğlu and Yılmaz 2012, 339).

print culture became more entrenched.[35] Alongside these practices, Müteferrika's printings introduced a novel genre of texts that were either rare or unknown in Ottoman circles. In particular, the works repeatedly argue for the administrative importance of geographic, historic, regional, and scientific knowledge. And the printed corpus inordinately emphasized recent discoveries and current events rather than traditional and time-tested Islamic scholarship.[36] The contents of the printed books certainly overlapped with Müteferrika's personal interests, but he was not printing them to simply advertise these ideas to others. Müteferrika advocated for the practical utility of these works in governmental, state, and military operations, and he wished to push such books into wider circulation. Müteferrika's aims were pedagogical and utilitarian, and his major achievements reflect his 'power as a politician and campaigner'.[37] The Müteferrika press aimed to benefit the Ottoman state, with civil servants as one of the primary target audiences for its printed books.

Notably, Müteferrika's first printings were maps, which play a highly utilitarian role in routes of navigation, trade, and governmental administration. Although maps certainly share new ideas, they function primarily as economic and administrative supports. Maps offer a prime example of what Chandra Mukerji labels capital goods: 'innovations in material culture that were *specifically designed to act as economic tools*'.[38] The practical significance of capital goods, and the particular importance of up-to-date geographical knowledge, was not lost on Müteferrika. He shared this view with Katip Çelebi, one of his intellectual heroes, championing the importance of accurate and up-to-date maps in his various introductions to printed editions of Çelebi's work.[39] Throughout his career, Müteferrika reiterated the importance of geographical knowledge for Ottoman competitiveness. And his printed corpus – which included multiple maps, maritime and military histories, a treatise on government, geographic tomes, and multiple regional histories – backed up these claims.[40] Over two-thirds of the press' output presented geographical, maritime, or regional and historical knowledge.

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35 Sabev 2018, 94–96.

36 Sabev 2018, 53.

37 Shebab and Nawar 2020, 38.

38 Mukerji 1983, 81 (emphasis original).

39 Erginbaş 2005, 24.

40 For a list of works printed by the Müteferrika press, see Watson 1968 and Osborn 2008, 194–195. Sabev (2018, 36–56) and Osborn (2017, 119–125) analyze the printed corpus in terms of topic and genre.

Vesiletü't-Tıba'a, Müteferrika's defense of printing, conveys a structure of feeling in which printed books constitute useful tools for political competitiveness and continued Ottoman glory. The tract begins by situating printing among the 'means and instruments that societies and groups of people might use for benefitting the organization of important human matters and for *the glory and power of the Empire and the state*'.[41] Müteferrika repeats this claim a few lines down, when he describes books as a means 'to continue the glory of the state and the good ordering of important affairs. Books are also a tool for perfecting the nation and the state, a method for increasing the majesty of the empire'.[42] The essay goes on to enumerate ten specific benefits of printing, the last of which reiterates this position yet again: 'this important and great work [i.e. Ottoman printing] certainly increases and augments the glory and majesty of the Ottoman state'.[43]

Müteferrika's essay emphasizes the benefits that print offers the state rather than what it provides to individual readers. Half of the listed benefits directly address the proper functioning or improvement of the Ottoman state (benefits 1, 2, 7, 8, and 10), and another three concern commerce and exchange as a means of state development (benefits 4, 6, and 9).[44] The fourth benefit, in particular, identifies books as 'items of commerce', echoing Mukerji's concept of 'capital goods'. Overall, Müteferrika's benefits are political and sociological rather than literary. They concern the use and circulation of printed books rather than their specific contents or the intellectual benefits of reading. Printing, for Müteferrika, was not a mark of Europeanization; it was a useful means of Ottoman preservation.[45]

Müteferrika never suggests that printed books should replace manuscript copies, nor does the tract question the utility of manuscript production. Nowhere does the essay critique or disparage the accuracy and importance of Ottoman scribal practice. On the contrary, Müteferrika's opening discussion *praises* the scribal methods of Islamic tradition, in which 'every word of the proclaimed Holy Law, every document or page which had been collected and written down'

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41 Müteferrika 1995, 286. All translations of Müteferrika's writings and Ottoman bureaucratic documents are drawn from Murphy (1995). The notes cite Müteferrika's name for his own writings and Murphy for the other documents. In both cases, the dates are listed as 1995, the publication date of Murphy's translations.
42 Müteferrika 1995, 286–287.
43 Müteferrika 1995, 291.
44 For a listing of the ten benefits, see Osborn 2017, 114–116.
45 Sarıcaoğlu and Yılmaz 2012, 74.

was protected in its integrity as 'a blessing to the entire community'.[46] Müteferrika does not challenge the Ottoman manuscript tradition; he simply wishes to quickly produce and widely distributed new genres of modern text, which fall beyond the scope of scribal circulation. Even the ninth benefit, which mentions books 'full of misspellings and mistakes' without 'any semblance of beauty [...] or correctness in spelling and orthography', is a critique of *printed* texts already in circulation rather than manuscripts.[47] Müteferrika is concerned that the earnings and commercial spoils of these faulty copies are flowing to non-Muslims and European printers rather than benefitting the Ottoman realm. If Ottoman printers can produce improved editions of these works, the Ottoman state would reap both the commercial benefits of print production and the intellectual benefits of new areas of scholarship. Printing offers a form of textual production in which useful, but currently rare, works (e.g. dictionaries, updated and accurate geographic knowledge, and reports of recent discoveries) would reinvigorate Ottoman scholarship as 'items of commerce'. The ideas circulated in these books, as well as their economic benefits, will augment the continued glory of the Ottoman state.

5 The Müteferrika Press as a hybrid state actor

Müteferrika's emphasis on continued Ottoman glory appears to have shared the backing of both religious and royal authorities. Müteferrika, along with financier Said Çelebi, requested both a religious judgement (*fatwā*) and a royal permission (*firman*) to pursue the endeavor. Both documents were received and enthusiastically supported the project. Notably, the *firman* does except works of 'religious law, Qur'an exegesis, traditions of the prophet, and theology'.[48] But this merely repeats İbrahim's wording almost verbatim, and the *firman* even acknowledges that these exceptions were included in his original petition.[49] Müteferrika and Çelebi neither requested, nor did they receive, a blanket permission to begin printing. They received permission to print specific types of text, much like the administrative printing permissions that marked early printing in parts of Europe.

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46 Müteferrika 1995, 287–288.
47 Müteferrika 1995, 291.
48 Murphy 1995, 285.
49 See Murphy 1995, 285 for the admission that the permission 'allows for the exception of the religious subjects mentioned in [Müteferrika's] tract'. For Müteferrika's original list of these exceptions, see Müteferrika 1995, 292.

The exception of certain genres should therefore not be interpreted as a governmental or conservative censorship of press operations. Suggestions that the *firman* and *fatwā* actively 'prohibited' the printing of religious and popular texts are misguided, precisely because Müteferrika never asked to print such works.

The close alignment of the *firman*, the *fatwā*, and the original petition, all of which repeat many of the same phrases, implies a bureaucratic process in which agreement across bureaucratic genres (petition, *fatwā*, and *firman*) may have been equally, if not more important, than the precise content of the individual documents. Orlin Sabev suggests that the Müteferrika press may have received its official permit *post factum*: prior to issuing the permit, the authorities had already reached a compromise solution in which they would support print in a limited scope, while manuscript copyists would continue to reproduce popular and religious works.[50] The various decrees and documents may therefore represent the end of negotiations rather than their beginning. Even if preliminary negotiations concerning the printing of religious and secular content did occur, these discussions are not reflected in the available documents. Müteferrika's petition only requests permission to print specific genres of work, which happen to be non-religious. The religious judgement of *Sheikh ül-Islam* Abdullah Effendi then affirms this undertaking as 'a great benefit', and the *firman* bases its permission on this 'exemplary' *fatwā*.[51] In another mark of bureaucratic agreement, Müteferrika's petition requested the appointment of proofreaders to carefully check the contents of printed works, the *fatwā* stipulated that such proofreaders are indeed necessary, and the *firman* responded by naming the necessary individuals. In other words, the *firman* can be read as clarifying and delineating the specific roles and operations of the press, rather than censoring or circumscribing its operations.

The various parties all agreed that printing was a useful administrative tool within specifically delineated areas of knowledge. Such administrative coordination complicates the claim that İbrahim Müteferrika was simply a commercial entrepreneur.[52] Although the press operated with very little governmental oversight, and Müteferrika ran it as an entrepreneurial venture, the press itself, and its printing agenda, operated in service to the state. This fluid position of state-private actor adheres to broader patterns of Ottoman society, in which a great

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50 Sabev 2018, 41–42; cf. Osborn 2017, 116–117.

51 Murphy 1995, 285.

52 Sabev 2018, xix, 109; Schwartz 2015, 48–53.

deal of 'slippage' occurred between administrative and intellectual practitioners.[53] Although Müteferrika initially benefitted from the financial backing of Said Çelebi, the original petition also requested additional state-based financial aid.[54] And the price of the first printed book, which included the bureaucratic documents that established the press, was state-subsidized to make copies more affordable.[55] The Müteferrika press was therefore a hybrid-state actor in which the press's output furthered the aims of the state, while the private individual took much of the risk. In contemporary terms, Müteferrika might be seen as a governmental contractor. Present-day organizations that receive governmental grants similarly assume private liability for the administration of those grants, while the work and research they conduct are in accord with broader state motives and agendas.

A number of factors support the notion of the Müteferrika press as a hybrid-state actor. Firstly, the title of Müteferrika itself refers to those who serve on behalf of the sultan and the court in public or political missions.[56] In his printed colophons, İbrahim refers to himself as 'one of the müteferrikas at the Imperial Court who is in charge to print', which implies that he saw his printing as a court service with which he was charged.[57] In addition, Müteferrika's tours of diplomatic service directly bookend the period in which he printed. From 1716–1720, he served in Hungary, and, from 1736–1739, he once again served in Europe, where he negotiated treaties with Poland, Russia, France, and Austria-Hungary.[58] Between and around these tours, he opened and operated the press. Thirteen of the press' titles were printed between 1729 and 1734, and the remaining three titles were printed from 1741–1742 after he returned from Austria. The later period also aligns with Müteferrika's work as a bureaucratic scribe, initially with the Ottoman artillery and later with the imperial council. All of these positions are consistent with Müteferrika's title, as one who is in service to the state.

Secondly, as noted, the close alignment of the petition, the *fatwā*, and the *firman* suggest the final steps of an administrative process rather than the opening salvo. In his petition, Müteferrika writes that he has already been trying to print for eight years, and the printing of his first map in 1719 predates the formal

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53 Ferguson 2018, 107–108.

54 Sabev 2018, 41.

55 Carleson 1979, 22; Kreiser 2001, 14; Sabev 2018, 71.

56 Erginbaş 2005, 9–10; Sabev 2018, 30.

57 Sabev 2018, 32.

58 Sabev 2018, 31.

1726 petition by a comparable time period.[59] Given his overall career trajectory, it is unlikely that Müteferrika would have been entirely free of diplomatic service for almost a decade. It is more likely that development of the press was itself perceived as serving a state function, especially since the 1719 map was inscribed as a gift to the grand vizier.

Thirdly, Müteferrika's printed corpus provides an educational curriculum of particular benefit to Ottoman diplomats and bureaucratic functionaries. The press' output adhered to the publishing program proposed in *Vesiletü't-Tıba'a*.[60] It sought to cultivate a newly educated diplomatic core, with a particular emphasis on benefitting and extending 'the glory and majesty of the Ottoman state'. Müteferrika printed three books on language and grammar, multiple works of geography and regional history, a booklet of calendrical tables, a treatise on governmental organization, a brief explanation of magnetism, and a multivolume series of official state chronicles. The corpus targeted a specific and highly delineated market: the *askeri* class of military and administrative functionaries, including military officers, administrative bureaucrats, judges, diplomats, and attachés of foreign service. Popular religious works and literacy classics were never considered, and the press never targeted a popular audience or a broad reading public.[61] Indeed, the reading list of the Müteferrika press aligns very closely to contemporary curricula geared toward diplomatic training: languages, geography, and regional knowledge.

The printed offerings introduce a new structure of feeling, with an emphasis on modernization and the formation of *niẓām-ı cedīd*. The press' first book included printed versions Müteferrika's essay, the *fatwā*, the *firman*, and statements of support from sixteen prominent judges and scholars. All of these texts reaffirm the importance of printing, demonstrate its usefulness to the state, and ensure that the endeavor will be 'free of public and private questioning'.[62] Since the press distributed knowledge deemed useful for bureaucrats in a modernizing realm, these important documents were included as of part of that stock of useful knowledge. Moreover, the technological translation of these documents, from handwritten tracts to printed information, demonstrated this important

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59 During this preparatory period and throughout the operation of the press, Müteferrika worked with Ottoman Jewish printer and typecutter Yonah ben Ya'akov Ashkenazi, who provided technical expertise, training, and necessary skills. The partnership of İbrahim and Yonah merits much further study.

60 Although Müteferrika (1995, 292) mentions 'medical texts' in his petition, he did not print any.

61 Sabev 2018, 55.

62 Müteferrika 1995, 287.

shift in practice. The original scribal copies of these texts would have been written in different styles of script, e.g. the *fatwā* in *ta'liq*, and the *firman* in *diwani*. Per script variation as a structure of feeling, this visual distinction tied each of the documents to the requisite authoritative sources: the entrepreneurial printer, the religious judge, and the royal decree. But these differences of script disappeared when Müteferrika printed the documents as front matter. Script variety was standardized with moveable type and the documents were presented as finalized statements. This technological and visual shift indicates a movement across structures of feeling: from handwritten script variation, which continued to dominate bureaucratic genres, to printed standardization, which was offered as useful knowledge to diplomats and *askeri* functionaries.

The continuing importance of script variation can also be observed in *Grammaire turque ou méthode courte et facile pour apprendre la langue turque* (1730), the eighth book of the Müteferrika press. This work is notable as the only Müteferrika printing that contains Latin type. It is also his only printing not directed toward Ottoman Muslims. But even this book aligns with the goals of a hybrid-state press. It too was a diplomatic exchange. French ambassador Marquis de Villeneuve requested the book in order to educate the French consular staff, and the books were purchased by the French consulate, thereby demonstrating Müteferrika's claim that Ottoman printing could redirect financial benefits that previously flowed to European printers. Interestingly, the book begins with an explanation of script variation. The opening chapter contains an engraved table showing seven distinct styles of Arabic script: *sulus* (*thuluth*), *reïhani* (*rayḥānī*), *jakuti* (a variant of *muḥaqqaq*), *nesqhi* (*naskh*), *tealik (ta'līq)*, *divani* (*dīwanī*), and *kyrma* (a variant of *siyāqah/qirmah*)[63] (see Fig. 2). The bottom of the table displays a brief note: 'The Turks have many other styles of writing, which were omitted in the interest of space'. And the accompanying text describes how each of these styles has a distinct purpose: *nesqhi* as the preferred script for copying the Qur'an, *divani* as the script of the royal bureau, *tealik* for use by judges and poets, *kyrma* for record keeping, *sulus* for titles of books and patents, etc. These useful notes explain the import of scribal variety to a French consular staff, which may have been less familiar with script variation as a structure of feeling. The inclusion of script varieties in *Grammaire turque* conveys the diplomatic importance of recognizing the stylistic differences of Ottoman handwriting.

At the end of his thirteenth printing, *Tārīh-i Na'īmā*, Müteferrika appends a list of print runs for all previous editions – with the sole exception of *Grammaire*

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63 This list of scripts roughly matches the list provided on pages 67–68 of the current essay.

turque. This omission may be explained by the fact that the book played a different diplomatic role than Müteferrika's other printings. *Grammaire turque* targeted French consular staff, whereas the remainder of the Müteferrika corpus targeted the Ottoman *askeri* class and the Ottoman diplomatic corps. Both sides of the equation are diplomatically important, and both serve state agendas, but the list of printings in *Tārīh-i Na'īmā* only documents the works that directly benefit Ottoman functionaries. If Müteferrika was trying to present a purely economic argument, he almost certainly would have included *Grammaire turque*, which was by far his most successful seller. According to Sabev, only 84 of 1000 copies remained unsold at the time of Müteferrika's death. But rather than being a purely economic tally, Müteferrika's list might be read as a concluding report on his printing operations. The list appeared just before Müteferrika's returned to overseas service, and much like the final report of a modern governmental grant, Müteferrika chronicles his accomplishments. He describes the numbers of books printed and advertises their availability for Ottoman administrators, bureaucrats, and diplomats. In *Vesiletü't-Tıba'a*, Müteferrika proposed a printing program which would benefit the Ottoman state. After fifteen years of pursuing this task, he was once again called upon for diplomatic service. Before returning to the field, Müteferrika documented his print production: a utilitarian corpus for Ottoman diplomats operating in a 'modern order'.

6 Competing trajectories of print development

The Ottoman administration certainly followed a different trajectory of print adoption than Christian Europe. Printing spread quickly across Christian Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, whereas Ottoman Muslims did not adopt print until İbrahim Müteferrika arrived in the early eighteenth century. Histories of print have traditionally emphasized the disjuncture of these trajectories, and such interpretations often privilege, either consciously or implicitly, the European path, which then suggests that Ottoman adoption was somehow delayed.[64] Broadening the scope to a 'long revolution' paints a different picture. During the early centuries of moveable type printing, Christian Europe was fractured – both religiously and politically – and printing spread due to piracy and lack of regulation as much as it did through benefits of the

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[64] Attempts to explain this delay result in the insidious persistence of unverified Ottoman printing bans. See Schwartz 2017.

technology itself.[65] The Ottoman realm, in contrast, was both more centralized and more stable, and therefore better equipped to administer textual production. The Ottomans commanded a wide geographic area, and shortly before Gutenberg printed the Bible, Sultan Mehmed II conquered Constantinople. The Ottomans were reaching the peak of their power during the early years of European print, and Ottoman influence spread into Europe concurrent with the spread of print. This expansion was supported by a large and well-developed scribal class, who efficiently and capably met manuscript needs of genre and script differentiation. Ottoman society may have felt no need to alter the time-tested textual and scribal practices that underwrote its rising dominance.[66]

An alternative interpretation of print development might highlight convergences across Ottoman and European developments rather than their disruptures. In both European and Ottoman lands, print adoption was part of a long revolution. As different as the trajectories were during the initial centuries of printing, they began to align in the eighteenth century. Many of the foundational practices of print culture – as opposed to the technology of moveable type – developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Carla Hesse has defined this shift as the crystallization of the 'modern literary system', which differentiated print technology as a *means* of reproduction from print culture as a *mode* of cultural practice.[67] In this regard, the Müteferrika press aligns very closely with shifts in European printing. Indeed, Müteferrika's essay, published in 1729, may be one of the first texts to synthesize various 'benefits' of print into a unified argument.[68] It touches upon nearly all the traits of print culture, as outlined by print historian Elizabeth Eisenstein.[69] These benefits include the dissemination, preservation, standardization, and reorganization of texts and knowledge.

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65 Eisenstein 1979, 405; Darnton 1982, 72–73.

66 A contemporary parallel may be drawn with issues of intellectual piracy and digital piracy. Countries opposed to unrestricted digital copying are not opposed to the technology per se. Rather, they wish to preserve practices of intellectual property that maintain the historical power invested in their legal and administrative systems.

67 Hesse 1996, 21–22.

68 Adrian Johns (1998, 373) makes a similar claim about Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795). But İbrahim's essay, which was published sixty years earlier, contains many of the same arguments.

69 The best summary of these feature can be found in chapter 3 of Eisenstein's *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (2005, 42–91). For specific correspondences between Müteferrika's ten benefits and Eisenstein's features, see Osborn 2008, 212.

In Europe, the administration of print via official governmental channels and the deployment of print for state-sanctioned purposes in Europe accompanied this generational shift from means to mode. Readers learned to trust the authors of printed books, and those authors, in turn, were supported and administered by the state. The 'Statute of Anne', for example, was passed by the British Parliament in 1710. The statute outlines one of the earliest formations of copyright regulated by governmental courts. Another early eighteenth-century innovation was the design of *Romain du Roi*, a set of geometrically proportioned letters that broke with handwritten tradition. Louis XIV commissioned the typeface in 1699 to serve as the exclusive typeface of the *Imprimerie nationale*, the official press of the French state. The design of *Romain du Roi* visually distinguished it from the typefaces of other presses, and its use for anything other than royally sanctioned texts was considered a crime.[70] Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi and his son Said, who toured French cultural institutions during the 1720s, likely encountered *Romain du Roi* during their travels. And the typeface's use of visual aesthetics to distinguish royal pronouncements from other texts may have resonated with their knowledge of *dīwanī*, which played a similar role in the Ottoman system of handwritten script variation.

The Çelebis vocally supported the opening of an Ottoman press, and Said initially funded Müteferrika's operations. Moreover, Müteferrika's tactical deployment of the press mirrors the aims of the *Imprimerie nationale*, which similarly operated in service to the state. In addition, Müteferrika writes from a position of familiarity with printing and print-based scholarship. He is contemporary with these early eighteenth-century discussions of print, rather than a delayed contributor. Müteferrika's defense of printing does not argue in favor of an experimental new technology; it argues for a technology proven to provide specific benefits, and some of these benefits would not have been known during the early centuries of European printing. The second benefit of *Vesiletü't-Tıba'a* describes printers' ink as more durable than the ink of manuscript copies, and the fifth benefit champions the reorganization of printed texts via indexes, tables of contents, and summaries. Both of these arguments rely on extended observation and a familiarity with printing over time. But Müteferrika writes as if the benefits of indexes and updated textual introductions were already understood and appreciated by a subsection of Ottoman intellectuals. And he goes even further, by demonstrating these benefits in practice. Müteferrika updated all of his printed editions with new introductions, corrections, more accurate

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70 Meggs and Purvis 2012, 122; Drucker and McVarish 2008, 108–109.

maps, and descriptions of the latest scientific discoveries.[71] Thus, Müteferrika's contributions were threefold: he introduced Ottoman Muslims to print technology, he argued for a new genre of administrative text, and he demonstrated the usefulness of printing as a means of updating and correcting information.

Even Müteferrika's intellectual interests, such as his promotion of geographic knowledge, align with European developments. The structure of feeling expressed by Müteferrika's corpus marks a generational change, not only in the Ottoman context but in Europe as well. In *The Long Revolution*, Williams discusses how geography, history, and the natural sciences had no place in British education until the eighteenth century:[72]

> Here, for the first time, the curriculum begins to take its modern shape, with the addition of mathematics, geography, modern languages, and, crucially, the physical sciences. [...] The eighteenth century is remarkable for the growth of a number of new vocational academies, serving commerce, engineering, the arts, and the armed services.[73]

Müteferrika argues for a surprisingly similar curriculum, which is also in service to commerce, engineering, and the armed services. Among his other contributions, Müteferrika wrote a brief tract describing theories of modern magnetism, and he was the first Ottoman scholar to present the ideas of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Tycho Brahe for a Muslim audience.[74] The printed corpus aims to educate Ottoman administrators, diplomats, and military commanders in modern methods. Müteferrika synthesizes print culture and modern science, and he presents a unified argument that such practices would benefit, preserve, and modernize the Ottoman state.

Müteferrika' emphasis on state, military, and diplomatic utility may also help tackle another dilemma of Ottoman technology adoption: why did the Ottomans quickly embrace artillery while eschewing the printing press? If firearms were adopted because of the immediate benefit they offered to Ottoman state power, Müteferrika makes a similar argument for print: it too is a useful tool for developing military advantage, accumulating state revenue, and extending Islamic glory.[75] However, grand cultural narratives often submerge this

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71 Watson 1968; Erginbaş 2005, 24; Sarıcaoğlu and Yılmaz 2012, 98–99.

72 Williams 1961, 129.

73 Williams 1961, 134.

74 Sarıcaoğlu and Yılmaz 2012, 98–99.

75 Coşgel, Miceli and Rubin (2009) employ game theory to compare 'Guns and Books'. They argue that Ottoman society adopted technologies which would support state legitimacy and increase revenue. By situating print in relation to state administration and continued Ottoman

complexity of relationships within simplistic and singular causes. Hence, unverified printing bans come to explain the lack of Ottoman printing, despite evidence to the contrary. Or the adoption of artillery is seen as an expression of Ottoman militarism, which contrasts with democratic ideals that are somehow embedded in the printing press. The risks of such assessments, per Carla Hesse, is a confusion of the technical means of print production with the mode of its cultural expression. Modern democracy, print culture, and books as items of commerce are not united by the technology of the printing press itself. They are related, ambiguously and without formal articulation, through structures of feeling.

The tendrils of these structures can be traced throughout much broader patterns of culture and society. But interpreting the minutiae of certain feelings as symptomatic of an entire culture is a question of power. The sweeping statements that are offered as explanations of Ottoman printing are rarely directed toward European print development. For example, Carla Hesse lists 'the author creator' and the 'book as property' as central ideals of the modern European literary system.[76] These relations shape structures of feeling in which property rights are paramount. Written ideas became a form of property, which can be privately owned, mechanically reproduced, and distributed for commercial gain. If the ideal of the property-owning citizen accompanied the spread of printing in Europe from 1450s onward, might we also relate these changes to another aspect of European society which began around the same time: institutional slavery and the classification of race?[77] This example may appear spurious, but it is no more spurious than contrasting the Ottoman adoption of guns and printing as symptomatic of the culture writ large. After all, the slave trade and printing share a number of overlaps: both were means of optimizing mass production for capitalist expansion and the exchange of goods. The classification of race, moreover, determined which segments of humanity were considered citizens, and who, by extension, was capable of owning books and authoring ideas.

Ottoman society was not, by any means, free from injustices of slavery, and slaves contributed a great deal to the Ottoman economy. But the Ottomans did not develop institutional slavery as a means of mass agricultural production to the same extent as European colonial powers. These issues, of course, are

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glory, Müteferrika adopts a similar stance. Müteferrika's 'benefits of print' include both the ongoing legitimacy and the increased financial revenue which will accrue to the Ottoman state.

76 Hesse 1996, 21–25.

77 Kendi 2019, 48–53.

incredibly complicated, and such comparisons are fraught with emotion. For the current argument, I simply note that European influence increased between the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, whereas Ottoman influence declined during the same period. And if we claim that European development bypassed Ottoman society due to a 'delay' in print adoption during this period, are we also suggesting that Ottoman society was bypassed by European developments of institutional slavery? Whereas the Ottoman adoption of military artillery in lieu of print technology has been interpreted as a sign of Ottoman aggression, the institutional aggression of European slavery is rarely mentioned in comparative analyses of print culture. The Ottoman '*failure*' to embrace the horrors and economic benefits of institutional slavery is rarely given the same explanatory weight as the *perceived failure* to adopt the benefits of print.

7 Conclusion: 'Stuctures of feeling'

What then can be learned from the Müteferrika printing experiment? Was it successful? Did it have lasting effects? The Müteferrika press was a key moment, albeit an incremental one, in the transformation from manuscript to print culture. This 'long revolution' perspective allows us to reassess a number of sticky historical questions, including the divergent (and convergent) trajectories of Ottoman and European printing and the relative success (or failure) of the Müteferrika press as an administrative and commercial endeavor. The Müteferrika press marked a generational shift in Ottoman development, and it successfully bridged two structures of feeling: manuscript practices of script variety and printed visions of textual modernization. In both his printings and writings, İbrahim Müteferrika championed the tactical adoption of print technology as a useful administrative tool for the endurance and modernization of the Ottoman realm. Moreover, Müteferrika's endeavors aligned with a period in which European states began to regulate and direct printing toward state priorities. A common structure of feeling, hovering at the edge of formal articulation, resonated in both Ottoman and European developments at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Our current structures of feeling are much more closely aligned with the ideas promoted by Müteferrika than the structures of script variation to which he responded. From this external perspective, a few centuries after the fact, we may be tempted to see the Müteferrika press as a new beginning, or – to use

Raymond Williams' phrasing – as 'a particular activity [that] came radically to change the whole organization'.[78] But Müteferrika never suggested printing as a radical revolution or a complete replacement for Ottoman manuscript culture. Printing with moveable type introduced a new style of 'script' within a broader system of script variation, and this new variation of Arabic script signaled new genres of administrative text. Moveable type, of course, can represent *any* genre of text, but this broader application spread slowly in the long revolution of Ottoman transformation. Manuscript practices and script variation persisted in Ottoman circles for a few hundred years after Müteferrika's printings. Indeed, aesthetic variety may even have increased, as a proliferation of experimental, calligraphic, iconographic, and zoomorphic script designs circulated alongside the standardized letters of mechanical type.[79] As Ottoman society slowly shifted from a manuscript-dominant to a printing-dominant textual system, stylistic and scribal variety interfaced with printed standardization.[80] Comparatively exploring the structures, feelings, and diverse technologies of this long revolution highlights generational and cross-cultural convergences, as well as specific cultural differences in which those convergences are situated. May such new perspectives reinvigorate both scholarly and visual possibilities, as we travel there and back again in studies of manuscript and print cultures.

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79 Kreiser 2001, 15–16.

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Fig. 1: The same phrase in multiple styles of script. The right-hand column displays the visual pairings of *al-aqlām al-sittah* (*thuluth-naskh*, *muḥaqqaq-rayḥānī*, *and tawqī'-riqā'*), while the left-hand column displays *ta'līq*, *dīwanī*, and *siyāqah* scripts. All styles were drawn by Mohamad Zakariya, and they all display the phrase: الفكرة سير القلب في ميدان الاغيار. Courtesy of Mohamed Zakariya, reproduced with permission.

Fig. 2: These engraved tables display seven styles of Arabic script. The tables were included in Jean Baptiste Holdermann's *Grammaire turque* (1730), which was printed by the Müteferrika press. Image courtesy of the Newberry Library.

Kathryn A. Schwartz

The Official Urge to Simplify Arabic Printing: Introduction to Nadīm's 1948 Memo

Abstract: In 1948, the Director of the Press of Egypt's Dār al-Kutub library, Muhammad Nadīm, submitted an unsolicited memo to his colleagues at the Egyptian Royal Academy of the Arabic Language. It proposed a simplified way of using printed vowel markers to facilitate readers' comprehension of learned texts. This chapter provides an introduction that situates Nadīm's memo within the wider context of a body that attempted to officially manage what it depicted as the need to reform Arabic writing in its substance and its technological expression during the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Between the late 1920s and early 1960s, Middle Eastern governments and the public figures they empowered saw official management of language as key to achieving general societal progress.[1] They did not debate the validity of this premise, nor did they articulate a well-defined blueprint for how to ultimately satisfy it. Instead, they dove into the topic at hand through examinations of vocabulary, grammar, and script, layering onto it the challenges that print technology – the increasingly dominant vehicle for public writing – posed to their national languages. Regarding printing Arabic in particular, four areas of need shaped their considerations: (1) the need for the script to work easily with Western-originated machinery; (2) for it to clearly represent the language in order to facilitate the literacy and comprehension of readers; (3) for it to preserve calligraphic styles; and (4) for it to respect what had by then become the customary appearance of Arabic in print. Concern for technical exigency, linguistic principles, and aesthetic continuity was not unique to the Middle East, as the evolution of Latin-based languages printed from Europe in the early modern period onwards demonstrates.[2] What distinguished the twentieth-century Middle Eastern case was the want for these adjustments to be formally undertaken to keep up with the spirit and pace of the age. Against this backdrop,

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1 A generalized portrayal of this modernizing attitude appears in Al-Toma 1961. See also specifically the language reforms initiated under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923–1938) as he fashioned the Turkish Republic out of the Ottoman Empire (Lewis 2002). For contemporary critical analyses of these debates, refer to Osborn 2017, Chapter 5; Lian 2020.
2 Refer to, for example, Morison and McKitterick 2009.

the Arabic language, its script, and the act of printing came to be seen as sites that required state-sponsored monitoring and updating.

In Egypt, Fu'ād I (r. 1917–1922 as Sultan, and from 1922–1936 as King) established the Royal Academy of the Arabic Language, *Majmaʿ al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya al-malakiyya*, in 1932 to manage these concerns. The Academy fell under the Ministry of Public Instruction and according to its founding decree, its mission was fourfold: 'to safeguard the integrity of the Arabic language' while adapting it nevertheless to 'the exigencies of progress in the arts and sciences' and 'the general needs of current life' by producing glossaries of words to be used and avoided; to create a historical dictionary of the language and publish studies related to its words and their evolution; to organize 'the scientific study of modern Arabic in Egypt and in other Arab countries'; and 'to work on all questions relating to the development of the language as entrusted to it by order of the Ministry'.[3] The number of men charged with undertaking this mission changed over the first several years. But by 1940 the Academy was to comprise between 24 and 30 titular members, of whom two thirds were required to be Egyptian, while the final third could be drawn from scholars of other Arabic-speaking countries or even from Europe.[4]

Serving as a member of the Academy, at first in palaces in Giza and Qasr al-ʿAyni, required significant effort. Members convened as a Congress once annually for four continuous weeks. The Congress was responsible for passing 'decisions related to the Arabic language', though the Academy's Council, made up of members resident in Egypt, could meet for deliberations at more regular intervals so long as they constituted a majority.[5] Despite the labor that joining the Academy entailed, it was nevertheless an honor. Members were appointed by the Ministry of Public Education, and they held esteemed positions at the intersection of government and learning within and beyond Egypt. Their ranks included, for example, the rector of al-Azhar mosque, the first president of the Arabic Language Academy in Damascus, and a French scholar whose country proposed his candidacy.[6] The presidency of the Academy, taken up by a member selected by his peers, was particularly emblematic of this governmental-scholastic confluence. Egypt's former Minister of Public Education, Muḥammad

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3 'Décret instituant' 1932, 5.

4 'Décret instituant' 1932, 5; 'Décret portant' 1940, unpaginated. There could be no more than twenty honorary members.

5 Hamzaoui 1975, 111–113; 'Décret instituant' 1932, 5; 'Décret portant' 1940, unpaginated.

6 For a full list of the original members, refer to the 2007 version of the Academy's webpage devoted to its founding members: <https://web.archive.org/web/20070430131314/> and <http://www.arabicacademy.org.eg/moaasson.asp>, accessed on 11 Aug. 2021.

Tawfīq Rifaʿat, served as the first president from 1934–1944 until he was succeeded in 1945 by the prominent lawyer and nationalist Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (1872–1963), who had also been Minister of Education, as well as Director of Dār al-Kutub – then the Egyptian or royal library – and of the Egyptian University. With the weight of their appointments behind them, the members of the Academy divided their work across eleven committees, eight of which concerned learned matters ranging from general principles of Arabic to terminologies of various disciplinary fields to dialects, while three concerned overseeing the body's administrative functions.[7]

At first, printing only related to the Academy insofar as it functioned as the medium used to disseminate its proceedings.[8] But via a committee that convened during the Congress's third annual meeting in 1936, it started to emerge as its own topic of study. This committee for 'Writing European Words' focused on the question of how to express, in Arabic, European proper nouns related to geography. The members decided that academic works should spell out terms in Arabic as they were pronounced, followed by their original forms in Latin characters between parentheses. Two years later, they took up the question of how to vowel such geographical terms – as written Arabic conveys short vowels through markers, *ḥarakāt*, entered above or below letters of consonants and long vowels. Printing's role in writing came up when it was observed that *ḥarakāt* voweling was particularly difficult for printers to implement, causing them to make errors often. Manṣūr Fahmī, a member of the committee who was then Director of Dār al-Kutub, proposed that the Congress thus establish another committee: one devoted to the 'serious problem' of writing and voweling Arabic – a concern that included, but also transcended, the topic of print.[9]

Studying how to simplify writing in Arabic, even via innovations, to facilitate reading it correctly without doing away with the language's principles came to be the mandate for this new committee on 'Reforming Writing'. Its task was both unwieldy and controversial, for its wide-ranging topic of investigation led its members into debates where opposing parties cleaved to preserving linguistic heritage on the one hand, and changing it severely by latinizing the Arabic alphabet on the other. The inquiry therefore fanned out into several other committees, and its progress was not helped by wartime delays.[10] To find a tractable

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7 Hamzaoui 1975, 127–131.

8 For these published proceedings, refer to the volumes of the Academy's journal beginning with *Majallat Majmaʿ* 1935, vol. 1.

9 Meynet 1971, 37–40.

10 Hamzaoui 1975, 239; Meynet 1971, 41–42.

solution, in 1944 the Academy decided to launch a public competition for the best suggestion for reforming Arabic writing. It charged yet another committee with determining the winner. Nearly 200 hopefuls who might have won 1,000 Egyptian Pounds ultimately submitted proposals to the Academy over the course of three years, as the closing deadline kept on getting pushed back. By March 1947, when the competition was adjourned for the first time, no elegant solution was found.[11]

Muḥammad Nadīm's 1948 'Memo to the Academy' emerged from this context.[12] As Director of the Press of Dār al-Kutub, Nadīm had only just been elected to the prize committee for simplifying Arabic writing.[13] He likely owed the honor to his government position first and foremost, but also to his expertise in printing, which was one of many fields of knowledge required to judge the submissions. The memo, which Nadīm submitted to Luṭfī al-Sayyid, covered its author's specialization alone. It concerned 'facilitating the correct reading of Arabic via the current letter sorts' used in government presses by voweling them with the customary *ḥarakāt* markers. Nadīm appears to have written the unsolicited piece to showcase his particular know-how to the Academy, and to influence this distinguished body's judgment on the form that simplifying Arabic printing should take. His introduction indicates that he was in awe of his target audience. But it is unclear whether Nadīm intended for his memo to solve one aspect of the Committee's inquiry, to sway the future evaluation of competition submissions, or to win him the prize and the backing to pursue his recommendation.

The memo is important for heralding a turning point both in the Academy's work and in the focus of its competition, whereby the two came to view reforming Arabic printing as necessary for simplifying the language.[14] Nadīm responded to their aim to ensure that the contents of learned texts be disseminated and consumed with ease and precision, since three factors sowed linguistic mistakes among printers and confusion and mispronunciations among readers. Arabic, because it is written in cursive, requires multiple sorts for each letter whereas non-cursive languages require only one or two. This complicates the job of the

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11 Hamzaoui 1975, 239–242; Hunziker 1985, 16.

12 Dr. Natalia Kasprzak Suit came across this memo there in 2010. She discusses the memo in relation to printing the Qur'an and the *naskh* typefaces of 1902–1906 in Suit 2020, Chapter 3.

13 Because Nadīm's name does not appear in official rosters of Academy members, I suspect that he was an honorary member. He does not appear in later listings of members either. See, for example, the Academy's website listing its former members: <https://www.sis.gov.eg/newVR/acadmy/html/acadmay0503.htm>, accessed on 11 Aug. 2021.

14 Meynet 1971, 70–71.

typesetter even before the standard calligraphic book-hand script for formal texts, *naskh*, creates the need for more sorts yet. *Naskh* binds letters to one another in precise, though varied ways, causing them to be vertically and horizontally 'interlinked and mounted', *mutarākaba wa-mutadākhala*. Once typeset, the irregular closeness and heights of these letter sorts make their *ḥarakāt* voweling hard to enact before printing, hard to stabilize while printing, and hard to parse exactly as a reader after printing.[15] Such were the Academy's problems with language and print that Nadīm proposed to ameliorate.

But more than representing the Academy's move to study print, his memo offers a quasi-official view onto what simplifying Arabic printing entailed historically and in practice. Nadīm begins by describing his purpose and why it matters for cultivating knowledge and progress. He next divides his summary into what he identifies as the three stages, *marhalāt*, of typefaces used by Egypt's government presses: (1) the 1820 founding of the first indigenous Arabic press and *naskh* typeface under Muḥammad ʿAlī (r. 1805–1848), whose rule became the source of the later Egyptian monarchy; (2) the 1902–1906 re-casting of this typeface as initiated by the Finance Ministry; and (3) the era intended to commence in 1948, when Nadīm advanced to the Academy his own plan for reforming the 1902-1906 sorts. With each stage, the number of sorts decreases. The first depended upon 900 *naskh* ones that included hard-to-fix *ḥarakāt* which could only be placed upon supplementary lines surrounding the main text. These were reduced to 464 in the second stage, even amidst an effort to more faithfully uphold the principles of *naskh*. Nevertheless, the approach to voweling remained unchanged during this second stage. Finally, Nadīm's aspired-for third stage suggests how to further reduce the sorts to 134. This entails abandoning the numerous interlinked and mounted letters of *naskh* in favor of single-letter configurations, *ṣuwar*, amounting to no more than four sorts for each letter. It also requires creating hollow spaces in the letters to hold any necessary *ḥarakāt*, now to be represented by one sort for each. Nadīm concludes his memo with a brief survey of the methods, *ṭarīqāt*, that the government and private presses deployed for voweling at the time of his writing, and with a plea that the Academy encourage the government to authorize his proposal.

Several features of the memo warrant note. Here, the development of printing is told through letter sorts and *ḥarakāt* in response to the Academy's earlier concerns about printing vowels. Nadīm depicts it as a source for spreading en-

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15 For more detailed explanations on transcribing Arabic, *naskh*, and printing, refer to Meynet 1971, 15–35; Osborn 2017; Nemeth 2017, Chapter 1.

lightenment, and he Egyptianizes this history emphatically. At no point in his recounting does he nod to European imperialism or Western expertise, as when he neglects to mention that the new turn-of-century casts were created in France while Egypt lay under British control. In line with this, Nadīm expressly glorifies the role of the Egyptian government in printing. He references the private presses of the land only to underscore their disarray concerning the matters at hand. Yet in the subsection of his 1948 coverage devoted to government presses, he nevertheless acknowledges one private printer favorably, Shafīq Mitrī and his unnamed Dār al-Maʿārif, who beat the government to using single-letter configurations and who undertook research into efficiently voweling Arabic of his own accord. Mitrī, whose Syrian origins go unnoted, worked from a linotype machine – the hot-metal printing technique first applied to Arabic in North America.[16] Notable too in this regard is Nadīm's emphasis on sorts at the expense of describing the underlying technology that deployed them. Though he was a printer like his father Muṣṭafā Nadīm Effendi, who also served the government during its earlier overhaul of Arabic sorts, he neglects to mention the shift from typography to linotype that informed the changes he charts by replacing hand-selected, freestanding sorts with ones cast together on the spot by machines. His emphasis instead rests upon the Academy's concern for clarity in the printed script, which brings him to distinguish the functional visual culture of Arabic typefaces from the 'fine art' of calligraphy.

Did Nadīm's memo ultimately influence the deliberations and decisions of the Academy? This is unlikely. No one had won the competition by the time of its final closing in 1952. Furthermore, the Academy continued to study how to reform Arabic printing into the 1950s in concert with the Arab League, and even the Egyptian Ministry of National Education, until this project and the effort to simplify Arabic writing quietly ended.[17] And the memo survives today not in the books and articles written by and about the Academy, but in the Library whose press Nadīm directed, after he donated it there in the months following its composition.[18] Still, the Committee for Simplifying Arabic Writing did finally propose to cut down the number of sorts that the government presses used from 470 to 135 – just one sort more than what Nadīm had advocated for. Loosely in line with *naskh* aesthetics, this count included *ḥarakāt*, as well as numbers, punctuation signs, and two of the three ligatures that Nadīm had recommended.

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16 For the history of the development of this technique, see Nemeth 2018.

17 Hamzaoui 1975, 242.

18 Refer to the reproduction of the title page of the member included below.

Its letter sorts were neither specially interlinked or mounted, instead taking the single-letter forms he pushed for.[19]

Today, the Academy of the Arabic Language still operates as a government body, though through a union in which Egypt serves as a principal party working in concert with the academies of Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Its efforts primarily focus on publishing books concerning grammar, lexicon, and Arabic heritage via committees organized according to branches of linguistics, and disciplinary fields and subfields.[20] That is to say, the Academy continues to officially monitor Arabic and to make recommendations for updating it in line with its founding mission. However, these more modest endeavors have moved away from portraying the language as inefficient, a source of confusion, and as an obstacle to cultivating proficient, learned readers. They instead embrace Arabic's complexity on account of several factors. All-encompassing, top-down language reform as a tool for state-building and modernization fell out of fashion in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, governments and popular cultures have grown to appreciate the intricacies of Arabic's history as a language and a script with the rise of post-colonial resistance and with some decline in the belief of prescribing the reordering of all manner of things to catalyze societal progress. The spread of Modern Standard Arabic and the growing recognition for the socio-political and economic roots of illiteracy have also shifted criticisms away from Arabic itself. Finally, technological advances have contributed to this reorientation too. As printing moved away from metal sorts into photography and then the digital realm, the challenges of voweling words and of ensuring aesthetic continuity with calligraphic scripts have diminished considerably.[21] The overall result now flips the urge to simplify Arabic writing on its head as scholars, technologists, and graphic designers – coming largely from the private sphere – exert themselves to rise to the demands of the language's distinctive characteristics.

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19 Hamzaoui 1975, 235 and Appendix IX.

20 I take this information from the following three pages of the Academy's website: <https://www.sis.gov.eg/newVR/acadmy/html/acadmay07.htm>; <https://www.sis.gov.egnewVR/acadmy/html/acadmay03.htm>; <https://www.sis.gov.eg/newVR/acadmy/html/acadmay04.htm>, all accessed on 11 Aug. 2021.

21 For more on the interaction between changing technologies and Arabic scripts, refer to: Tracy 1975a and 1975b; AbiFarès 2001; Nemeth 2017; Thomas Milo's work on the DecoType project: <https://www.decotype.com>, accessed on 24 Aug. 2021.

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Mahmoud Jaber, J.R. Osborn, Kathryn A. Schwartz, Natalia K. Suit

Muḥammad Nadīm's 1948 Memo on Arabic Script Reform: Transcription and Translation

Abstract: We present Muḥammad Nadīm's memo in three forms. First, a typeset Arabic transcription and an English translation are presented opposite one another on facing pages. These are followed by scanned images of the handwritten manuscript, along with its two appendices.

Note on the principles of edition: Muḥammad Nadīm's memo is written in the *ruqʿa* style of Arabic handwriting. As such, the document itself lacks many of the vowel markers, which Nadīm discusses at length. In transcribing the text, we strove to adhere as closely as possible to the original memo and reproduce only marks written by Nadīm himself. A key exception to this rule is final *yā*, which is transcribed with *nokte* even when Nadīm does not mark them. In translating the document, we sought, as much as possible, to recreate Nadīm's cadence and tone. Occasionally we divided long Arabic sentences in order to clarify meaning in English. We also attempted to specify some of Nadīm's concepts by utilizing critical terms of design and typography. All proper names are fully transliterated per IJMES guidelines. In both the transcription and the translation, the appearance of [p. #] indicates the beginning of a new page. This allows the text to be cross-referenced across all three versions. We offer this transcription and translation as a semi-diplomatic edition of the handwritten memo in hopes of sharing this important primary document with a broader audience. The authors take responsibility for any errors or inconsistencies that may remain.

مذكّرة

بشأن تيسير القراءة العربية الصحيحة بحروف الطباعة الحالية
وضبطها بحركات الشكل المعروفة اللازمة للنطق الصحيح

مرفوعة
الى حضرة صاحب المعالي رئيس مجمع الملك فؤاد الأوّل للغة العربية

من
محمد نديم
مدير المطبعة بدار الكتب المصريّة
بالقاهرة

Memo

On Facilitating the Correct Reading of Arabic Via the Current Letter Sorts and
Voweling Them with the Customary Vowel Markers Required for Correct
Pronunciation and Understanding

Raised
to His Excellency, the Esteemed President
of King Fuʾād I's Academy for the Arabic Language

By
Muḥammad Nadīm
The Director of the Press of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya
Cairo

[p. 2] يا صاحب المعالي

شرّفني المجمع اليوم بانتخابي عضوا في لجنة بحث المقترحات المقدّمة له في مسابقة جائزة تيسير الكتابة العربية. وفي الجلسة الأولى للجنة (يوم ٤ يونيه ١٩٤٧) شرح سعادة الأستاذ علي الجارم بك الغرض من ذلك الاجتماع، وذكر المراحل التي مرّ بها هذا الموضوع، وأشار الى أن الكلمات العربية أحوج ما تكون الى الضبط لمكان الأوضاع الصرفية وحركات الإعراب، كما أشار أيضا الى أن الشكل الذي هو أداة الضبط المستعملة الآن ليس بالسهل إجراؤه في المطابع، وهو مع ذلك قابل للتعثر والاختلال، الأمر الذي رغب المجمع من أجله الوصول الى طريقة تكفل القراءة الصحيحة لبنية الكلمة ولآخرها.

ولبثت اللجنة تعمل طيلة الصيف الماضي في فحص ما قدّم إليها من هذه المقترحات الى أن انتهت في نحو ٧٥ منها، لم تجد من بينها اقتراحا واحدا صالحا للغرض الذي يتوخاه المجمع، سواء أكان من ناحية الموضوع أم من ناحية الطباعة، ما عدا بضعة اقتراحات رأت اللجنة أن تعيد النظر فيها مرة أخرى لا لصلاحيتها بل لمقارنتها بمثيلاتها على أنها كلها في رأيي لا تصلح للغاية المطلوبة.

وكنت فكّرت في هذا الأمر منذ حين، وقضيت في بحثه طويلا الى أن انتهيت بحمدالله الى خير طريقة أراها تكفل القراءة العربية الصحيحة بتيسير ضبط حروف الكلمة في الطباعة بحركات الشكل التي هي أداة الضبط المستعملة الآن، دون أن يعتريها تعثر أو اختلال أو كسر، مما هو واقع ومعروف الآن في الطباعة.

[p. 2] Your Excellency,

The Academy honored me today by electing me a member of the Committee charged with examining submissions to it for the 'Simplifying[1] Arabic Writing' prize competition. On the Committee's first meeting (4 June 1947), his Grace the esteemed ʿAlī al-Jarīm Bey explained the purpose of the body, and rehearsed the different stages that this issue had gone through. He highlighted that Arabic words are in the utmost need of some form of voweling to signal their grammatical positions and their pronunciations. He also explained that the markers, which constitute the apparatus for voweling currently in use, are not easy for presses to implement because they are prone to slipping and falling out of order. For this reason the Academy desired to look for a way to ensure the correct reading of the body of the word and its end.

For the entirety of last summer, the Committee persisted in its work by examining all of these submissions that came its way. In the end, they amounted to approximately 75, of which not one single proposal was suitable for the purpose that the Academy had in mind, neither in terms of grammar[2] nor printing, with the exception of a few submissions that the Committee decided to look over again, not because they were good but in order to compare them with similar ones.[3] In my opinion, however, they were all unsuitable in achieving the desired goal.

I spent a long time thinking about and researching this matter until I found, thank God, a good way to ensure the correct reading of Arabic by simplifying the voweling of a word's letters in printing via the vowel markers[4] that are the apparatus[5] for voweling currently in use, though without having them be afflicted with the slippage, falling out of order, or fracture that exists and is well-known in printing today.

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1 Throughout the document, we translate تيسير as 'simplification' or 'simplifying' wherever it appears in relation to practices of printing and typesetting. When it relates to practices of reading, we translate the term as 'facilitation'.

2 The phrase ناحية الموضوع (subject matter) in the Arabic text refers to the grammatical issues of position and pronunciation outlined in the previous paragraph.

3 Proposals submitted to the Committee were grouped based upon common solutions. Hunziker (1985, 16) lists three primary groupings: (1) a complete break with tradition and the use of Romanized letter forms; (2) the retention of Arabic letters with the addition of new characters indicating phonetic values; and (3) proposals adopting a single form for each Arabic letter regardless of word position (cf. AbiFarès 2001, 73–74).

4 We translate ضبط as 'voweling' and حركات الشكل as 'vowel markers'.

5 We translate أداة as 'apparatus' and أداة الضبط as 'voweling apparatus' or 'apparatus for voweling'. The term refers to the specific printing sorts that represent vowel markers (حركات الشكل). The sorts are the material apparatus that represent the linguistically meaningful vowel markers. See appendix letter (ا), where Nadīm labels these sorts as (حركات الشكل) أداة الضبط.

[p. 3]وسيكون من وراء ذلك تيسير القراءة العربية، دون الخروج عن أصولها المعروفة وطبع الكتب العلمية والأدبية وغيرها مضبوطة بالشكل، وتيسير إصلاح تجارب الطبع على المؤلفين والناشرين، فتعمّ الفائدة والنفع، إذ الطباعة من أقوى الوسائل للتقدّم والإصلاح ونشر الثقافة والمعارف.

إلا أن عَوَزِي الى من يعاونني من أولى الأمر على تحقيق ما فكّرت فيه، هو الذي قعد بي عن الجهر بذلك. والآن وقد وجدت هذه الرّغبة البديلة من المجمع، فاني أنتهز الفرصة وأعرض ما انتهيت إليه في مراحل الموضوع الثلاث الآتية:

المرحلة الأولى سنة ١٨٢٠

الطباعة العربية في مصر بحروفها التي أوجدها المغفور له محمّد باشا الكبير

يرجع فضل إدخال الطباعة العربية في مصر سنة ١٨٢٠ بطريقة منظمة الى المصلح العظيم محمد علي باشا الكبير، لأنه رآها أقوى وسيلة للتقدّم والإصلاح. فقد كانت ولا تزال واسطة لتعميم ثمرات التقدّم ونشر لواء الحضارة والعرفان.

لا مشاحة في أن الطريقة التي روعيت في ابتكار الطباعة العربية كانت ذات صعوبات كثيرة، وذلك لتعدّد أشكال كل حرف من حروف الهجاء بحسب موقعه من الكلمة، وضرورة ركوب بعضها بعضا ثم لتداخلها بعضها في بعض. فقد التزم واضعوها قواعد خط النسخ الأصلية، فجعلوا كثيرا من الحروف تتداخل في حروف أخرى أو تتراكب بعضها فوق بعض، وأسرفوا في تعدّد أشكالها وتنوّع صورها، حتى بلغ عدد الحروف التي كانت مستعملة في ذاك العهد (تسعمائة).

[p. 3] This will result in facilitating reading in Arabic without departing from its well-known principles, as well as [in simplifying] printing, with vowel markers, scientific and literary books and the like. This will also simplify authors and publishers' adjustments to the galley proofs. How wonderful the advantage and the benefit [would be], since printing is one of the strongest means for progress, reform, and the dissemination of culture and knowledge.

My need, however, for someone vested with authority to assist me in achieving what I conceived of is what has prevented me from disclosing it publicly. Now that I have discovered the Academy's latest desire, I am seizing this opportunity and presenting what I have concluded from [my investigation], dividing the topic into three different stages:

The First Stage: 1820

Arabic Printing in Egypt by Typography, as Originated by the Great
Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, the Deceased

The credit for bringing printing in Arabic to Egypt in 1820 in an organized manner goes to the illustrious reformer, the Great Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, as he saw it as the strongest means for progress and reform.[6] It was then, and continues to be, an agent for disseminating the fruits of progress and for diffusing the banner of civilization and knowledge.

There is no doubt that the method according to which the invention of Arabic printing was implemented brought about many difficulties. That is due to the number of forms that each letter of the alphabet can take depending on its position in the word, and due to the necessity for them to be mounted together so that they be interlinked one with the next.[7] Those who created [sorts for printing] abided by the original rules of the *naskh* script. They [therefore] made a lot of sorts that interlinked with other sorts or that could be mounted one on top of the other, [so much so that] they overproduced the number of their forms and the variety of their configurations,[8] until the number of sorts that were used during that era reached nine hundred.

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6 Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha (محمد علي باشا) was the founder of modern Egypt, who governed from 1805 to 1848. For discussion of his initiatives and reforms related to printing, see Radwan 1953, 28–155.

7 We translate ركوب as 'mounted' and تداخل as 'interlinked'. The terms refer to different types of letter combinations, or ligatures, which were often cast as a single printing sort.

8 We translate صور as 'configuration'. The term refers to the arrangement or configuration of multiple printing sorts that form the image to be printed. The term roughly parallels the typesetting term 'forme', which indicates a locked arrangement of sorts within a chase, which is therefore ready for printing. Nadīm's use of the term does not refer to a fully locked chase, but rather the various configurations of Arabic letter sorts and vowel markers.

ولم يفطن واضعو هذه الطريقة الى ما صحبها من عدم استقامة الكلمة في السطر، وتساوي [p. 4] الحروف تساويا تاما. فكانت هناك بعض حروف مرتفعة وأخرى منخفضة، وبعضها مركب من حرفين أو ثلاثة أو أربعة، يركب بعضها بعضا قليلا أو كثيرا، حسب مقدار الإفراط في تداخلها أو تراكبها، وكان في ذلك من الخلل والاضطراب ما فيه، إذ يجب بحسب مقتضيات فن الطباعة وصبّ الحروف ألّا يشغل الحرف إلا حيّزه المقرّر له، ثم إن وضع أداة الضبط (حركات الشكل) يكون صعبا لتعذّر تبيّن الحرف المقصود ضبطه، وذلك لتداخل الحروف وتراكبها، فيترتب على ذلك أن يصعب النطق الصحيح قطعا. ذلك الى صعوبة طريقة الطباعة في ضبط الكلمات بالشكل، وهي إحداث سطرين تكميليين لحركات الشكل فوق وتحت الأسطر المعتادة.

على أن المدرّبين على القراءة يتردّدون في معرفة الحرف المقصود بيان حركته بالشكل الموضوع فوق أو تحت. يضاف الى ذلك ما تكابده المطابع من صعوبات في هذه الطريقة، وما تتحمله من أعباء لا تتفق مع النتيجة التي يؤدّى إليها من جرّاء هذا التعقيد العقيم.

Those who created this method did not realize what would accompany it in terms of the word's lack of straightness on the line, or the sorts' [lack of] [p. 4] being completely level. So there were some sorts that were higher than the [main] line, while others were lower, with some of them [made] by mounting two or three or four letters such that they fit together a little or a lot, depending upon the extent of the immoderation in their interlinking and mounting. This was the source of imperfection and disarray, since it is necessary, in accordance with the requirements of the art of printing and of casting sorts, that a sort must not occupy [anything] but the space that is designated for it. Then, if the voweling apparatus (the vowel markers)[9] was added, it would be hard to [the point of] impossible to determine the letter intended for voweling because of the sorts' interlinked and mounted [natures]. The result of this makes correct pronunciation and understanding decidedly difficult. That is due to the difficulty of the method of printing for voweling words with vowel markers, which created two supplementary lines for the vowel markers above and below the [main] lines.[10]

Thus even those skilled in reading hesitate to recognize the intended letter elucidated by the vowel marker, [whether it be] placed above or below. Add to that how much the presses suffer from the difficulties of this method, and how they bear the burdens of the deficiencies that implementing this ineffective complexity produces.

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9   Appendix letter (ا) appears as [p. 13], where Nadīm identifies the 'voweling apparatus (the vowel markers)' sorts as (حركات الشكل) أداة الضبط.

10 We translate سطر and الأسطر المعتادة as '[main] line(s)'. The term corresponds to the baseline of typesetting, the imaginary horizontal line upon which the bodies of letters rest. See Gacek, 2009, 142–143.

المرحلة الثانية سنة ١٩٠٢
لجنة إصلاح حروف الطباعة العربية التي أوجدها المغفور له
محمد علي باشا الكبير

في سنة ١٩٠٢ فطنت الحكومة المصرية (وزارة المالية) الى ضرورة إصلاح هذه الحالة، فشكلت لجنة برئاسة المرحوم ابراهيم نجيب باشا وكيل وزارة الداخلية وعضوية المرحومين أمين سامي باشا وأحمد زكي باشا والشيخ حمزه فتح الله وشيلو باشا، لإصلاح هذه الحروف وتحسينها، انتهت أعمالها الى اختصار حروف الطباعة الى ٤٦٤ حرفًا بدلًا من التسعمائة التي كانت مستعملة منذ إدخال الطباعة في مصر.

ثم رأت اللجنة ضرورة إعادة كتابة الحروف من جديد بخط النسخ، واختارت لهذا العمل المغفور له محمد جعفر بك الخطاط الشهير. وكان من رأي اللجنة في كتابة الحروف وقتئذ عدم الالتزام قواعد خط [p. 5] النسخ الأصلية في الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة، والاقتصار على استعمال مفردات الحروف الهجائية بأشكالها المختلفة، لولا معارضة المرحوم جعفر بك لهذا الرأي، وإشارته بإبقاء الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة التي يقتضيها المقام بوصف خط النسخ فنًا من الفنون الجميلة.

The Second Stage: 1902

The Committee for Reforming the Sorts of Arabic Printing that Were Founded by the Great Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, the Deceased

In 1902, the Egyptian Government (the Finance Ministry) realized the necessity of reforming this situation. So it established a Committee to reform and improve these typefaces under the Presidency of the deceased Ibrāhīm Najīb Pasha, Deputy of the Ministry of the Interior, and [with] the membership of the deceased Amīn Samī Pasha, Aḥmad Zakī Pasha, Shaykh Ḥamzah Fatḥallah, and Shīlū Pasha.[11] Its efforts came to an end with the reduction of the typeface to 464 sorts instead of the nine hundred that had been used since the introduction of printing to Egypt.[12]

The Committee then saw it necessary to rewrite the letters in the *naskh* script, and it chose for the job the famous calligrapher, the deceased Muḥammad Jaʿfar Bey.[13] It was of the Committee's opinion at that time to write the letters without following the original rules [p. 5] of the *naskh* script regarding the mounted and interlinked letters, and solely limiting them to the use of single alphabetical letters in different forms.[14] [This might have occurred] except for the opposition of the deceased Jaʿfar Bey to this opinion, and his instruction to preserve the mounted and interlinked letters that are required for the *naskh* script's standing as one of the fine arts.

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11 Many of the listed individuals have entries in Goldschmidt's *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (2000), and the career of Aḥmad Zakī Pasha (1868–1934) is examined in detail by Umar Ryad. Ryad's article (2018, 153) mentions this particular committee and confirms the list of members.

12 In the original handwritten document, Nadīm shifts between using numerals and spelling out numbers. We have preserved these differences in both the transcription and the translation.

13 Muḥammad Jaʿfar Bey (d. 1916) drew the letters upon which the official sorts of al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya were based (Suit 2020, 67).

14 We translate the phrase مفردات الحروف الهجائية بأشكالها المختلفة as 'single alphabetical letters in different forms'. The phrase indicates the various permutations that Arabic letters take in different word positions, and the sentence refers to a printing practice in which letter sorts would be assigned to each positional variation without any additional ligatures or letter combinations.

وقد أخبرني المرحوم أمين سامي باشا أحد أعضاء تلك اللجنة أن المرحوم جعفر بك الخطاط هدّد اللجنة بالانقطاع عن عمله إن هي أصرّت على رأيها. وكان أن وافقت اللجنة على استبقاء الكثير من تلك الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة تحت هذا التهديد. على أن جعفر بك زاد فيما كتبه بعض حروف متراكبة ومتداخلة لم تكن في الطريقة القديمة.

ولا تزال هذه الحروف التي انتهت إليها هذه اللجنة سنة ١٩٠٦ مستعملة بالمطبعة الأميرية وبمطابع الحكومة الأخرى الى الآن. ولم تتعرّض تلك اللجنة في أعمالها، في قليل أو كثير، لإصلاح طريقة ضبط حروف الطباعة بحركات الشكل، بل تركتها على ما كانت عليه في سطرين تكميليين لحركات الشكل فوق وتحت الأسطر المعتادة كما كانت عليه الحال منذ إدخال الطباعة الى مصر، اللهم إلا إذا استثنينا ما قام به — فيما بعد — والدي المرحوم مصطفى أفندي نديم الخبير الفني للجنة. فإنه حين تبيّن أن اللجنة — وقد انتهت من أعمالها — لم تعرض لهذا الموضوع، وكانت الحروف الجديدة قد صبّت بحجم لم تراع فيه الحاجة الى ضبطها من أعلى أو من أسفل، وكان قد بُدِئ فعلا في استعمال تلك الحروف في طبع الجريدة الرسمية وغيرها — فانه استطاع أن يجعل الضبط السفلي فقط في صلب الحرف بطريقة التجويف الجانبي، وهو لا يزيد على الكسرة والكسرتين، مع ما في ذلك من صعوبة ضبط الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة.

أما ضبط الحروف من أعلى، فقد تركت على ما كانت عليه في سطر تكميلي بطريقة دقيقة [p. 6] مرهقة مملّة للعامل، فضلا عن صعوبة عملها أو تعديلها أو إصلاح أي خطأ فيها، وهي مع ذلك قابلة للتعثر والاختلال.

على أن الفرصة كانت مؤاتية لجعل الضبط العلوي في صلب الحروف أيضا، ولكن كيف كانت السبيل له الى ذلك، والحروف صبّت كما أسلفت بحجم لم تراع فيه الحاجة الى ضبطها، وكان سيف جعفر بك الخطاط لا يزال مُصْلَتًا لاستبقاء الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة. وهذا ما نريد التحرّر منه الآن في أمر الطباعة.

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❋   ❋

The late Amīn Samī Pasha, who was a member of this Committee, told me Jaʿfar Bey the calligrapher threatened to withdraw from the proceeding if the Committee insisted on its opinion. Under this threat, the Committee agreed to preserve many of these mounted and interlinked letters. Jaʿfar Bey even added some mounted and interlinked letter sorts that he composed, which did not exist in the old [printing] method.

The sorts that this Committee settled upon in 1906 are still used to this day in al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya and in other government presses. The Committee in its works did not meddle with reforming the way of voweling the sorts with vowel markers, either a little or a lot. Instead, it left them as they were with the two supplementary lines for vowel markers above and below the main lines, as it has always been since the introduction of printing to Egypt, with the exception of the efforts done by my father, the late Muṣṭafā Nadīm Effendi, the technical expert of the Committee. For when the Committee made clear – having finished with its works – that it did not wade into this subject, and the new letters were cast in a size that did not take into account the need for them to be voweled from above or from below, and the use of these sorts had really begun for printing the official paper and others – then it became possible to enter the lower voweling only in the body of the sort by way of a side cavity, though not by more than a *kasra* or two. However, it was still difficult to vowel mounted and interlinked sorts.

With regards to voweling sorts from above, it was left as it was with a supplementary line. [That is, it was a left] in a way that was exacting [p. 6] and exhausting for the worker, especially given the difficulty of using [the sorts], straightening them, or correcting any error within them, such that they were prone to slippage and falling out of order.

However, the opportunity arrived to add upper-level voweling to the main body of letters too [i.e., as opposed to voweling sorts from above with a supplementary line], but how to do this [was unclear], for the sorts were cast, as I mentioned before, in a size that did not take into account the need to vowel them, and the sword of Jaʿfar Bey was still drawn to preserve the mounted and interlinked sorts. This is what we now need to be liberated from when it comes to printing.

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❊   ❊

ومن الحق أن هذه الحروف التي انتهت إليها اللجنة تعدّ مفخرة لا نظير لها للطباعة العربية في الشرق، وآية فريدة يسجلها التاريخ في القرن العشرين لكاتبها المغفور له جعفر بك الخطاط عليه رضوان الله.

فيتبين لمعاليكم — من كل هذا — أن صعوبة طريقة الضبط لمفردات الكلمة ضبطا سليما صحيحا وسهلا في الطباعة وتعذر ضبطها، على الأخص، في الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة كان ولا يزال سببا في خطأ وتحريف كثير من المطبوعات العلمية والأدبية وغيرها منذ قرن وثمانية وعشرين عاما، فضلا عن إحجام المؤلفين والناشرين عن إخراج كتبهم مضبوطة، حتى قلّ المضبوط منها، فعمّت الشكوى وقامت الضجة أخيرا حول تيسير القراءة العربية.

وليس من شك في أن الكلمات العربية أحوج ما تكون الى الضبط لمكان الأوضاع الصرفية وحركات الإعراب، ولا سبيل لضبطها إلا بالشكل الذي هو أداة الضبط المعروفة، والذي [p. 7] نسعى الآن الى تيسير طريقة استعماله في الطباعة.

وبحسب اختباري في الطباعة في الأربعين سنة الماضية، وعلى الأخص في الخمس وعشرين سنة الأخيرة منها كمدير لمطبعة دار الكتب المصرية، وصلتي فيها بالمؤلفين والطابعين وغيرهم، أرى أن كثيرين منهم يسرفون في وضع الشكل كاملا في كتبهم دون ضرورة. فحبذا لو اقتصدوا في وضعه واقتصروا منه على الضروري الحتم، فان أكثر الكلمات العربية لا يحتاج الى شكل، وأنه يجب الاستعانة إذا دفعت الحاجة، وفي تلك الحالة لا يكون عسيرا ولا ضارًا. وهذا ما يراه بحق حضرتا الأستاذين علي الجارم بك والمرحوم أنطون الجميّل باشا.

In truth, the sorts achieved by this Committee count as a source of unequalled pride for Arabic printing in the East, and a unique marvel that twentieth-century history remembers the late Jaʿfar Bey the calligrapher for drafting, God bless him.

But it should be clear to Your Excellency − from all this − that the difficulty of the method of voweling the single sorts of a word soundly, correctly, and easily while printing, and the infeasibility of voweling the mounted and interlinked sorts especially, has been and continues to be for one hundred and twenty-eight years a cause of error and great phonetic corruption for scientific and literary printings and others. Especially for the authors and publishers who have refrained from producing their books with voweling, such that the voweled [books] among them decreased, complaints spread, and noise was finally raised for facilitating Arabic reading.

Undoubtedly, Arabic words most decidedly need what vowel markers offer for establishing grammatical positioning,[15] and there is no way to do that except through the markers, which is the known apparatus for voweling, and which [p. 7] we are now striving to ease the way for using in printing.

On account of my forty years of experience in printing, and especially the last twenty-five years of them as the Director of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya press, I have gotten to know authors and printers and others, and to see that many of them are overly indulgent in unnecessarily using vowel markers exhaustively throughout their books. How much better it would be if they were more economical in their use of vowel markers, restricting them only to what is definitively necessary. For most Arabic words do not need these markers; they should only be resorted to when the need arises, and in that case it should not be difficult or detrimental [to add them]. This was what the esteemed ʿAlī al-Jarīm Bey and the late Anṭūn al-Jumayyil Pasha[16] saw fit.

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15 We have condensed and translated the phrase الأوضاع الصرفية وحركات الإعراب as 'grammatical positioning'. The phrase refers to the grammatical role of desinential vowels in Arabic, or vowels placed at the end of a word to signify changes in grammar and inflection.

16 Anṭūn al-Jumayyil Pasha (b. 1887) was an editor of *al-Ahrām* newspaper and an official translator for the Egyptian Ministry of Finance. He later served in the senate and was appointed as a member of the Academy for the Arabic Language (<https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/أنطون_الجميل> accessed on 12 Jan. 2022).

المرحلة الثالثة سنة ١٩٤٨

طريقتنا المقترحة للطباعة وهي تلخص في الاقتصار على استعمال مفردات الحروف الهجائية بأشكالها الأربعة المختلفة، والتحرّر من التزام قواعد خط النسخ الأصلية فيما يتصل بالحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة.

ولهذا أرى أنه يجب الآن، للأسباب التي سلفت، أن يفصل بين الطباعة العربية باعتبارها وسيلة لنشر الثقافة والمعارف، وبين الخط العربي باعتباره فنّا من الفنون الجميلة. فمتى تقرّر ذلك وجب التحرّر في الطباعة من استخدام الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة التي التزمها فيما سبق مبتكرو الطباعة مراعاة لقواعد خط النسخ الأصلية، والاكتفاء باستخدام مفردات الحروف الهجائية بأشكالها الأربعة المختلفة المعروفة في الطباعة والمبينة في الملحق حرف (ا) وعدّتها ١١٣ مع استثناء استعمال ثلاثة حروف من الحروف المتراكبة فقط، إذ لا مندوحة عنها وهي لفظ الجلالة (ﷲ) فان هذا الاسم الكريم كثير الشيوع والاستعمال وله رسم خاص به فيجب احترامه والمحافظة [p. 8] عليه، فان استعماله بحروف الطباعة المفردة مما تنفر منه الأذواق. وكذلك الأمر في حرفي (لا ـلا) فانه يكاد يكون من المتعذر استعمالهما بالحروف المفردة، ولا ضرر من استبقاء هذه الحروف الثلاثة على حالها لسهولة وضع حركات الشكل عليها، فيكون مجموع الحروف اللازمة في طريقتنا ١١٦ حرفا فقط بدلا من الـ٤٦٤ حرفا المستعملة الآن في مطابع الحكومة، وهي كافية لكل ما يتطلبه فن الطباعة من تمثيل الكلمات والجمل العربية، وما يتطلبه النطق الصحيح بحركات الشكل المعروفة الآن، دون أن يكون في ذلك مساس بجوهر اللغة وأصولها. ينظر الملحق حرف (ب).

The Third Stage: 1948

Our proposed method for printing can be summarized by restricting the use of sorts to single alphabetical letters in their four different forms, and by liberation from adherence to the original rules of the *naskh* script with regard to mounted and interlinked sorts.

Thus, I see that it is now necessary for aforementioned reasons to distinguish between Arabic printing as a means to disseminate culture and knowledge, and Arabic calligraphy as one of the fine arts. When that is determined, then it is necessary for printing to be liberated[17] from the use of mounted and interlinked sorts, upheld thus far by the inventors of printing in observance of the original rules of the *naskh* script, and [for printing to] get by with the use of alphabetical letters and their four different forms known in printing. [They are] shown in appendix letter (ا) and are 113 in number, [and to them are added] exceptionally three ligatures from the mounted sorts, since there is no alternative for them.[18] These are the word of majesty (ﷲ) [for God], for this lofty designation is much in circulation and use and it carries a special value which should be respected and preserved, [p. 8] for deploying it in separate printed sorts would be distasteful. This is also true of the two ligatures (لا and لحـ), as it is almost impossible to use them with separated letters. There is no harm with keeping these three sorts as they are because it is easy to add vowel markers to them. Thus the total number of necessary [letter] sorts in our method would be only 116, instead of the 464 sorts used currently in the government presses, and they are sufficient for all that the art of printing requires for representing Arabic words and sentences. [They are also sufficient for] what correct pronunciation requires presently via the known vowel markers, without interfering with the essence of the language and its principles. Refer to appendix letter (ب).

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17 The Arabic text, which reads وجب التّحرّر في الطباعة, is reflexive. The phrasing implies that a communal 'we' should be liberated. Nadīm is therefore not advocating for a specific position, but a position that is in service to the greater community.

18 Nadīm labels these three ligatures as الحروف المتراكبة ('the mounted letters') in appendix letter (ا). In Nadīm's presentation, the first of these ligatures, (ﷲ) [for God], includes the *shadda* but it does not include the dagger *alif*.

ولذا ينبغي صبّ الحروف المقترحة الآن والمبينة في الملحق حرف (ا) في قوالبها المحفوظة بمصنع صبّ الحروف بالمطبعة الأميرية بحجم أكبر نوعا بمقدار يفي بحاجة الشكل من أعلى ومن أسفل حسب ما يتطلبه الفن دون حاجة الى سطر تكميلي من أعلى. أما الحروف الرفيعة ذات الشبك القصير فيزاد طول الشبك فيها عند صبّها بمقدار يكفي لحركة الشكل على ألّا يزيد سمكها مع حركة الشكل عن سمك الحرف الأصلي حتى لا تتعرّض للكسر. وأن تكون الحروف مجوّفة الجوانب بطريقة تجعلها صالحة لأن تلتصق حركات الشكل وتدخل فيها فيؤمن الوقوع في الزلل.

وسيترتب على هذه الطريقة إصلاح عظيم هو تسهيل الطباعة العربية، وتوضيح الكلمات، وتخليص حروفها بعضها من بعض، ومنع الالتباس، دون تعرّض لخطأ أو لحن أو تعثر أو اختلال أو كسر مما هو واقع ومعروف الآن في الطباعة. ذلك لأنها تقضي أن يكون كل حرف من الحروف الهجائية بأشكاله المختلفة في الطباعة له حيّز مستقل بذاته وخاص به، فلا يختل أو ينحرف وضع حركة الشكل فوقه أو تحته، فضلا عما في ذلك من إيجاد [p. 9] التناسق الهندسي المضبوط في كل السطور، وهذا مما يزيد الكلمات والسطور اعتدالا وضوحا دون أن تنتقل أو تنحرف حركات الشكل عند الطبع عن مواضعها، من حرف يُقصد ضبطه الى آخر غير مقصود، فتخلص الكلمة بحروفها وأداة الضبط فيها من هذا التعقيد العقيم، فضلا عما في ذلك من تيسير العمل على مرتّبي الحروف، وتسهيل إصلاح تجارب الطبع على المؤلفين والطابعين، وتشجيعهم على إخراج كتبهم مضبوطة، وقلة النفقات وزيادة المقطوعية.

Therefore the suggested sorts ought to be cast now, based upon the appendix letter (ﺍ), in the preserved molds of al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya's sort foundry in a size that is somewhat larger in measure [in order to] satisfy the need for vowel markers from above and below according to what the art demands, without resorting to a supplementary line from above. As to the thin sorts possessing the short joiner,[19] the joiner therein should be lengthened when casting it to a size sufficient for the vowel marker, on the condition that its thickness with the vowel marker does not exceed the thickness of the original sort, such that it is not susceptible to breaking. The sorts should be [cast] hollow in the sides in a way that makes them able to have the vowel markers adhere to them and enter into them so as to be safe from falling into error.

A great reform should result from [following] this method, which is simplifying Arabic printing, clarifying words, and liberating letters from each other, while preventing ambiguity without being exposed to error, grammatical mistake, slippage, falling out of order, or breaking, as currently occurs and is common in printing. This is because [the method] requires that there be for each letter of the alphabet, in its different forms of printing, an independent space of its own, so that there is no falling out of order or deviation in entering vowel markers from above or below it, and so as to establish [p. 9] technical, controlled consistency[20] in all of the lines. [The method] increases the clarity of the words and the evenness of the lines without moving or distorting the vowel markers from their positionings while in press, [e.g.] from a letter intended to be voweled to one that is not, so that the word escapes [intact] from this inexorable complication with its letters and vowel markers. It also simplifies the work of typesetters, facilitates the fixing of printed proofs by authors and printers, encourages them to publish voweled versions of their books, and reduces [their] expenses while increasing [their] consumption.

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19 We translate شبك as 'joiner'. The term indicates the short horizontal line that cursively connects one letter to the next.

20 We translate the phrase التناسق الهندسي المضبوط as 'technical, controlled consistency'. The middle word هندسي also carries connotations of geometry, engineering, and design, all of which are important in practices of printing and typography.

طريقة الطباعة في مطابع الحكومة

إن الطريقة المتبعة الآن في مطابع الحكومة تنشأ عنها عوائق مضرة بالعمل وبالطباعة، لأن وضع حركات الشكل فيها لا يمكن أن يكون فوق أو تحت الحرف المقصود تماما بسبب تداخل الحروف وتراكبها، يضاف الى ذلك ما في إحداث سطر تكميلي دقيق لحركات الشكل فوق الأسطر المعتادة من عمل شاق في الطباعة يحتاج الى دقة ومهارة في العمل والى زمن والى أجر مضاعف. هذا الى ما يقع من الخطأ والتحريف وما يستدعيه التغيير والتبديل في حركات الشكل وغيرها بسبب التصحيح، لأن حذف أي كلمة أو حركة من حركات الشكل أو إضافة أخرى في أي سطر بعد إعداده يقتضيان حتما إعادة العمل من جديد، وفي ذلك من ضياع الوقت وزيادة الأجر ما لا يخفى.

على أن استعمال مفردات الحروف في الطباعة دون المتراكبة منها قد أصبح شائعا ومألوفا الآن في طبع الجرائد والمجلات وفي كثير من الكتب بفضل استعمال آلات صف الحروف العربية الحديثة، وحاجة مخترعيها الى الاقتصاد فيها على طريقة استعمال هذه الحروف دون [p. 10] غيرها في آلاتهم، وهي مقبولة الصورة سهلة القراءة. غير أنه أسيء اختيار خطها وهذا ميسور يمكن إصلاحه وتحسينه ما دامت العناية بتحسينها متوافرة.

وبهذه المناسبة أذكر أن الأستاذ شفيق متري أحد أصحاب دور الطباعة الكبرى في مصر قد قام أخيرا باصلاح هذه الحالة في الآلات التي جلبها حديثا من هذا النوع بما يقرب من خط المرحوم جعفر بك. ولا يزال يعمل بجد ونشاط لإدخال طريقة الضبط بالشكل في هذه الآلات.

The Method of Printing in Government Presses

The method currently used in government presses leads to harmful obstacles in the work [of typesetting] and printing. This is because placing vowel markers this way cannot be done at all from above or below the intended sort due to the interlinking of the letters and their mounting. Additionally, [there is] the arduousness of generating a thin supplementary line above the main lines, as printing [it] requires precision and skill in the work, as well as double time and pay. [This government method] also leads to error and distortion, and demands changing and substituting vowel markers and other [sorts]. Correcting causes [this issue] because erasing any word or vowel marker or adding [them] to any line after its preparation inevitably requires restarting the work anew, which entails an unavoidable loss in time and an increase in cost.

Nevertheless, deploying single letters in printing without one mounting another has become common and familiar now in the publication of newspapers, magazines, and many books. [This is] thanks to the use of modern Arabic typesetting machines[21] and to their inventors' concern for economizing by employing these [single] letters without [p. 10] other [sorts] in their machines. They are satisfactory in appearance and easy to read. However, the [style of] script is badly chosen, though that is easy to fix as long as the interest in its improvement is ample.

On this point, I [should] mention that the esteemed Shafīq Mitrī,[22] one of the owners of the great publishing houses in Egypt, has recently taken it upon [himself] to fix this issue in the machines of this type that he acquired as of late, which come close to the script of the deceased Jaʿfar Bey. He continues to work seriously and actively to introduce a method of voweling to these machines.

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21 The phrase آلات صف الحروف العربية الحديثة, which we translate as 'modern Arabic typesetting machines', likely refers to Linotype machines, which were used by printers in the Arabic world from the 1930s onward. The Arabic terms آلات صف imply that these modern machines work in rows and lines. For discussion of Arabic Linotype machines, see Nemeth 2017, Nemeth 2018, and Tracy 1975.

22 Shafīq Mitrī was the owner of دار المعارف (Dār al-Maʿārif), an Egyptian publishing house founded in 1890: <https://cairobookstop.wordpress.com/publishing-houses/dar-al-maarif/> accessed on 12 Jan. 2022.

وأذكر أنه عندما ظهرت جريدة الأهرام مطبوعة بحروف هذه الآلات واطلعت عليها لأول مرة — بدرت مني، لما اعتراني من دهش — هذه الجملة: لا حول ولا قوّة إلا بالله، إن هؤلاء القوم يريدون أن يغيّروا ديننا. ولكن مع مرور الأيام تعوّدتها وألفت قراءتها في جميع الجرائد والمجلات الأخرى. ولم يكن نفوري منها أوّل الأمر إلا لما فطر عليه الإنسان من تعصب لما ألفه في ماضيه، وما تكوّن في نفسه من عادات.

<center>طريقة الطباعة في المطابع الأهلية</center>

أما في المطابع الأهلية، فعلى الرغم من تجويف الحروف بها لحركات الشكل من أعلى ومن أسفل، فإن الحالة فيها غاية في التعقيد. فطريقة وضع الشكل على الحرف تكون في الغالب محوّلة عن مواضعها، لأنها تكون في العادة منحرفة عن الحرف المقصود ضبطه، قبله أو بعده، من فوق كانت الحركة أو من تحت، وذلك بسبب زيادة سمك الحركة من سمك الحرف المقصود ضبطه في أكثر الحروف الرفيعة ذات الشبك القصير، وهي [p. 11] مع ذلك عرضة للكسر لسوء طريقة صبّها وتعدّد صورها ارتفاعا وانخفاضا. فالحرف الواحد من أحرف الكلمة في هذه الصورة له أنواع من حركات الشكل مختلفة الأوضاع لتعدّد أشكال كل حرف من الحروف الهجائية، فتظهر أداة الضبط مع حروف الكلمة في شكل ينفر منه الذوق وتنبو عنه العين، ويحار القارئ في تبيّن حركات الشكل مع مفردات الحروف.

I remember when *al-Ahrām* newspaper appeared in letters printed by these machines and I saw them for the first time – this sentence occurred to me in my astonishment: 'God save us, these people want to change our religion'. But as the days passed, I got used to them and became familiar with reading them in all of the other newspapers and magazines. My initial aversion was nothing but mankind's instinctive bias in favor of [what is] familiar in the past and habits already formed.

The Method of Printing in Private Presses

As for the private presses,[23] despite their hollowed sorts for vowel markers from above and below, the situation is extremely complicated. The method of placing the vowel marker upon the sort usually displaces [the vowel marker's] positionings, because the vowel marker tends to deviate from the letter intended to be voweled, [falling] before it or after it [regardless of] whether the marker was above or below [the intended letter]. That is because of the greater thickness of the vowel marker compared to the thickness of the letter [sort] intended to be voweled in most of the thin letters possessing a short joiner. The [letter sorts] are [p. 11] moreover prone to breaking because they are cast in a poor manner and [because] of the diversity of the highness and lowness of their configurations. Each of the letter [sorts] of the word in this way therefore has vowel markers with a variety of differing placements due to the diversity of the forms of each letter of the alphabet. Thus the vowel markers and the letters of the word appear in a manner that eschews good taste and is displeasing to the eye, and the reader is left confused in discerning the vowel markers and the[ir corresponding] individual letters.

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23 We translate المطابع الأهلية as 'private presses', and we understand the term as encompassing a diverse set of presses that do not belong to the state.

ولم تكن المصانع الأهلية لصبّ حروف هذه المطابع متحدة في الغاية، بل لكل مصنع منها طريقته الخاصة في صنع الحروف وحركات الشكل، حتى تعدّدت وتنوّعت أشكال هذه الأداة على هذه الصورة لاختلاف وجهات النظر في طريقة صبّها حتى بلغت ٧٢ صورة، على أنها في الواقع لا تزيد على ١٨، فنرجو الله مخلصا أن يوفق أصحاب هذه المصانع فيوجهوا طرقهم نحو هذه الغاية، وذلك بالاقتصار على استعمال مفردات الحروف الهجائية في الطباعة دون الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة.

وإني يا معالي الرئيس لعلى يقين تام أنه باستعمال هذه الطريقة الجديدة المقترحة للطباعة نكون قد يسّرنا القراءة العربية الصحيحة بغير خروج عن أصول أوضاعها العامة المألوفة، ولا تغيير لحروفها ولا تعديل لشكلها، فنأمن بقاءها حافظة لتراثنا العلمي والأدبي الذي كتب بها، فيعمّ المنفع، وتسهل الطباعة وتقل النفقات، وتمتنع الشكوى من التصحيح والتحريف، ويكثر الإنتاج، وييسر إخراج الكتب العلمية والأدبية وغيرها مضبوطة بالشكل اللازم للنطق الصحيح السليم.

[p. 12] فاذا أقرّ المجمع هذه الطريقة وعمل لتنفيذها فاني مستعد كل الاستعداد لإخراجها من حيّز القول الى العمل. ولتحقيق ذلك أرجو أن يطلب الى وزارة المالية أن تصدر أمرها للمطبعة الأميرية بإجراء صب الحروف المطلوبة بمصنع صبّ الحروف بها وتعديل صبّ الحروف الرفيعة منها بإطالة الشبك فيما يحتاج منها الى الإطالة، وذلك في الحروف اللازمة لطبع الكتب العلمية وغيرها التي يراد ضبط كلماتها. أما فيما عدا ذلك من المطبوعات فيجوز استعمال الحروف الحالية بحجمها الحالي وبطريقتها الحالية من حروف متراكبة ومتداخلة ما دام الضبط لا يتناولها، والله الموفق.

يناير سنة ١٩٤٨   محمد نديم
مدير المطبعة بدار الكتب المصرية

The private foundries for casting the letter sorts of these presses were not united in [their] approach. Rather, each foundry among them had its own particular method for manufacturing the letters and vowel markers, to the point that the forms of these [vowel markers] proliferated and varied in configuration because of the different viewpoints on the method for casting them, such that [the vowel markers] amounted to 72 configurations, though they should not exceed 18 in reality.[24] So we beseech God, the Savior, to bring luck to the owners of these factories so that they direct their methods towards this end, and that is [by] restricting [themselves to] using single alphabetic letters in printing without mounted and interlinked letters.

Your Excellency the President, I am completely certain that by using this new suggested method for printing, we will have paved the way for reading Arabic correctly without departing from the principles of its prevalent customary rules, or changing its letters or modifying its markers. We thereby ensure that it continues to preserve our scientific and literary heritage that has been written through it. Benefit will spread, printing will be easier and expenses will be reduced, complaints from correction and distortion will be prevented, and production will increase. [This will] facilitate the publication of scientific, literary, and other books that are voweled with the necessary markers for correct, flawless pronunciation.

[p. 12] If the Academy adopts this method and works on implementing it, then I am wholly prepared to move it from the realm of words to action. To achieve this, I kindly request that the Ministry of Finance be asked to issue its command to al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya to start casting the requisite sorts from its foundry and amending the thin sorts by lengthening the joiners as needed, [i.e.] for the letter sorts required for printing learned books and beyond, [wherever] the voweling of words is called for. As for other printings, it is permissible to use the current letter sorts in their current size and via their current method of mounted and interlinked letters, so long as voweling is not applied to them. May God grant success.

January 1948   Muḥammad Nadīm
                          Director of the Press of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya

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24 These 18 vowel markers can be seen in appendix letter (ا) under the heading (حركات الشكل)
أداة الضبط.

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مذكرة

بشأن تيسير القراءة العربية الصحيحة بحروف الطباعة الحالية
وضبطها بحركات الشكل المعروفة اللازمة للنطق الصحيح

مرفوعة

الى حضرة صاحب المعالى رئيس مجمع فؤاد الأول للغة العربية

من

محمد نديم

مدير المطبعة بدار الكتب المصرية
بالقاهرة

Fig. 1a: Memo, cover. All images are reproduced with permission from دار الكتب والوثائق القومية (The National Library and Archives of Egypt).

Fig. 1b: Memo, p. 1: title page.

Fig. 2: Memo, p. 2.

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وسيكون من وراء ذلك تيسير القراءة العربية ، دون الخروج عن أصول الحروف المعروفة

وطبع الكتب العلمية والأدبية وغيرها مضبوطة بالشكل ، وتيسير إصلاح تجارب الطبع على

المؤلفين والناشرين ، فتعم الفائدة والنفع ، إذ الطباعة من أقوى الوسائل للتقدم والرقي ونشر الثقافة والمعارف .

إلا أنه عوّزني إلى مبادئي من أولى الأمر على تحقيق ما فكّرت فيه ، هو الذي قد

في عمل الجمع بذلك . والآن وقد وجدت لهذه الرغبة النبيلة من المجمع ، فإني أنتهز الفرصة

وأعرض ما انتهيت إليه في مراحل الموضوع الثلاث الآتية :

المرحلة الأولى سنة ١٨٢

الطباعة العربية في مصر بحر وقرط التي أوجدها المغفور له محمد علي باشا الكبير

يرجع فضل إدخال الطباعة العربية في مصر سنة ١٨٢ بطريقة منظمة إلى المغفور العظيم

محمد علي باشا الكبير ، لأنه رآها أقوى وسيلة للتقدم والإصلاح ، فقد كانت ولا تزال

واسطة لتعميم ثمرات التقدم ونشر لواء الحضارة والعرفان .

لا شبهة في أن الطريقة التي روعيت في ابتكار الطباعة العربية كانت ذات

صعوبات كثيرة ، وذلك لتعدد أشكال كل حرف من حروف الهجاء بحسب موقعه من الكلمة ،

وصورة تركيب بعضها ببعض ثم اتصال بعضها ببعض في بعض . فقد التزم واضعوها قواعد النحو

الأصلية ، فجعلوا كثيراً من الحروف تشاكل في حروف أخرى أو تتراكب بعضها فوق بعض ، وأسرفوا

في تعدد أشكالها وتنوع صورها ، حتى بلغ عدد الحروف التي كانت تستعمل في زمن الوبر (الطباعة)

لم نفطن وأرجعوا هذه الطريقة إلى ما يترتب من عدم استقامة الكلمة في السطر وفساد

Fig. 3: Memo, p. 3.

الحرف نادرًا بها. فكانت هناك بعض حروف مرتفعة وأخرى منخفضة وبعضها يركب من

حرفين أو ثلاثة أو أربعة، ويركب بعضها بعضًا كبيرًا، حسب مقدار الإفراط في تداخلها

أو تراكبها، وكان في ذلك سبب الخلل والاضطراب ما فيه، وإذ يجب بحسب مقتضيات قواعد الطباعة توحيد

الحروف أو تشغيل الحرف إلا جبيزة المقدرة له، ثم إنه وضع أداة الضبط (حركات الشكل) يكون حسبما

تقدّم تبيّنه الحرف المقصود ضبطه، وذلك لتداخل الحروف وتراكبها، فيترتب على ذلك أن

بحسب النظر الصحيح قطعًا. ذلك إلى صعوبة طريقة الطباعة في ضبط الكلمات بالشكل وهي ذاتها

مطبوعة تمثيلية لحركات الشكل فوق وتحت بعد مصدر للعبارة.

على أنه المدرّب يده على القراءة يتردد دائمًا في معرفة الحرف المقصود بما بحركته بالشكل

الموضوع فوق أو تحت. يضاف إلى ذلك ما تلاقيه المطابع من صعوبات في هذه الطريقة وتكلفها

من أعباء لا تتفرع لنتيجة التي تؤدي إليها مع جراء هذا التعقيد العقيم.

المرحلة الثانية سنة ١٩٠٢ه

لجنة إصلاح حروف الطباعة العربية التي أوجدها المغفور له جميل باشا الكبير

في سنة ١٩ نظرت الحكومة المصرية (وزارة المالية) إلى ضرورة إصلاح هذه الحالة فشكلت

لجنة برياسة المرحوم إبراهيم نجيب باشا وكيل وزارة الداخلية وعضوية المرحوم أمين سامي باشا

وأحمد زكي باشا والشيخ حمزة فتح الله وشليم باشا، بإصلاح هذه الحروف وتحسينها، انتهت أعمالها

إلى اقتصار حروف الطباعة إلى ٢٦٤ حرفًا بدلاً من ثمانمائة كانت مستعملة منذ إدخال الطباعة مصر

ثم رأت اللجنة ضرورة إعادة كتابة الحروف مع جميع بخط النسخ، واختارت لذلك المعلم المعروف

محمد جعفر بن الظاهر الشهير. وكان سبب رأي اللجنة في كتابة الحروف وتحسينها عدم لزوم قواعد خطية

Fig. 4: Memo, p. 4.

نسخ الأصلية في الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة ، والاقتصار على استعمال مفردات الحروف الهجائية

بأشكالها المختلفة ، ولا معارضة للمرحوم جعفر بك لهذا الرأي ، وإشارته بإبقاء الحروف المتراكبة

والمتداخلة التي يقتضيها المقام بوصف نسخ منها من الفنون الجميلة

وقد أخبرني المرحوم أسعد باشا أسعد سامي باشا أحد أعضاء تلك اللجنة أن المرحوم جعفر بك قد

قدد اللجنة بالاقتراح محمد إدهمى أهمية على رأيه . وأنا أذكره وافقت اللجنة على استبقاء

الكثير من تلك الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة تحت هذا التصويت . على أن جعفر بك زاد فيها كتب بعض

حروف متراكبة ومتداخلة لم تكن في الطريقة القديمة .

ولا تزال هذه الحروف التي أثبتها المرحوم جعفر بك باللجنة ١٩ مستعملة بالمطبعة الأميرية ومطابع

الحكومة الأخرى الى الآن . ولم تتعرض تلك اللجنة في أعمالها ، في قليل أو كثير لإصلاح طريقة

ضبط حروف الطباعة بحركات الشكل ، بل تركزت على ما كانت عليه في سطرية تكميلية لكتابة الشكل

فوقه وتحت الأسطر المعتادة كما كانت عليه الحال منذ إدخال الطباعة الى مصر ، فلم يهتم بالضبط إلا إذا

استثنينا ما قام به ـ فيما بعد ـ والدي المرحوم مصطفى نديم أفندي الخبير الفني للجنة . فإنه

عبد بنفسه أمر اللجنة ـ وقد أشرت إلى أعمالها ـ لم نعرض لهذا الموضوع ، وكانت الحروف الجديدة قد

صبت بحجم لم يراع فيه الحاجة الى ضبط مد أعلى أو مد أسفل ، وكأنه قد بدأ ظاهرا في استعمال

بعض الحروف في طبع الجريدة الرسمية وغيرها ـ فإنه استطاع أن يجعل الضبط يعمل فقط

في صلب الحروف بطريقه التجويف الجانبي ، وهو لا يزيد على الكسرة والكسرتين ، مع ما في ذلك

من صعوبة ضبط الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة .

أما ضبط الحروف مد أعلى ، فقد تركت على ما كانت عليه في مد تكميلي بطريقة دقيقة

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دفعة مرّة للعامل ، فضلا عن صعوبة عملي أو تسديط أو إصلاح أي خطأ نبرا ، وهي في
ذلك قابلة للتّغير والاختزال .

على أنه القصد كانت مؤتية لحمل الضبط العلوي في صلب الحروف أيضا ، ولكن كيف
كانت السبيل له الى ذلك ، والحروف صبّت كما أسلفت بحجم لم تراع فيه الحاجة الى ضبطها وكان
سيف جعفر بن الخطّاط لا يزال نحتاج لاستيفاء الحروف المركّبة والمتداخلة . وهذا ما يزيد
المحرّر منه المؤونة في أمر الطباعة .

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٭ ٭ ٭

ومما الحمد أنّ هذه الحروف التي اشترتها البراط اللجنة تمتّد ضخمة الى نظير لا القطاعة العربية
في الشرق، وآية فريدة يسجّل التّاريخ في العهد الشريف لكاتبل المنصور له جعفر بن الخطّاط
عليه رضوان الله .

فينبّه لما بكم ـ شكل لهذا ـ أنّ صعوبة طريقة الضبط لمفردات الكلمة ضبطا سليما
سهما وسريعا في الطباعة وتمدّه ضبطا ، على الخصوص ، في الحروف المركّبة والمتداخلة كان
ولا يزال سببا في خطأ وتحريف كثير من المطبوعات العلمية والأدبية وغيرها منفردة وثمانية عشرة
عاما ، فضلا عن إعجام المؤلّف والناشر به عن إخراج كثيرم مضبوطة ، حتى قل المضبوط
مرّاء، فنمّت تشكى وقامت الضجة أخيرا حول تيسير القراءة العربية .

وليس مدمشك في أنّ الكلمات العربية أحوج ما تكون الى الضبط لكمال الاوضاع الجنة
دفعات الإعراب ، ولا سبيل لضبطها إلا بالشكل الذي هو أداة الضبط المعروفة ، والذي

٧/

نفس الأداة إلى تيسير طريقة استعماله في الطباعة .

وحسب اختباري في الطباعة في الأربعين سنة الماضية ، وعلى الأخص في الخمس وعشرين سنة الأخيرة منذ كنت بالمطبعة دار الكتب المصرية ، وعلى احتكاكي فيها بالمؤلفين والطابعين وغيرهم ، أرى أن كثيرين منهم يسرفون في وضع الشكل تامًا في كتبهم دون ضرورة . فإذا لو اقتصروا في وضعه واجتهدوا على الضروري الحتم ، لما أكثر الكلمات العربية لا تحتاج إلى الشكل ، وأنه يجب الاستعانة به إذا دعت الحاجة ، وفي تلك الحالة لا يكون عسيرًا ولا غاليًا : وهذا ما يراه يجمعه
مصرنا الأستاذ ... على الجامع بن والمرحوم أنظره الجميل باشا .

<u>المرحلة الثالثة سنة ١٩٤٨</u>

طريقتنا المقترحة للطباعة وهي تقضي في الاقتصار على استعمال مفردات الحروف
الهجائية بأشكالها الأربعة المختلفة ، والتحرر من التزام خطوط النسخ الأصلية فيما يتصل بالحروف
المتراكبة والمتداخلة .

ولذا أرى أنه يجب التقدم ، وللأسباب التي سلفت ، أن يفضل بيننا الطباعة العربية
باعتبارها وسيلة لنشر الثقافة والمعارف ، وبين الخط العربي باعتباره فنًا من الفنون الجميلة .
حتى تتقرر ذلك وجب للتحرر في الطباعة من استخدام الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة إلى التزم
فيها يستمر يشكرو الطباعة مراعاة لقواعد خط النسخ الأصلية ، والاكتفاء باستخدام مفردات الحروف
الهجائية بأشكالها الأربعة المختلفة المدرجة في الطباعة والمبينة في اللوحة حرف (أ) وعددها ١١٤
مع استثناء استعمال ثمانية حروف من الحروف المتراكبة فقط ، إذ لا مندوحة عنها وهي لفظ الجلالة
(الله) فإنه لهذا الاسم الكريم كثير الشيوع والاستعمال وله رسم خاص به يجب احترامه وحفظه .

Fig. 7: Memo, p. 7.

عليه ، فإنه استعمال لحروف الطباعة المفردة مما يتعذر منه لا ذواته . وكذلك الأمر في

حرف (لا لا) فإنه جاد يكون مستعذر استعمالها بالحروف المفردة ، ولا حصر سه

استثناء هذه الحروف الشاذة على حالها لسهولة وضع حركات لشكل عليها ، فيكون مجموع

الحروف اللازمة في طريقتنا ١١٦ حرفا فقط يدل سه ال ٢٦٤ حرفا لستعمل لرتنفي طابع

الحكومة ، وهي طابعة لكل ما يتطلبه فيه الطباعة سه تمثيل الكلمات والجمل العربية ، وما يتطلبه

النظم الصحيح لحركات لشكل المدونة الآنفة ، دون أنه يكون في ذلك ماسي جوهر لبنية

وأصولها . نظر المجمع حرف (ب) .

ولذا أيضى جبت الحروف المتحركة لآدم والمبنية في للمجمع حرف (أ) في توالبط

لمحفوظة بمصنع جبت الحروف بالطبعة الأميرية يجمعها أكبر نوعا لجعتذ يبعض لحجابة لشكل سه

أعلى وسه أسفل حبت ما يتطلبه النظم دون حاجة الى سط تكسين سه أعلى . أما لحروف

الرئيسة زات الشبت القصير ذاد طول لشبت فيزا عند جتذا يجعتذ يكفي لحركة لشكل

على لآد يزيد سكون مع حركة لشكل بحسن الحرف لأعلى حتى لتتعرض للكسر . وأنه لكون لحروف

مجزئة الجوانب بطريقة تجعل احمالية لأد لتتقصد حركات لشكل وتدخل فيرا فيبوسه لموضع فيها

وسيترتب على هذه الطريقة إصلاح عظيم سه تسريل الطباعة العربية ، وتوضيح

الكلمات ، وتخليص حروف لبعضا سه بعض ، ونظم الاقباس ، دون تعرض لخطأ أو له سه

أو تغير أو اختزال أو كسر مما هو واقع ومعروف الآن في الطباعة . ذلك لأن ط تقضي أنه

يكون لكل حرف سه الحروف الرجائية لشكاله المختلفة في الطباعة له جيز مستقل بذاته ذلتا

به ، فإن بتقل أو يتحرف وضع حركة لشكل فوقه أو تحته ، فضلا عما في ذلك سه إيجاد

التناسب الرئيسى المضبوط فى كل السطر ، وكذا ما يزيد الكلمات وخروجها عن قدر اختيارها

دون أنه تنتقل أو تنحرف حركات الشكل عند الطبع مهما وانبسط ، سهرف يبقى ضبطه

الى آخر غير مقصود ، فتخصص الكومة بمرور وزارة الصناعة فيرظ مسة لهذا التعقيد بتعميم

وضعها فى ذلك مد تيسير العمل على مرتبى الحروف ، وسهولة إصلاح تجارب الطبع على

المؤلفين والطابعين ، وتشجيعهم على إخراج كثير من مضبوطة ، وفق بنفقة وزيادة معقولة

<div align="center">

طريقة الطباعة فى مطابع الحكومة

</div>

إنه الطريقة المتبعة الآن فى مطابع الحكومة تخذ منذ عدة مواقع مضرة بالعمل وبالطباعة

لأنه وضع حركات الشكل فيرظ لا يمكنه أنه يكونه فوق أو تحت الحرف المقصود تماما بسبب تداخل

الحروف وتراكبها ، يضاف الى ذلك ما فى إحداث مطبعة تكمله ضعيد لحركات الشكل فوق

الأسطر المعتادة مما يحمل مشاوم فى الطباعة مما يحتاج الى دقة وبراعة فى العمل والى زمن والى

أجر مضاهف . هذا الى ما يقع مد الخطأ والتحريف وما يستدعيه التغيير والتبديل فى حركة

الشكل وغيرها بسبب التصحيح ، لأنه حذف أى كلمة أو حركة مد حركات الشكل أو إضافة

أخرى فى أى سطر بعد إعداده يقتضيا بدهما إعادة العمل مد جديد ، وفى ذلك مد ضياع

الوقت وزيادة الأجر ما لا يخفى .

على أنه استعمال مفردات الحروف فى الطباعة دون المتراكبة مزايا قد أصبح شائعا

وما ألوفا لدرسه فى طبع الجرائد والمجلات وفى كثير مد الكتب بفضل استعمال آلات صف الحروف

المربية الحديثة ، وجاجة متزمر مرظ الى الاقتصاد فيرظ على طريقة استعمال هذه الحروف دون

غيرها في الترقيم ، وهي مقبولة الصورة سريعة القراءة . غير أنه قد أسيء اختيار خطوط

وهذا ميسور يمكن إصلاحه وتحسينه ما دامت العناية بتحسين نوادرة .

وبهذه المناسبة أذكر أن الأستاذ شفيق متري أحد أصحاب دور الطباعة بكبرى

في مصر قد قام أخيرا بإصلاح هذه الحالة في الآلات التي يجلبها حديثا مهتديا بما بقي

سنة لله المرحوم جعفر بك ، ولا يزال يبذل نشاط لإدخال طريقة الضبط بالشكل

في هذه الآلات .

وأذكر أنه عندما ظهرت جريدة الأهرام مطبوعة بحروف هذه الآلات والمصحف على غلط

لأول مرة — بدأت مني ، ولا اعتراف بعد والشر — هذه الجملة : لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله

إن هؤلاء القوم يريدون أن يفقدونا ديننا . ولكن مع مرور الأيام تعودت وألفت فإذا

في جميع الجرائد والمجلات الأخرى . ولم يكن نظري شيء أول الأمر إلا لما خطر عليه رئيسا

سيصيب لما ألفه في ماضيه ، وما تكرره في نفس مهارات .

طريقة الطباعة في المطابع الأهلية

أما في المطابع الأهلية ، فعلى الرغم من تجويف الحروف بطرحات بشكل رأسي

وسد أسفل ، زاده الحالة فيه لغاية في المقيد . فطريقة وضع الشكل على الحرف تكون في

الغالب محولة مسه و صبط ، لأنه يكون في العادة مترفة مع الحرف المقصور ضبط ،

قبله أو بعده ، مه فوده ظانت الحركة أو سه تحت ، وذلك بسبب زيادة سمت الحركة

مه ست الحرف المقصود ضبطه في أكثر الحروف الرفيعة ذات الشبك القصير ، وهي

مع ذلك معرفة للكسر له، وطريقة ضبطها ونقدر صدورها ارتفاعا وانخفاضا. فالحرف الواحد من أحرف الكلمة في هذه الصورة له أنواع من حركات تشكل مختلفة لأوضاع تتعدد بأشكال كل حرف من الحروف الهجائية، فتنظم أداة الضبط مع حروف الكلمة في شكل ينفر منه الذوق وتنبو عنه العين، ويحار القارئ في تبين حركات تشكل مع مفردات الحرف.

ولم تكن المصانع الأهلية لصب حروف هذه المطابع معدة في الغاية، بل لكل مصنع منزل طريقته الخاصة في صنع الحروف وحركات تشكل، حتى تعددت وتنوعت أشكال هذه الأداة على هذه الصورة لاختلاف وجهات النظر في طريقة ضبط، من بلغت ٧٤ صورة، على أنواع في الواقع لا تزيد على ١٨، فأرجو أنّ مخترعها أن يوفق أصحاب هذه المصانع فيوحدوا طريقهم نحو هذه الغاية، وذلك بالاقتصار على استعمال مفردات الحروف الهجائية في الطباعة دون الحروف المتراكبة والمتداخلة.

وإني بإمكان الرئيس لعلّي يفيده أن أنه باستعمال هذه الطريقة الجديدة المقترحة للطباعة نكون قد يسّرنا القراءة العربية الصحيحة بغير خروج عما مألوف أوضاعها للعامة المألوفة، ولا تغيير لحروف ولا تعديل لشكل، فنأمن بقاءها محافظة لتراثنا العلمي والأدبي بلذى كتب بها، نعيّم النفع، ونسهل الطباعة، ونقل النفقات، ونمنع الشكوى من التصحيح والتحريف، ونكثر الإنتاج، ونيسّر إخراج الكتب العلمية والأدبية وغيرها مضبوطة بالشكل اللازم للنطق الصحيح السليم.

Fig. 11: Memo, p. 11.

فاذا أقرّ المجمع هذه الطريقة وعمل لتنفيذها فانى مستعد كل الاستعداد

بوضعها موضع القول الى العمل . ولتحقيق ذلك أرجو أن يطلب الى وزارة

المالية أن تصدر أمرها للمطبعة الأميرية باجراء صب الحروف الملدوية بمضاعفة صبّ

الحروف برمل وتسهيل صبّ الحروف الرفيعة منعا لاطالة لشبث فيها يحتاج منها الى

الاطالة ، وذلك فى الحروف اللازمة لطبع الكتب العلمية وغيرها التى يراد

ضبطها كلماتها . أما فيما عدا ذلك من المطبوعات فيجوز استعمال الحروف الحالية

بحرفها الحالى وبطريقتها الحالية من حروف متراكبة ومتداخلة ما دام الضبط لا

يتناولها ، والله الموفق ٠٠

يناير ١٩٤٨

محمد نديم

مدير المطبعة بدار الكتب المصرية

Fig. 12: Memo, p. 12.

ملحـــق (١)

بيـان الحـروف الهجائيـة بأشكالها المختلفة اللازمة لكل ما يستدعيه فن الطباعة
من تمثيل الكلمات والجمل العربية وما يستدعيه النطق الصحيح بحركات الشكل المختلفة

(١) الحروف التي لا تتصل بغيرها

عـــدد

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش ص ض

٢٨

ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن ه ة و ى ء

(٢) الحـروف ذات الاتصال الأول

٢٩

ب ت ث ج ح خ س ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ

ف ق ك ل م ن ه ي ة ئ

(٣) الحـروف ذات الاتصال الأخير

٢٧

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش

ص ض غ ع ف ق ك ل م ن ه ة و ى ا

(٤) الحـروف ذات الاتصالين

٢٩

ب ت ث ج ح خ س ش ص ض ط ظ

ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن ه ي ة ئ

١١٣   جملة المفردات

٣   ← [المستثناة من الحروف المتراكبة]   الله لا لا لا

١١٦   الجملة العمومية

أداة الضبط (حركات الشكل)

ـٌ ـٍ ـَ ـِ ـُ ـّ ـْ ـ ـ ـ

علامات الترقيم والأرقام وأداة ضبط الأسطر

ـ ـ ٠ ٩ ٧ ٦ ٥ ٤ ٣ ٢ ١ " " ( ) : ! ؟ ، ؛

Fig. 13: Memo, Appendix letter (ا).

ملحـــق (ب)

نماذج من تمثيل الجمل العربية بحروف الطباعة المفردة دون المتراكبة والمتداخلة في الطريقة
الجديدة المقترحة مضبوطة بحركات الشكل المعروفة من أعلى ومن أسفل ضبطا كاملا

(١) من رد الأستاذ الدكتور منصور فهمي باشا في موضوع تيسير القراءة العربية

... أمّا إذَا قُصِدَ تَيْسِيرُ القِرَاءَةِ لأبْنَاءِ اللُّغَةِ العَرَبِيَّةِ، فَحَسْبُهُمْ حُرُوفُهُمُ الَّتِي
أَلِفُوهَا مُنْذُ زَمَنٍ طَوِيلٍ، وَأَلِفَتْهَا أَذْوَاقُهُمْ، وَتَكَوَّنَتْ مِنْ أُلْفَتِهَا عَادَاتٌ ذِهْنِيَّةٌ.
أَقُولُ حَسْبُهُمْ حُرُوفُهُمْ هذِهِ حِينَ يَضَعُونَ الشَّكْلَ عَلَيْهَا لِيَقْرَأُوا صَحِيحًا ... الخ.

(٢) من مناقشة للأستاذ الدكتور طه حسين بك حول هذا الموضوع

... وَأَعْتَقِدُ أَنَّ مِنْ أَحْسَنِ الأَشْيَاءِ أَنْ نَطْلُبَ إِلَى الحُكُومَةِ إِعْدَادَ جَائِزَةٍ
تُمْنَحُ لأَحْسَنِ طَرِيقَةٍ لِتَيْسِيرِ الكِتَابَةِ. فَلَعَلَّ عِلْمَ العُلَمَاءِ وَمُقْتَرَحَاتِ أَصْحَابِ
الفَنِّ تَنْهَارُ أَمَامَ فِكْرَةٍ يُبْدِيهَا رَجُلٌ مِنَ المُشْتَغِلِينَ بِالطِّبَاعَةِ.

(٣) من رد الأستاذ علي الجارم بك حول هذا الموضوع

... وَإِذَا كَانَ لاَ بُدَّ مِنْ هذِهِ فَإِنَّ إِبْقَاءَ رَسْمِنَا العَرَبِيَّ أَوْلَى وَأَجْدَرُ مَعَ
الاقْتِصَادِ فِي الشَّكْلِ، وَالاقْتِصَارِ مِنْهُ عَلَى الضَّرُورِيِّ الحَتْمِ. وَهُوَ الرَّأْيُ الَّذِي
أَشَارَ بِهِ زَمِيلُنَا الفَاضِلُ أَنْطُونُ الجَمِيلِ بك، فَإِنَّهُ يَرَى بِحَقٍّ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَ الكَلِمَاتِ
العَرَبِيَّةِ لاَ تَحْتَاجُ إِلَى شَكْلٍ، وَأَنَّهُ يَجِبُ الاسْتِعَانَةُ بِالشَّكْلِ إِذَا دَفَعَتِ الحَاجَةُ،
وَأَنَّهُ فِي تِلْكَ الحَالَةِ لاَ يَكُونُ عَسِيرًا وَلاَ يَكُونُ ضَارًّا ... الخ.

(٤) من رد الأستاذ الدكتور فارس نمر باشا حول هذا الموضوع

... وَهُنَاكَ مُشْكِلَةُ الكِتَابَةِ العَرَبِيَّةِ فِي الطِّبَاعَةِ، فَالشَّكْلُ القَائِمُ الآنَ يَكْسِرُ
الحَرْفَ وَيُبْعِدُ عَنْ مَوَاقِعِهِ، فَهُوَ مِنَ الوَجْهَةِ العَمَلِيَّةِ يَعْسُرُ تَنْفِيذُهُ وَيُكَلِّفُ
كَثِيرًا، عَلَى أَنَّهُ مِنَ الوَجْهَةِ الأَدَبِيَّةِ يَصْعُبُ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ نُغَيِّرَ حُرُوفَنَا الَّتِي كُتِبَ
بِهَا تُرَاثُنَا الأَدَبِيُّ ... الخ.

Fig. 14: Memo, Appendix letter (ب).

Part II

Ulrike Stark

Calligraphic Masterpiece, Mass-Produced Scripture: Early Qur'an Printing in Colonial India

Abstract: Scholarship has recently begun to shed light on the understudied history of Islamic printing in South Asia, where the first printed Qur'an was produced by Muslims as early as 1828. This chapter traces the coexisting and competing modes of Qur'an printing in nineteenth-century colonial India, from the first Qur'ans printed with movable type in Hooghly and Calcutta to the ornate lithographed Qur'ans produced across northern India beginning in the 1840s. The second part explores the changes introduced in Qur'an printing by commercial mass production. Focusing on the editions and trade networks of the famous Naval Kishore Press of Lucknow (est. 1858), I discuss the socioeconomic, cultural, material, and aesthetic implications of shifting production technologies and the Holy Book's transformation from calligraphic masterpiece to mass-produced and accessible scripture.

1 Introduction

'Orthodox Mussulmen used formerly only MSS., there are now 7 different Indian editions of the Koran before me, showing the progress of civilization',[1] the famous London bookseller Bernard Quaritch noted in his 1860 book catalogue, drawing attention to the 'neatly executed' lithographed Qur'ans from northern India he had before him. Notwithstanding Quaritch's questionable, though hardly surprising, notion of civilizational progress, the entry of Indian Qur'ans into the international booktrade and Quaritch's praise of local craftsmanship provide a good point of departure for this exploration of the sociocultural, material, and economic conditions of early Qur'an printing in South Asia, a singularly prolific region in the history of Islamic printing. It is little known that Indian Muslims produced a printed Qur'an as early as 1828–1829, barely three years after the Qur'an was first printed in Iran. The relative lack of attention to South Asia is surprising in light of the pioneering impulses originating from the region

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1 Quaritch 1860, 178.

and the vigor of its early commercial print culture, the transregional impact of which is still little understood. Even prestigious publications such as the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* (2005) and the recent *Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies* (2020) provide incomplete and inaccurate information on India's important contribution to early Qur'an printing.[2] This neglect seems all the more remarkable given that nineteenth-century European scholars, be it Gustav Flügel in Leipzig or J. H. Garcin de Tassy in Paris, regularly cited Indian Qur'an editions in their work. More recently, scholars of Islamic intellectual history have begun to highlight the role of print and translation in the circulation and exegesis of Qur'anic knowledge and in promoting the social and religious reform movements initiated by Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century.[3] The present chapter traces the history of early Qur'an printing in India from a book history perspective, foregrounding material, sociocultural, and economic aspects of the nineteenth-century endeavor to bring the holy book of Islam to the Muslim general public. I discuss the phase of transition from manuscript to print culture in South Asian Islam over a period of fifty years, from the first Qur'ans printed with movable type in the 1820s and 1830s to the mass-produced and inexpensive lithograph editions churned out by Indian commercial presses in the second half of the nineteenth century. Focusing on the geographical regions of Bengal and North India, I trace the spread of Qur'an printing from Hooghly and Calcutta, the earliest sites of Qur'an printing in the subcontinent, to the urban centers of the Hindi-Urdu heartland such as Lucknow.

The limited existing research on early Islamic printing in South Asia has often been framed around the idea of Muslim resistance to print and cites nineteenth-century India as a counterexample to the Ottoman Empire and its apparent 'ban' on printing. As Kathryn Schwartz has shown, this is itself a problematic notion.[4] The question of why Indian Muslims adopted print at a faster pace than other Islamic populations was first addressed by Francis Robinson, who argued that despite the centrality of oral transmission in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge, Indian Muslims embraced print at a time when Islam itself was perceived to be at stake.[5] In the colonial situation, Robinson contends, print emerged as a powerful weapon to counteract the combined threat of

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2 Rezvan 2020. Rezvan mentions that the Kazan Qur'ans dominated the market 'in spite of the growing competition from the British-Indian publications', but does not further discuss Indian Qur'an production.

3 See, e.g., Pearson 2008, 90–126; Farooqi 2010; Tschacher 2019; Tareen 2020; see also Wilson 2014.

4 Schwartz 2017; see also Proudfoot 1997, 166.

5 Robinson 1996, 69.

foreign rule, Christian proselytizing, and Hindu revivalism. As a means of broadcasting religious knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of Islamic doctrines and practices, print was crucial in asserting Islamic identity.[6]

Robinson's approach has been criticized for overemphasizing the external threat, while failing to take into account the creative convergence of print, vernacularization, and religious reform in the Indian subcontinent. Print was key to Islamic revival in India – both orthodox and reformist Muslims embraced printing in order to disseminate the scriptural sources of Islam, along with an expanding range of texts in modern Indian languages.[7] The spread of printing in northern India coincided with the rise of Urdu as a medium of instruction, literature, and religious thought; it was closely linked to Muslim efforts to forge new paths for transmitting Islamic knowledge in the vernacular languages spoken by the masses. As Urdu replaced Persian as the lingua franca of north India's educated elites, it gained importance as a medium of religious and scholastic discourse.

More recently, Nile Green in his *Bombay Islam* and *Terrains of Exchange* has proposed a global framework of studying Islamic printing by using the paradigm of 'religious economy'. Green argues that colonial India was characterized by a pluralistic and competitive 'marketplace of religions' shaped by religious entrepreneurs and consumers, in which Christian missionaries served as 'ideological and organizational catalysts'.[8] Muslim printing, he goes on to show, was in large part a response to the onslaught of Protestant printed books – scriptures, tracts, pamphlets, schoolbooks, periodicals – produced by an increasing number of mission presses. Though Green's formulation of the 'evangelical midwifery in the birth of Muslim printing'[9] may not be applicable to specific local contexts, it highlights the role of global technology transfer and directs our attention to the advances in print technology that provided the material conditions for the rise of Islamic printing in the subcontinent.

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6 Robinson 1996, 69; Robinson 1993.

7 Metcalf 1982.

8 Green 2011 and 2014.

9 Green 2014, 97. As outlined below, in Lucknow, for instance, Muslim printing predated religious exchanges with Christians, though Christian actors later collaborated with the Royal Press. The first major encounter between local ulama and Protestant missionaries was a famous religious debate (*munāẓara*) held in 1833. Not to be outdone by their Christian opponents, Muslim debaters were in possession of printed Bibles in Henry Martyn's Arabic and Persian translations (see Powell 1993, 126; 172–173). The Church Missionary Society and American Methodist Mission did not establish a formal presence in the city until after the Great Rebellion of 1857–1858.

2 Set in type: early Qur'ans from Hooghly and Calcutta

The spread of print technology provided Indian Muslims with unprecedented ways to circulate knowledge, claim religious authority, and promote the views of specific groups.[10] Printing and religious revival and reform intersected with one another in mutually constitutive ways, as is best illustrated by the popular vernacular translations of the Qur'an prepared in the late eighteenth century by Shah ʿAbdul Qadir Dehlavi (d. 1814) and Shah Rafiuddin Dehlavi (d. 1817), the sons of the great Muslim theologian, mystic, and religious leader Shah Waliullah Dehlavi (d. 1762). This prolific and influential family of Islamic scholars played a pivotal role in bringing the Qur'an to ordinary Muslims. In order to make the Qur'an more widely accessible, Shah Waliullah authored a pathbreaking commentary in simple and easy Persian titled *Fatḥ al-raḥmān* (1738). His eldest son, Shah ʿAbdul ʿAziz (d. 1824), followed in his father's footsteps with a popular, though incomplete, Persian commentary known as *Tafsīr Fatḥ al-ʿAzīz*.[11] Yet Persian remained an elite language that was not understood by the Muslim masses. The task of translating the Qur'an into the vernacular was first taken up by Shah Rafiuddin, who completed a word-by-word Urdu translation in 1190 AH / 1776 CE. Of greater consequence, however, was his younger brother Shah ʿAbdul Qadir's prose rendering, composed in simple and idiomatic Urdu 'so the common people should understand it without difficulty'.[12] This translation, supplemented subsequently by explanatory notes (*fawā'id*), was completed in 1205 AH / 1791 CE and bore the chronogrammatic title *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān* ('Explicator of the Qur'an'). It holds historical importance not only for being the first complete Urdu rendering of the Qur'an: its posthumous publication thirty-eight years later also marks the beginning of Qur'an printing in India.

Since there was no printing in Delhi prior to the 1830s, the works of Shah Waliullah and his sons were first published in and around Calcutta, the seat of the colonial administration and foremost center of printing and Orientalist scholarship in British India. The first edition of *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*, which included the complete Arabic text of the Qur'an, was produced in the trading town of

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10 Zaman 2019, 280–300.

11 Pearson 2008, 107–110. *Tafsīr Fatḥ al-ʿAzīz* was first printed partially in Calcutta in 1248–1249 AH / 1832 CE.

12 See his '*Tammim bi'l-khair*' contained in the Hooghly edition of 1829. Pearson 2008, 110–111.

Hooghly (Hugli), some 25 miles from Calcutta, in 1245 AH / 1828–1829 CE.[13] The printer, Sayyid ʿAbdullah of Sawana, belonged to a family of Islamic scholars with roots in Lahore. His father, Mir Bahadur ʿAli Husaini, had served as chief *munshī* to John B. Gilchrist, the eminent Scottish orientalist in the Hindustani Department of Fort William College, Calcutta, and was part of a group of Indian scholars who prepared an early Urdu translation of the Qur'an under Gilchrist's direction.[14] Though Sayyid ʿAbdullah may have been introduced to the world of scripture translation and print by his father, his career in religious publishing was initiated by his encounter with the popular mystic and religious reformer Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (d. 1831), who had himself studied with Shah ʿAbdul Qadir before becoming the leader of a proselytizing revivalist movement known as the *Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya* ('Path of Muhammad'). When Sayyid Ahmad visited Calcutta on his way to the Hajj, Sayyid ʿAbdullah became his disciple and joined the group of followers who accompanied him on the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1822–1823. It was during the Hajj that ʿAbdullah first encountered a manuscript copy of ʿAbdul Qadir's *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*, which he copied 'with immense enthusiasm' in the holy city itself:

> And I thought that if this Holy Qur'an with Hindi [i.e. Urdu][15] translation could come into the hands of Muslims of our time, then perhaps they would understand and see the Word of their Sustainer, and through the blessings of the Word, which comes from the mouth of the Creator himself, some guidance (*hidāyat*) would come into their hearts. But for most, this could not be unless it were printed.[16]

In outlining his motivation to print the Qur'an with an Urdu translation, Sayyid ʿAbdullah echoed reformist concerns that Muslims had deviated from the path of pure Islam and begun to indulge in *shirk* (idolatry, polytheism) and *bidʿat*

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13 For a detailed account see Khan 2001, 229–242. Khan's study of Qur'an translations in twenty-three South Asian languages is an invaluable source for tracing the history of Qur'an printing in the region.

14 I was unable to locate a copy of this early Urdu (Hindustani) translation of the Qur'an, which apparently was only partly printed in 1804 (*College* 1805, 224 and 226). Garcin de Tassy refers to it as a 'traduction inédite' (1839, 55). Though Gilchrist intended the Urdu Qur'an to prepare the way 'for a very idiomatical translation of our own scriptures, as also for their favorable reception among the natives of Hindustan', he viewed it primarily as a linguistic project: 'I flatter myself, that our Hindoostanee Qooran will soon become the standard of real excellence in that useful and expressive tongue, since no pains shall be spared to preserve it from unavailing pedantry on the one hand or misplaced useless innovations on the other' (Gilchrist 1803, xxix).

15 Arabic and Persian sources of the period regularly use the term 'Hindi', i.e. the language of Hind or India, to refer to the Urdu language.

16 See his epilogue, or '*Khātima*', [851].

(innovation). This, he notes, caused him 'excessive sorrow and anger'. After returning from the Hajj, he spent two years preparing the edition and also opened a printing press, named Matbaʿ Ahmadi after his spiritual guide.[17] He did so on the advice of several noted Islamic scholars who had been his fellow pilgrims – Shah Waliullah's son-in-law Maulana ʿAbdul Hayy, Waliullah's grandson Muhammad Ismaʿil, and Shah Muhammad Ishaq Dehlavi, a grandson of Shah ʿAbdul ʿAziz – but completed the project without assistance (*be-muʿāwanat*) and 'through the expenditure of many rupees and much toil and self-sacrifice'.[18] Not surprisingly, Sayyid ʿAbdullah's effort to print the Qur'an did not go unopposed. In his epilogue he hints at the attacks by 'imperfect' (*kacce*) and 'ignorant' (*nā-fahm*) Muslims, noting that he prevailed against his opponents by the grace of God who 'threw their derision and envy back upon them' and 'saved this abject writer from their harm'. Given the religio-cultural implications of the new technology of print, he also emphasized the care taken to ensure that the pressmen assigned to the task were all pure (*ṭāhir*) and constant in faith (*namāzī*) and that 'no kind of heedlessness or inelegance' would occur in the printing.[19]

This first Qur'an printed on Indian soil with movable type consists of two parts in one volume, comprising 850 pages in folio. It is a plain-looking book, the only decorative element on the opening pages being the floral-bordered panels holding the Arabic text and interlinear Urdu translation. They evoke the outlines of a mosque, with the phrase '*allāhu akbar*' inscribed in the central cupola, followed by the name of the surah, the place of revelation, and the number of verses. The text pages are devoid of embellishment. Sayyid ʿAbdullah, who calls himself a 'person of low income' (*qalīl al-bizāʿat*), clearly did not have the means to produce a lavishly ornamented book. But more importantly, he prioritized the Word of God, his stated intention being to produce a Qur'an that was accessible and affordable to all believers, whether elite or commoner, or, in his own words, a book for *ʿām-o-khāṣ*. As he writes, he became determined that 'he should print it whatever the condition be and set a price that would cover the printing cost, and that any Muslim brother who has the taste and desire to understand the Word of Allah should face no burden in acquiring it' (see Fig. 1).[20]

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17 Sayyid ʿAbdullah went on to print Shah Waliullah's famous work on Qur'anic hermeneutics, *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī uṣūl al-tafsīr* (1249 AH / 1834 CE). His Ahmadi Press was one of several private presses that printed the writings of Sayyid Ahmad's followers. As early as 1832, a British observer noted 'how extensively the emissaries of this sect have availed themselves of the press to disseminate their tenets' (Colvin 1832, 494).

18 '*Khātima*', [851].

19 '*Khātima*', [851].

20 '*Khātima*', [851].

The Arabic text, set in small and inelegant *naskh*, is fully vocalized. It is un-clear whether Sayyid ʿAbdullah acquired fonts of *naskh* and *nastaʿlīq* from a local type-foundry or cast his own type. In any case, he faced problems of kern-ing and metal-type breakage common to early printers. 'Experts of this art will be well aware of the state of errors in the printing, for despite the greatest care, some letters and lines have slipped out of place during the printing process, and on account of the inconsistency of the ink, in some places the dots are minute, while in others they are [too] bold',[21] he wrote. The printing of Arabic diacritical marks had proved especially difficult. Despite its underwhelming appearance, the Hooghly edition circulated widely among Sayyid Ahmad's reformist circles and beyond; it proved so popular that it was reprinted in 1832. It not only paved the way for a surge in religious publishing in Urdu, but also assumes im-portance for providing a template for subsequent Qur'an printing in northern India, where the most common format would be that of the Arabic *muṣḥaf* with an interlinear Persian or Urdu translation and commentaries in the margins. ʿAbdul Qadir's Urdu prose version and Shah Rafiuddin's word-by-word transla-tion were most frequently reprinted in this manner.[22] As Sayyid ʿAbdullah point-ed out, although ʿAbdul Qadir's translation had been written 'in the form of a *tafsīr*', he had favored the interlinear format, 'because it is difficult while read-ing a *tafsīr* to lift one's gaze from the Holy Qur'an in one place and move it to another at some distance.'[23] ʿAbdul Qadir's explanatory notes (*fawā'id*) were marked by the letter *fā* – offset by asterisks – in the Urdu translation and the margins. In addition, each page gave the name of the surah, the number of the respective *juz'* (a thirtieth section of the Qur'an) and *rukūʿ* (a subdivision of a surah),[24] and a count of verses, allowing readers to easily navigate the text. The paratextual apparatus also included a list of errata and a lexicon of Indic (*ṭheṭh hindī*) words with synonyms.

The significance of the Hooghly edition is underscored by the fact that a copy was presented to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, a gift unusual enough to inspire a comment in the *Asiatic Journal*. 'The circumstance of the *Koran* being recently printed in Calcutta, and a copy of it being presented to a public institu-tion, is rather remarkable considering the repugnance that Mahommedans have

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21 *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*, [422].

22 Shah Rafiuddin's word-by-word translation was first published in Calcutta in 1838. See Khan 2001, 242–245.

23 'Fā'ida', [852].

24 *Rukūʿ*: a group of thematically related verses in a surah that help the reciter identify when *rukūʿ* or bowing in prayer is to be performed. *Rukūʿ* are indicated by the letter ع.

hitherto generally evinced towards the promulgation of their scriptures among people not of their creed',[25] the unnamed commentator wrote, hailing the event as evidence of 'the decline of prejudice' and 'a more liberal feeling' among Muslims. He further suggested that the new accessibility of the Qur'an would have a beneficial effect 'in a moral and literary point of view' as it would inspire 'the lower classes' of Muslims to acquire reading and writing skills. It should also be noted here that the Baptist missionaries at the nearby Serampore Mission Press (est. 1800), the largest Christian printing establishment in South Asia, apparently found ʿAbdul Qadir's Urdu translation important enough to consider reprinting it with an English translation. It remains unclear, however, whether this project materialized.[26]

In 1831, within two years of the Hooghly edition, an Arabic Qur'an was produced in Calcutta by Muhammad ʿAli Khurasani, the author of an Arabic treatise on Qur'anic orthography and rules of recitation contained in the edition. In preparing the edition, Khurasani had been assisted by Hafiz Ahmad Kabir (d. 1849), the assistant secretary at the Calcutta Madrasa and *khaṭīb* (preacher of the Friday sermon) at the madrasa mosque, and by Hafiz Maulvi Muhammad Husain. Khurasani's artful and fairly technical Persian preface suggests that this Qur'an was designed for a scholarly audience. As Khurasani notes, he had printed the Qur'an 'with proper orthography, stops (*awqāf*) and the signs for stops (*rumūzāt-i awqāf*), and elisions (*maqṭūʿ*) and liaisons (*mawṣūl*), and suppressions (*ḥazf*) and additions (*ziyādāt*), coalescenses (*idghām*) and *yarmalūn*'[27] in accordance with the works of premodern exegetes such as Sajawandi, al-Shatibi, and al-Suyuti, which he had studied 'with utmost care'. This Qur'an of 724 pages in royal octavo (25.4 cm × 16.5 cm) is extraordinary in its simplicity, scarce embellishment, and unusual floral ornaments. The visual appearance of the opening pages suggests European influence: while the Arabic text is inscribed in the conventional framed rectangular panels, the oval medallions containing the surah headings and *basmalah*, one with a floral border reminiscent of a laurel wreath, the other with a geometric border, create a hybrid, somewhat 'non-Islamic' look which is reinforced by the figurative representation of three trees displayed prominently on the opening page. What we have

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25 *The Asiatic Journal*, June 1829: 732.

26 Zenker and other early catalogues list an edition of *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*, with English translation, published from Serampore in 1833. It is doubtful whether this edition actually exists. I have not come across any copy nor found any reference to it in missionary sources.

27 *Yarmalūn*: a mnemotechnic term describing the 'six letter' rule of assimilation of *yā, rā, mīm, lām* and *wāw* with *nūn-i sākin* or *nūn-i tanwīn*.

here is an example of a distinctly local element: the tree motif is typical of the tradition of Calcutta woodcut prints. The same woodcut had appeared decades earlier in John B. Gilchrist's *Oriental Fabulist* (Calcutta, 1803), which suggests that it was a standard decorative element used by Calcutta printers at the time. Another noteworthy feature of Khurasani's editorial practice is the use of pagination. From all this it may be surmised that this Qur'an was produced in association with the Calcutta Madrasa and perhaps printed under European supervision (see Fig. 2).

While these early typeset Qur'ans bear historical significance, aesthetically speaking they were unremarkable and compared poorly to India's rich manuscript tradition. With their rather crude typefaces and sparse use of ornamentation, they display the technical constraints of movable type printing and presumably had little visual appeal for Muslim readers. Despite advances in Arabic typography, early Arabic fonts, whether locally cast or imported from Europe, violated the rules of proportion governing *naskh* scripts and failed to reproduce the subtle aesthetic of the reed pen's varied strokes in handwriting.[28] While *naskh* as a Qur'anic script was generally valued for its legibility, this did not necessarily hold true for the printed character: evidence from colonial and missionary sources suggests that nineteenth-century Indian readers were uncomfortable with *naskh* typefaces, finding them both unpleasant and difficult to read.[29] All this changed with the advent of lithography, a new printing technology invented by the German playwright Alois Senefelder around 1798 and introduced into India some twenty years later.[30] In its ability to replicate the aesthetic qualities of handwritten texts and cursive scripts, lithography 'eased the transition from manuscript to printed word, and provided the first effective means of mass book publishing'[31] in Muslim Asia. As Table 1 illustrates, the shift from movable type to lithography in Indian Qur'an printing occurred in the mid-1830s; it was paralleled by a geographical shift from Calcutta to the urban centers of the erstwhile Mughal heartland of northern India.

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28 For the system of proportional script (*al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb*) in Arabic calligraphy, see Osborn 2017, 15–41.

29 Stark 2021.

30 Lithography is a planographic printmaking technique that traditionally uses stone as a printing surface and is based on the mutual repellence of water and grease. The text or design is drawn on a flat stone surface using an oil-based ink. The stone is then wetted and greasy ink applied to it with a roller, making the ink adhere to the already greasy areas. In Indian bookmaking, a more common practice was writing on transfer paper, though some calligraphers perfected the art of drawing directly on the stone in reverse script (see n. 54 below).

31 Proudfoot 1998, 131.

Table 1: Early Indian Qur'an Editions, 1828–1853

Year	Place	Printing Mode	Format
1828–29	Hooghly	typeset	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)
1831	Calcutta	typeset	with a Persian preface and introductory treatise in Arabic on Quranic orthography and rules of recitation
1831	Calcutta	typeset	with interlinear Persian transl. (*Fatḥ al-ʿAzīz*?)
1832	Hooghly	typeset	2nd edition of Hooghly Qur'an
1834[32]	Kanpur	typeset	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)
1835	Kanpur	lithograph	with interlinear Persian transl.
1837	Calcutta	lithograph	with *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān* and the Persian commentaries *Tafsīr-i Ḥusainī* and *Tafsīr-i ʿAbbāsī* in the margin
1838	Calcutta	lithograph	with Shah Rafiuddin's interlinear Urdu translation
1840	[Lucknow]	lithograph	with anonymous interlinear Urdu transl. and marginal notes
1847	Lucknow	lithograph	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*) and additional Persian notes; preceded by *Khulāṣat al-nawādir,* a Persian treatise on Qur'an recitation
1847	Delhi	lithograph	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)
1847	Delhi	lithograph	*Ḥamā'il mutarjam*
1847	Agra	lithograph	*Ḥamā'il mutarjam*; with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)
1848	Agra	lithograph	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)
1848	Bombay	lithograph	Arabic *muṣḥaf*
1848	Bombay	lithograph	with interlinear Urdu translation (anon.)
1850	Calcutta	lithograph	with *Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān* and the Persian commentaries *Tafsīr-i Ḥusainī* and *Tafsīr-i ʿAbbāsī* in the margin (2nd edn)
1850	Calcutta	lithograph	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)
1850	[Lucknow]	lithograph	with marginal notes on the orthography of the text
1853	Bombay	lithograph	with interlinear Urdu transl. and notes (*Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān*)

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32 According to Garcin de Tassy, this edition remained unpublished (1839, 8, n. 1).

3 The impact of lithography

The introduction of lithography represented a watershed in the history of print in South Asia. Given its enormous impact on regional-language printing, the new technology was perhaps even more significant than the arrival of typography back in 1556, when Portuguese Jesuits established the first printing press in Goa. As Graham Shaw has shown, lithography reached Calcutta in the early 1820s, if not earlier, and was first practiced successfully by two French artists residing in the city. By 1823, the colonial government had established its own lithographic press, the first in India to exploit the technique for printing maps, official forms, and books in oriental scripts. Two years later, the Asiatic Lithographic Company's Press, a British-owned commercial press, issued the first Arabic-language works lithographed in India: a compilation of legal decisions according to Hanafi law titled *Nuskha-i Fatāwā Ḥammādiyya dar ʿilm-i fiqh*.[33] From Calcutta, the new printing method spread to the urban centers of North India – to Patna, Kanpur, Benares, Lucknow, Delhi, and Agra. Lithography represented more than a technological leap: by enabling widespread Indian participation in the printing trade, it facilitated the emergence of a vernacular print culture and played a prominent role in democratizing print in South Asia. Lithography triggered a boom in newspaper printing; but more important in the present context, it became the preferred technology for book printing in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, and largely replaced movable type. According to Shaw's estimate, almost three times as many works were lithographed in India than in Europe during the period from 1824 to 1850.[34] The rise of lithography was accompanied by other technological innovations, most importantly the iron handpress, invented by the third Earl Stanhope around 1800. The widespread adoption of the iron press, dubbed the 'Stanhope revolution' by Nile Green, became a 'key enabling factor' in the rapid spread of printing in Iran and India.[35]

The advantages of lithography over letterpress printing are well studied, but they bear repeating in the context of South Asia. As a cheap and portable technology that required neither expensive equipment nor specific expertise, lithography encouraged the emergence of autodidact printers and enabled even small print shops to print in different languages and scripts – a critical advantage in India's multilingual ecology. Lithography bypassed the problems

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33 For a detailed account, see Shaw 1994 and 1998.

34 Shaw 1998, 89–90.

35 Green 2010.

associated with the development of oriental typefaces; it was particularly well suited to reproducing the cursive Perso-Arabic scripts and derived its cultural authority from its visual proximity to the manuscript. As Graham Shaw has pointed out, in a society still wedded to the manuscript, lithography was 'in essence, a link with the past' which allowed for a 'cultural paradox, the mass-produced manuscript'.[36] This concept of the lithographed text as a 'printed manuscript'[37] assumes particular relevance in the context of Qur'an printing. 'Qur'anic *masahif*, copied by pen, preserved and celebrated the divine text', writes J.R. Osborn, noting that unlike movable type lithography 'mechanically reproduced the gestural pen and visual design of manuscript *masahif*'.[38] More-over, lithography is a versatile technology that lent itself well to ornamentation, offering flexibility in the nature and size of decorative elements and the overall spatial design of the page. Besides legibility, aesthetic appeal, and the potential to create multiscript texts in diverse calligraphic styles, socioeconomic factors proved critical to the acceptance of this European print technology in India: lithography did not threaten the monopoly of professional scribes but estab-lished continuity with the manuscript tradition. In a period of declining court patronage, the new lithographic presses helped keep the calligraphic arts alive by providing a livelihood to many.[39]

Given the intrinsic link between lithography and calligraphy, the 'quintes-sential' Islamic art, it comes as no surprise that one of the first books printed by lithography in Iran was a Qur'an, published by Mirza Salih in 1832–1833 with technology imported from Saint Petersburg.[40] India followed suit several years later, with the first lithographed Qur'an produced in Calcutta in 1837. This remarkable edition, a quarto volume of 940 pages, contains ʿAbdul Qadir's interlinear Urdu translation as well as two Persian commentaries in the margins: *Mawāhib-i ʿaliyya* ('The Sublime Gifts'), commonly known as the *Tafsīr-i Ḥusainī*, by the fifteenth-century polymath Kamal al-Din Husain Waʿiz Kashifi (d. 910 AH / 1504–1505 CE), and *Tafsīr-i ʿAbbāsī*, perhaps a Persian translation of the Arabic commentary attributed to Muhammad Ibn Yaʿqub al-Firuzabadi (d. 817 AH / 1414 CE). It was the first time that Kashifi's immensely popular *tafsīr* appeared in print. The volume attracted Orientalist interest, as suggested by a comment by William Morley, the librarian of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great

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36 Shaw 1994, n.p.
37 See also Witkam 2012, 230.
38 Osborn 2017, 160.
39 Sharar 1975, 103–104. For a similar argument in the Iranian context, see Marzolph 2001, 15.
40 Green 2014, 98.

Britain and Ireland. 'The *Tafsir-i Husainī* is now in course of publication, in lithography, at Calcutta. It is accompanied by the Arabic text of the Kuran',[41] Morley tellingly writes. A copy of volume one – which goes up to surah 18 (*al-Kahf*) – is preserved at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich. Since it has no title page or colophon, the identity of the publisher remains unclear. According to Garcin de Tassy, the edition was produced by the Asiatic Lithographic Company's Press; Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan attributes it to Sayyid ʿAbdullah's Ahmadi Press.[42] The book, though entirely devoid of embellishment, is striking for its unconventional page design. The Arabic text, in bold *naskh*, and its interlinear Urdu translation are set apart in a framed central panel, but it is the Persian commentaries, in small *nastaʿlīq*, that occupy most of the page. Written diagonally at different angles, they surround the panel in an undulating fashion and create an unusual visual effect that emphasizes the pen's movement across the page, as if to demonstrate the versatility of lithography (see Figs 3a and 3b).

And yet little of lithography's potential for fine calligraphy and ornamentation is visible in this edition, which in no way anticipates the rich and sophisticated tradition of Qur'an lithography that would soon evolve in North India. It would seem that Qur'an printing in Calcutta was to some extent influenced by the strong Orientalist presence in the city, epitomized in the Calcutta Madrasa (est. 1771), Fort William College (est. 1800), and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. It is worth noting that when William Nassau Lees, assisted by several Muslim scholars at the Calcutta Madrasa, published his critical edition of al-Zamakhshari's famous Qur'an commentary in 1856, he reverted to typographic printing. A very different conceptualization of consigning the Holy Book to print, one more attuned to the splendid manuscript tradition of Mughal India, evolved under Muslim agency in northern India. In order to fully understand Ian Proudfoot's characterization of lithography as a 'Muslim technology',[43] we need to turn to the city of Lucknow.

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41 Morley 1858, 271.

42 Garcin de Tassy 1839, 565; Khan 2001, 336; 460. This rare copy was part of the collection of the French Orientalist Étienne Quatremère, which was acquired by the library in 1858; it is accessible in digitized form (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, 4 A.or.418). It appears that no further volumes were printed.

43 Proudfoot 1997, 177–182.

4 Early book production in Lucknow

Lucknow's rise to prominence began in 1775 when it became the capital of the Mughal successor state of Awadh. During the 80-year rule of the Nawabs of Awadh the city evolved into one of the most prosperous and cosmopolitan urban centers in northern India. The decline of the imperial capital of Delhi hastened Lucknow's emergence as a center of literature and the arts, marked by an efflorescence of Indo-Persian culture and Urdu poetry under the legendary patronage of the Nawabi court. Lucknow also became known as a seat of Islamic learning, with Farangi Mahall, a religious seminary established by a family of Sunni scholars and mystics in the late eighteenth century, spearheading the revival of the Islamic rational sciences (*maʿqūlāt*) and attracting scholars from across the Muslim world.[44] At the same time, the Awadh Nawabs made Shiʿa Islam a powerful force in state politics. As Juan Cole has shown, Shiʿism was firmly institutionalized in the state apparatus by way of a formal Shiʿite judicial system and the establishment of a royal madrasa by the 1840s. The result was 'a powerful and self-confident Shiʿite culture in constant interaction with the Shiʿa heartlands in Iraq and Iran'.[45]

Although the impact of the European presence in the city has often been dismissed as superficial, the Nawabs of Awadh were remarkably receptive to Western technology.[46] Print came to Lucknow as early as 1819, when King Ghaziuddin Haidar (r. 1814–1827) set up the Matbaʿ-i Sultani or Royal Press, the first major Muslim-owned printing press in northern India. The history of the Royal Press provides an illustration of the intellectual networks of 'imperial Muslims' across the Indian Ocean.[47] Its first superintendent, Sheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Yamani al-Shirwani (d. 1840), embodies the type of 'trans-cultural middlemen' that populated the Indian Ocean world. A trader and scholar from Yemen, Sheikh Ahmad had come to India in search of opportunity and found employment at the East India Company's College of Fort William in Calcutta. There he taught Arabic and became involved in a series of prestigious Orientalist publishing projects. When he shifted to Lucknow in 1818, he brought with him a printing press, a set of Arabic metal types, and a group of pressmen.

The first book printed at the Royal Press with movable type was Sheikh Ahmad's Arabic panegyric of Ghaziuddin Haidar titled *al-Manāqib al-Ḥaidariyya* (1820). It was not a success. The king, presumably disappointed by the plain

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44 Robinson 2001.

45 Cole 1988.

46 Powell 1993, 56.

47 See Reese 2018.

appearance of the book, so disliked it that he had the edition confiscated.[48] The Royal Press subsequently won fame for its production of *Haft qulzum* ('The Seven Seas'), a Persian dictionary and grammar in seven volumes compiled under the king's own supervision in 1822. But the real impetus to local print culture came in the early 1830s, when the anglophile King Nasiruddin Haidar (r. 1827–1837) called Henry Archer, the Superintendent of the Asiatic Lithographic Press in nearby Kanpur, to Lucknow. Archer soon presented the king with what is presumably the earliest book lithographed in Lucknow: an Arabic commentary by al-Suyuti on Ibn Malik's treatise on grammar, titled *Bahjah al-marḍiyyah fī sharḥ al-alfiyyah* [1831].[49] Yet the book that best epitomizes the transition from movable type to lithography is *Tāj al-lughāt*, an Arabic-Persian dictionary in seven large folio volumes issued from the Royal Press around 1830: the first three volumes are typeset, the rest are lithographed.

The advent of lithography substantially increased printing activity in the city. From the late 1830s onward, a dozen commercial print shops emerged, among which were several large businesses run by *ashrāf* Muslims of considerable means and learning, most prominently the Muhammadi Press (est. 1837) of Maulvi Muhammad and the Mustafa'i Press (est. 1839) of Mustafa Khan, a wealthy glass merchant.[50] But it was the comparatively modest Hasani Press (est. 1840?) of Mir Hasan Rizwi that in 1847 produced one of the first, and most splendid, Qur'ans lithographed in Nawabi Lucknow. The exquisite edition of 548 octavo pages (22.8 cm × 15.2 cm) contained ʿAbdul Qadir's interlinear Urdu translation and selections from his notes as well as additional Persian notes on the orthography of the Qur'an. It was preceded by *Khulāṣat al-nawādir,* a Persian treatise on the rules of Qur'anic recitation by Mufti Muhammad Saʿad Allah of Rampur, a teacher in the royal madrasa.[51] An important new feature, reflecting European influence, was the elaborately ornamented title page which, in addition to exhibiting a variety of calligraphic styles, contained information that had earlier been featured in the colophon. As Olimpiada Shcheglova has pointed out, the Hasani Press created a distinct title page 'template' that was later adopted by the Naval Kishore Press and became 'the standard format for several decades':[52] it prominently featured the book title in the rectangular central panel, a citation from the Qur'an in its upper panel, and details on the place

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48 Schimmel 1973, 51–52.
49 Sprenger 1854, vi.
50 Diehl 1973.
51 Khan 2001, 460–461.
52 Shcheglova 2009, n.p.

of publication as well as the name of the press in the lower one, all framed by richly decorated borders. The double opening pages display elaborate ornamented headpieces, with red ink coloring added by hand. Handcoloring was also used for the surah headings (red on black background), verse markers, and the letter *fā* inserted in the text to reference the marginal notes. Written in a large and bold *naskh*, with 11 lines to the page, this printed Qur'an also uses interlinear rulings, a feature typical of Indian Qur'ans (see Figs 4 and 5).

As the Hasani Press Qur'an demonstrates, Lucknow's early print shops capitalized on the wealth of scholarly expertise and calligraphic talent available in the city. Printers cultivated the art of the book and won fame for the elegance of their lithographs, which emulated manuscripts in their page layout, ornamentation, and graphic design. Basic similarities include the ornamented *unwān* or headpiece, framed panels, decorated borders with floral and geometric patterns, and the insertion of commentaries and glosses in fine writing in the margins, usually at a pronounced slant. Scholars have drawn attention to the distinctive style established in Lucknow in the 1840s. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Lucknow lithographs are the heavily ornamented opening pages, which, similar to the title page, emulated the carpet page design of Islamic and Indo-Persian manuscripts (see Fig. 6).[53] Colophons acquired a new function, becoming more of a publisher's afterword.

Local book production was deeply embedded in a patronage economy of Nawabi Lucknow. In its concern with aesthetics and valorization of fine calligraphy, it reflected the dual influence of Persianate court culture and Islamic scribal traditions. As Abdul Halim Sharar, the famous cultural historian of Lucknow, remarked:

> At first printing was not undertaken on a commercial basis but purely as a private pursuit. The finest quality paper, highly appropriate for lithography, was used and the best calligraphists were employed at high salaries. They were shown great favor without any stipulations as to working conditions or how much they wrote in a day or whether they wrote anything at all. In the same way the printers were never asked how many pages they had printed in a day. For the ink, thousands of lamps of mustard-oil were lighted to produce fine-quality lamp-black. Instead of acid, fine-skinned lemons were used and sponges took the place of cloth. In short, only the finest materials were employed. As a result, Persian and Arabic educational and religious books in the days of the monarchy could not have been printed anywhere else but in Lucknow, where they were produced irrespective of cost for discriminating eyes.[54]

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53 Scheglova 1999, 12–15.

54 Sharar 1975, 107. Lucknow was associated with the rare calligraphic arts of reverse or mirror writing (*maʿkūs-nigārī*) and stone correction (*islāh-i sang*), a technique said to have been initiated

Illumination was rare in commercially printed Qur'ans and limited to deluxe copies meant for elite patrons. Mass-printed Qur'ans were by and large mono-chrome books dominated by black ink, though rubrication was sometimes add-ed by hand for surah titles and verse markers. Publishers relied on fine calligraphy and decorative frames and borders for aesthetic appeal. Compared to their typeset predecessors, lithographed Qur'ans stand out for their skillful use of a variety of calligraphic styles: in the manner of manuscripts, the Arabic text of the Qur'an would be reproduced in bold *naskh*, while other calligraphic styles such as *thuluth*, *muḥaqqaq* and *riqāʿ* were occasionally used on title pages and for surah headings. Interlinear translations and commentaries were written in elegant but visually subordinated smaller *nastaʿlīq*. Unlike Ottoman Qur'ans, Indian Qur'ans typically exhibit a calligraphic style distinguished by its 'thick' letters; they also differ in their orthography (*rasm*), using the spelling conven-tions of *al-rasm al-ʿUthmānī* ("Uthmani orthography') developed in the seventh century under the third caliph, ʿUthman.[55]

Lucknow's early printing boom was briefly interrupted in 1849, when King Wajid ʿAli Shah (r. 1847–1856) ordered the closure of the city's presses. The publication of a history of Awadh from the Royal Press had incurred the king's anger. Local printers were forced to relocate to the nearby city of Kanpur, where printing continued unabated – the total number of books lithographed in 1849 amounted to an impressive 700 titles. A year later, Aloys Sprenger, the Austrian scholar charged with cataloguing the royal manuscript collection, noted the existence of twelve lithographic presses in Lucknow; by 1857, their number stood at more than twenty.[56] Sprenger highlighted the impact of printed Qur'ans on religious education, which, he noted, was now extended 'to all classes and even to ladies':

> Twenty years ago verses of the Qur'an were repeated as prayers and charms, and even the whole book was learned by heart, but without being understood, and the Sunnah was al-most unknown; in our days people are gradually beginning to study the book, and I shall have to describe several commentaries on it in Arabic, Persian and Hindustany [*sic*] which have lately been published. [The Musalmans] are now beginning to make their sacred

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at the Mustafa'i Press. In reverse writing, the scribe wrote directly onto the lithographic stone in reverse script, using a steel pen. The Naval Kishore Press (see below) helped keep this waning art alive by employing several masters of reverse writing, most prominently Mir Hashmat ʿAli, who had learned his craft at Lucknow's Royal Press. See Shaw 1994; Nurani 1994, 75–77.

55 Akbar 2015, 325.

56 Sprenger 1854, vi; Khan 1990, 311–317.

books intelligible to all. This must lead to results analogous to those which the translation and study of the Bible produced in Europe.[57]

The British annexation of Awadh in 1856 and the Great Rebellion of 1857 brought Lucknow's flourishing print industry to a temporary standstill. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the city, now the seat of the British provincial administration, saw the rise of the famous Naval Kishore Press, which under its enterprising Hindu proprietor, Munshi Naval Kishore (1836–1895), grew into the largest Indian-owned printing and publishing firm in South Asia. Supported by colonial patronage, the firm published an estimated 5,000 titles in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Sanskrit, and Hindi during Naval Kishore's lifetime, while it also served as an intellectual hub for scholars, poets, and literati.[58] As one observer noted: 'No other press in India was fortunate to have such a large number of *ḥuffāẓ*, scholars, historians, writers and poets as were gathered simultaneously at this press in Lucknow.'[59] An academic and general publisher, Naval Kishore played a pivotal role in the preservation, dissemination, and popularization of Islamic textual knowledge. He was one of the first commercial printers to engage in the production of the Qur'an and its exegetic literature (*tafsīr*) on an industrial scale. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the contribution of India's foremost 'print capitalist' to Qur'an printing.

5 Mass printing the Qur'an

The rise of the Naval Kishore Press coincided with the industrialization of the Indian printing and publishing trade. Advances in print technology in combination with enhanced communication networks, facilitated by the railway and postal system, ushered in the commercialization of religious production. By 1870, the Naval Kishore Press's Kanpur branch alone turned out 128,000 printed pages per day. All this led to the emergence of the low-priced book in the Indian marketplace: with mass-produced editions, declining paper prices, and effective distribution systems, books became an accessible and affordable commodity.

A critical factor in the Lucknow firm's success was its ability to adapt the city's eminent lithographic tradition to commercial mass printing. The introduction of

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57 Sprenger 1854, vi–vii.
58 Stark 2007.
59 Kakorvi 1939, 184 (my translation). *Ḥuffāẓ*: plural of *ḥāfiẓ*, a person who has memorized the Qur'an.

standard formats and title page layouts resulted in a distinctive 'Naval Kishore style' which, according to Shcheglova, attained model status in North India, while also exerting 'a significant influence on the graphic design of books produced by Central Asian lithographers'.[60] To be sure, Naval Kishore's Qur'an editions could not compare in elegance with those produced by Lucknow printers during the Nawabi period. However, concepts of fine craftsmanship and the beauty of the book remained relevant – even in the age of mechanical reproduction.

Subjecting the sacred scripture of Islam to the profane process of mass production had several implications. First, it required a high sensibility to the sanctity of the Qur'an as both divine revelation and material artefact. To avoid any risk of defilement, Qur'an printing at the press implied meticulous observance of Islamic precepts and was a task assigned exclusively to Muslim employees, who had to perform ablutions before embarking on their work. Smoking or chewing betel leaf (*pān*) was strictly forbidden while printing was underway. Old lithographic stones bearing the words of the Qur'an were not destroyed but buried.[61] In continuation of the manuscript tradition, printed editions regularly came with a cover page (either in lieu of or in addition to the title page) that reminded readers of the sacred nature and charismatic power of the Qur'an as text and object by citing the conventional verses from surah al-Waqiʿah (56:77–79): '*Innahu la-qur'ānun karīmun fī kitābin maknūnin lā yamassuhu illā 'l-muṭahharūna*' – 'That this indeed is a noble Qur'an, inscribed in a well-guarded book, which none but the pure may touch' (see Figs 7 and 8). Secondly, Naval Kishore took great care to have his Qur'an editions sanctioned by religious authority. In keeping with traditional practice, Qur'ans lithographed at the press typically bore the seals (*muhr*) of eminent ulama and *ḥuffāẓ*, attesting to the correctness and excellence of the copyist's work. The colophon of an 1868 Qur'an, calligraphed by Munshi Ashraf ʿAli and edited by Hafiz Muhammad Makhdum and Maulvi Muhammad ʿAbdul Hafiz, highlighted the meticulous process by which the text had been collated and compared 'with numerous copies, both published and unpublished, using also several books and treatises on *awqāf*[62] and the variations in the readings', prior to undergoing careful review – 'word by word from beginning to end' – and being certified by five noted Qur'an scholars (see Fig. 9).[63]

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60 Scheglova 1999, 15.

61 Hasan 1981, 11.

62 *Awqāf* (Ar. plural of *waqf*): the rules and signs of stopping when reciting the Qur'an.

63 *Qur'ān majīd* (Naval Kishore Press, 1868). This is a revised version of a previous edition by Maulvi Mahbub ʿAli.

The dual concern with accuracy and aesthetic appeal is further reflected in the way in which mass-printed Qur'ans continued to be penned by master calligraphers. Embedded in a highly refined aesthetic tradition and invested with sacred meaning, the copying of the Qur'an required both artistic and scholarly expertise. To be sure, scribal hands eventually adapted to the exigencies of commercial printing, as legibility became a new priority. Connoisseurs would regularly bemoan the decline of the calligraphic art and the fact that even the greatest artists were compelled to exercise their skills for commercial purposes: 'Now there are *katib*s, clerks, not calligraphers. If one or two well-known penmen have remained, they are forced to earn their living by *kitabat*, the copying out of documents and manuscripts, which is actually inimical to the art of calligraphy',[64] laments ʿAbdul Halim Sharar. 'Earlier calligraphists thought that getting involved in writing a manuscript was beneath their dignity as it would be impossible for anyone who wrote out a whole book to maintain throughout the principles and standards of calligraphy.' In order to guarantee a high aesthetic standard, the Naval Kishore Press hired several eminent calligraphers for the task. Foremost among them was Maulvi Muhammad Hadi ʿAli (d. 1865), an Islamic scholar and poet of Persian and Urdu who wrote under the penname 'Ashk'. His career illustrates how calligraphy transitioned from its traditional contexts of Islamic art, piety, and scholarship to the commercial domain. Born in a scholarly family in Bijnor District, Hadi ʿAli was educated at Farangi Mahall and trained in calligraphy by Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim. He took up employment as a scribe and proofreader at the Muhammadi Press and subsequently spent time at King Wajid ʿAli Shah's court-in-exile in Matiya Burj, Calcutta. Upon his return to Lucknow he joined the Naval Kishore Press as editor of *Awadh Akhbār*, the firm's Urdu newspaper, and rose to the position of head proofreader in the lithographic department. An expert in large and miniature scripts, Hadi ʿAli excelled in the writing of both *naskh* and *nastaʿlīq*. A second master calligrapher at the press, Hadi ʿAli's pupil Maulvi Hamid ʿAli (known as *muraṣṣaʿ raqam* or 'Bejeweled Pen') similarly straddled the worlds of Islamic scholarship and commercial employ: a descendant of the Lucknow saint Hazrat Muhammad ʿAli Shah, Hamid ʿAli was a scholar of Arabic and Persian who taught calligraphy at the local Madrasa ʿAliya Furqaniya. The third Qur'an calligrapher employed by Naval Kishore, Munshi Ashraf ʿAli 'Ashraf' (surnamed *javāhir raqam* or 'Jeweled Pen'), was trained by the master calligrapher and Urdu poet Amirullah 'Taslim'. Ashraf ʿAli calligraphed at least five different

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64 Sharar 1975, 103–104.

Qur'ans for the press, including a popular large-letter edition with ʿAbdul Qadir's Urdu translation (1872).[65]

Hadi ʿAli's masterpiece, and the pride of the publishing house, was *Qur'ān majīd jalī qalam* (Kanpur 1868), a widely acclaimed large-letter edition that contained the Persian commentary *Baḥr al-ʿulūm al-islāmiyya* in the margins. It had taken him five years to prepare. In keeping with the hyperbolic style of nineteenth-century book advertising, it was announced in the publisher's catalogue as a specimen 'of exquisite handwriting, prepared with such beauty and excellence as has never been seen to the present day'. Besides aesthetic appeal, a more practical selling point of this large-letter Qur'an was its usefulness to those 'of weak eyesight'. The edition was also marketed to new readerships and declared especially suitable for 'women and children' who could 'easily learn the Qur'an' with its help.[66] Navigation of the text was facilitated by page numbers, indication of *manāzil*,[67] and a set of decorated medallions in the margin that indicated the division into *ajzā'* (pl. of *juz'*, the thirty sections of the Qur'an) and *rukūʿ*, and gave a count of verses, words, and letters for each surah (see Fig. 10).

Diversity was key to commercial publishing – the Qur'an was no exception. In order to serve an increasingly heterogeneous class of religious consumers, the Naval Kishore Press issued the Qur'an in more than seventeen editions, in various sizes, formats, and paper qualities designed to suit every pocket. Aiming at both ends of the intellectual spectrum, the publisher catered to both the needs of Islamic scholars and the desire of ordinary Muslims to grace their homes with a copy of the Holy Book. Affordability remained a chief concern in the endeavor to make the Qur'an widely accessible to Muslims in India and beyond. To this end, the press in 1868 issued a finely lithographed Qur'an of 700 pages, calligraphed by Maulvi Hadi ʿAli, at the sensational price of one and a half rupees. This arguably makes Naval Kishore – an Indian, and a Hindu, at that – the first publisher to render the holy book of Islam accessible to a mass audience.[68] By 1876 the 'Kanpur edition', as it came to be known, had sold 19,000 copies; its price had been further reduced to less than a rupee.[69] It was truly a Qur'an for every household.

By this time, inexpensive editions of the Qur'an were flooding the Indian market. Prices had declined steadily since 1850, when pocket Qur'ans (*ḥamā'il*),

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65 Sharar 1975, 104; Nurani 1994, 64–65, 74–75, and 96.

66 *Fihrist-i kutub* 1879, n.p.

67 The Qur'an is divided into seven portions (*manzil*, pl. *manāzil*) of roughly equal length for the convenience of reciting it in one week.

68 Stark 2008.

69 Hurst 1887, 355.

designed primarily for the pilgrimage market, sold for three to eight rupees, a rather hefty expense for the average Muslim reader. By the mid-1860s, standard prices ranged from two-and-a-half to five rupees. We should note that the transformation of religious publishing toward the mass market was not exclusively driven by large commercial firms like Naval Kishore's. Nor was it confined to the urban metropolises. In Meerut, a town 40 miles northeast of Delhi, half a dozen Muslim presses churned out a total of 15,000 copies of the Qur'an, in various formats, in the years 1868 to 1869 alone.[70] Among them is one of the most extraordinary Qur'ans lithographed in 1860s North India, an edition of 638 pages in royal octavo issued by the Hashmi Press of Maulvi Muhammad Hashim ʿAli. In a striking display of the versatility of lithography, the Arabic text, two interlinear translations in Urdu and Persian, the Arabic *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* by al-Suyuti and al-Mahalli, as well as two more sets of marginal annotations were made to neatly fit onto the page in several vertical columns. At a time when chromolithography was not yet common in Indian book printing, and the use of thin colored paper remained a cost-effective way of enhancing the appeal of lithographed Qur'ans, this edition also stands out for its generous use of hand-coloring: the Arabic text is inscribed on brown cloud-bands throughout. The magnificent book had a relatively small print run of 200 and sold for five rupees (see Fig. 11). Within a year, the Hashmi Press struck off 3,400 copies of another Qur'an edition with Persian and Urdu translations, which was slightly less expensive at four rupees.

Over the next decade, printed Qur'ans became steadily more affordable: a less elaborate Qur'an issued in 4,400 copies by another Meerut press in 1876 sold for a mere 12 annas.[71] When the American Methodist bishop John F. Hurst visited the Naval Kishore Press several years later, he was struck by the variety of scripture publications. 'No one can find fault with the price', Hurst wrote, finding editions 'of so varied a character that they range in price, calculated in American currency, from twenty-four cents to ten dollars'.[72] Hurst also commented on 'the shrewd Kishore' (whom he mistook for a Muslim) emulating Christian Bible and Tract Societies in adopting the practice of publication in parts, an effective way of making a voluminous book such as the Qur'an affordable to a larger number of people.[73]

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70 This calculation is based on the colonial government's quarterly reports on 'Publications Issued and Registered' and may actually be too low.

71 1 anna = one sixteenth of a rupee. *Report on Publications Issued and Registered, 1876*, 25.

72 Hurst 1887, 355.

73 Hurst 1887, 355.

6 A lucrative trade: mass distributing the Qur'an

Qur'an printing was a profitable business. At a time when the Middle East and Central Asia had yet to develop full-fledged print industries of their own, Indian publishers did brisk business exporting the Qur'an to the vast market of the Islamic world. Yet Indian participation in the emerging international book trade has received scarce attention; little is known with regard to agents, distribution channels, and the transregional impact of books made in India. The trade in Indian Qur'ans, and their physical transfer along commercial and pilgrimage routes, in particular, calls for more detailed research. Naval Kishore's extensive trade network reached from Patna to Lahore and from Delhi to London.[74] With its Patna branch, the firm made a foray into the eastern Indian market, where traders from Purnea, Chittagong, and Dhaka were keen buyers of printed Qur'ans and other Islamic books. The establishment of an agency in the cosmopolitan port city of Bombay in 1871 marked an important step in the firm's international trade with the Middle East and Europe. As an official report noted:

> To this Depôt resort traders from Persia, Muscat, Baghdad and Arabia. The Kuran meets with a ready sale. Merchants from Java [...] are said to have bought large numbers of the Kuran. Munshi Nawal Kishor had an interview with the Persian envoy at Bombay and hopes through his influence to open a trade with Persia. Dictionaries are in request. There is some trade with Leipzig and with London through Messr Trubner and Co. 20,000 copies of the Kuran are reported to have been sold during the year.[75]

Bombay had for some time been a major hub of the Islamic publishing and book trade in the subcontinent. As Green has shown, the city had expanded its commercial connections with Iran, which became an increasingly important export market for religious books by mid-century. Parsis and Sufis from Iran who had been lured by Bombay's booming print industry maintained close ties with Persian booksellers.[76] Besides the trade with Iran, Bombay's Muslim print entrepreneurs distributed Indian Qur'ans all over Southeast Asia, where 'Bombay Qur'ans', characterized by the Indian 'thick-letter' style, gained great popularity from the late nineteenth century onwards.[77]

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74 Details in Stark 2007, 176–177; 194–203.

75 Government of India. Proceedings. *Report on Public Education in Oudh, 1871–1872*, 174.

76 Green 2011, 118–154; Shcheglova 2009, n.d.

77 Akbar 2015, 325–326. According to Akbar, by the end of the nineteenth century, the most widely distributed Qur'ans in Southeast Asia were printed in Bombay or Singapore. For the production of Malay books in Bombay, see Proudfoot 1994.

Eyeing both the domestic market and the Indian Ocean trade, Indian publishers responded to 'market trends of custom and reform'.[78] The range of Qur'an editions was supplemented by scripture portions, translations, and a variety of exegetic literature. Alongside the classic Arabic and Persian Qur'an *tafsīr*s, publishers invested in a growing number of vernacular commentaries intended for mass consumption. This popularization of religious knowledge and its impact on traditional Islamic education was not always viewed favorably. As SherAli Tareen cautions, 'Rendering the Qur'an more understandable and accessible to the masses did not equate to an argument for a modern liberal individual unmoored from traditional sources and protocols of external authority'.[79] To the eminent Muslim reformer and modernist Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) the spate of popular translations was a mixed blessing. Commenting on an Urdu translation of Shah ʿAbdul ʿAziz's Persian *tafsīr* in 1847, he noted:

> [At present] every commoner believes himself to be a scholar and every ignoramus regards himself as a learned man. Merely on the basis of having read a few chapbooks on religious issues and a translation of the Qur'an, and that too in Urdu, with some ordinary teacher or just through his own effort, he considers himself as a jurist and an exegete and dares to preach and opine on issues.[80]

In opening up an easy avenue to knowledge, print challenged elite notions of embodied learning and undermined religious authority. And yet, Sayyid Ahmad Khan himself keenly embraced print technology to propagate his reformist and educational agenda; thirty years later, he would publish his own Urdu commentary, a controversial work that interpreted the Qur'an from a rationalist perspective, offering a 'resoundingly modernist reading'.[81]

Commercial printer-publishers were not likely to share such concerns about the effects of mass circulation on Islamic education. To them, Qur'anic publishing was a lucrative investment. So much so that Naval Kishore was able to bring into print several previously unpublished works, including the *Tafsīr-i Qādrī* (1879), a translation in simple Urdu of al-Kashifi's Persian *Tafsīr-i Ḥusainī* by Maulana Fakhruddin Ahmad Qadri of Farhangi Mahall. The translation gained wide popularity and came to head the list of books recommended for women in *Bihishtī Zewar* (*c*. 1905), a classic of Muslim female education by the Deobandi

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78 Green 2011, 121.

79 Tareen 2020, 235.

80 Cit. from Naim 2003, 17.

81 Tareen 2020, 249. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's incomplete *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* was published from Aligarh in 1880–1904.

reformer Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi.[82] Another work first printed by Naval Kishore was *Sawāṭiʿ al-ilhām* (1888), a pre-modern commentary by Shaikh Abu'l Faiz Faizi (d. 1595), the famous poet-laureate at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar. This *tafsīr* is remarkable for using only undotted letters (see Figs 12a and 12b).

7 The persistence of the manuscript

How did the proliferation of inexpensive printed Qur'ans affect India's rich manuscript culture? Even a cursory look at the catalogues of the foremost repositories of Islamic manuscripts in North India attests to the persistence of manuscript production through much of the nineteenth century. The Rampur Raza Library and the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library in Patna, for example, each house dozens of nineteenth-century Qur'an manuscripts, including both deluxe copies and a substantial number of manuscripts classified as 'ordinary'. One mundane reason for the continuance of manuscript copying was the scarcity of texts printed early in the century that, due to their small print runs, were difficult to obtain outside urban centers or had gone out of print. Khan cites the example of Muradullah Ansari's *Khudā kī niʿamat*, one of the earliest Qur'an commentaries in Urdu, which was first printed in Calcutta in 1831 in a small and quickly exhausted edition: 'The commentary was so popular that due to its scarcity people used to make handwritten copies of it in various parts of South Asia'. One such manuscript copy, prepared in 1847 from a 1835 reprint of the text, is held in the Idara-e Adabiyat-e Urdu in Hyderabad.[83] But the practice of copying the Qur'an by hand was also continued for spiritual and artistic reasons, as a pious act of faith for the common believer, or a means of sublime artistic expression for the professional calligrapher. Manuscripts were given away as pious gifts or in a bride's dowry; luxury copies were commissioned by rulers and elite patrons. A striking example of the latter is the lavishly illuminated Indian manuscript of a thirty-leaved Qur'an dating to 1849, now housed in the British Library (see Fig. 13).[84]

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82 Metcalf 1990, 376; Khan 2001, 278–279.

83 Khan 2001, 224–225.

84 Sims-Williams 2018 (accessed on 23 October 2020).

8 Conclusion

Despite its significant role in the early mass production of the Qur'an, South Asia has received little attention in the global history of Qur'an printing. As we have seen, the surge in Qur'an printing in India was initiated by a combination of religious, cultural, and material factors. But it was ultimately facilitated by the transfer and ready acceptance of global technologies. In its ability to replicate fine calligraphic styles and elaborate ornamentation, lithography provided a link with the manuscript past, while it also enabled large scale reproduction and created a productive interface between commercial enterprise and traditional Islamic art and scholarship. As Ian Proudfoot put it pointedly: 'With lithography, the printing of the Qur'ān became practicable, acceptable, – and lucrative'.[85] The question of how precisely lithography impacted and coexisted with manuscript practices remains an understudied area within South Asian book history. In order to chart continuities and disjunctures at the intersection of Islamic scribal and print practices, a more sustained dialogue between scholars of manuscript and print culture is required.

The case of Lucknow offers important insights into the profound impact of lithography on Islamic textual production. First, it illustrates the expanding professional horizons of Qur'an scholars and calligraphers who crossed from the traditional spaces of madrasas, mosques, and royal courts to the modern print shop. Even among mass-produced Qur'ans, we find calligraphic masterpieces that deserve more detailed analysis as both physical objects and in their historical and social contexts. Secondly, it reveals the extraordinary scope and diversity of early Qur'an publishing in India. As Proudfoot notes in an apt metaphor: 'By mid-century, printing in Cairo and Istanbul was still a trickle beside this Indian torrent'.[86] The torrent of polyglot Qur'ans reflects the dynamism of Islamic reform and revival in nineteenth century India, with its dual emphasis on Islamic scripturalism and vernacularization. Finally, the history of Qur'an printing in India compels us to pay closer attention to early print entrepreneurs' international networks and the transregional circulation of Qur'ans and works of Qur'anic exegesis in the global context of Islamic modernity. In this regard, the case of the Hindu publisher Munshi Naval Kishore serves to refute the great Turkish scholar and Sufi Muhammad Haqqi, who in his 1839 tract on the benefits of print stated categorically: 'When printing is done by infidels there will be no blessing in it'.[87]

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[85] Proudfoot 1995, 218.
[86] Proudfoot 1997, 165.
[87] Cit. from Abdulrazaq 1990, 92.

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Fig. 1: *al-Qur'ān: Mūḍiḥ al-Qur'ān* (Hooghly: Maṭbaʿ Ahmadi, 1828–1829). © British Library Board (14705.d.16, pp. 1–2); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
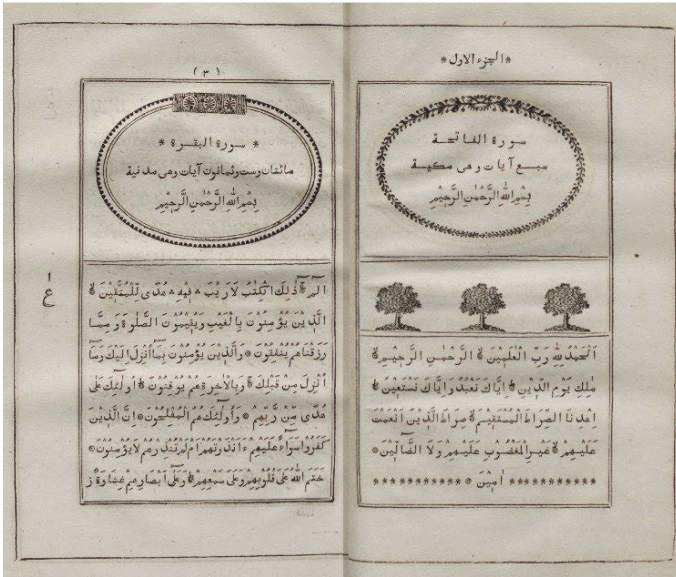
Fig. 2: *Qur'ān majīd* (Calcutta: s.n., 1831). © British Library Board (14705.b.11, pp. 2–3); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.

Fig. 3: *Qur'ān-i majīd* (Calcutta: s.n., 1837). Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, 4 A.or.418, pp. 790–791, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10218901-1.

Fig. 4: *Qur'ān majīd mutarjam* (Lucknow: Hasani Press, 1847). © British Library Board (14705.d.3, title page); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
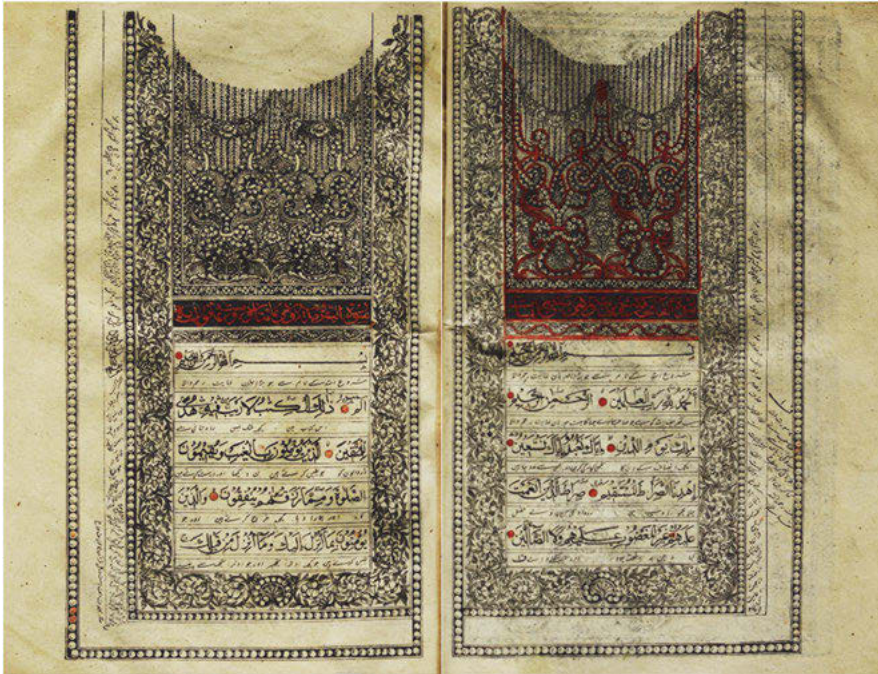
Fig. 5: *Qur'ān majīd mutarjam* (Lucknow: Hasani Press, 1847). © British Library Board (14705.d.3, opening pages [pp. 1–2]); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
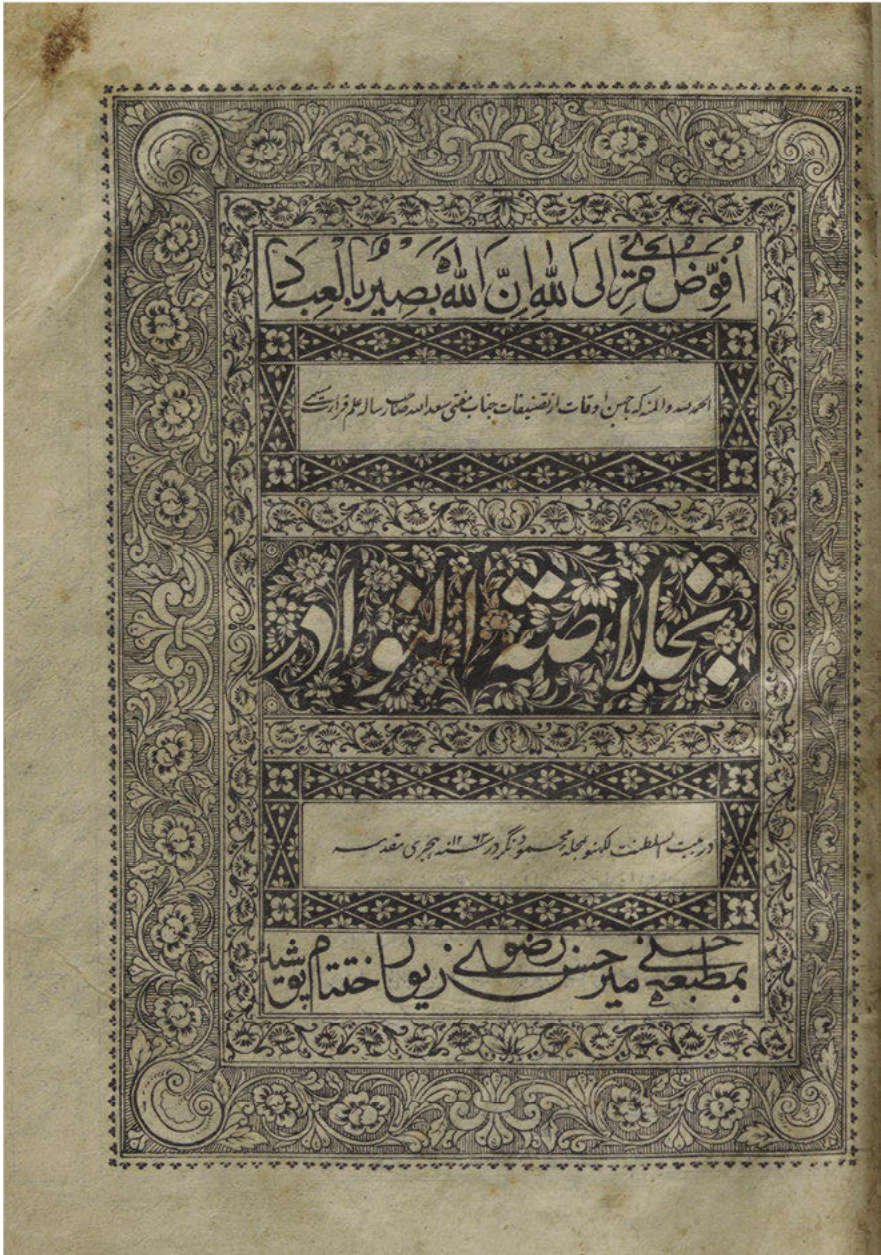
Fig. 6: *Khulāṣat al-nawādir* (Lucknow: Hasani Press, 1847). © British Library Board (14705.d.3, title page); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
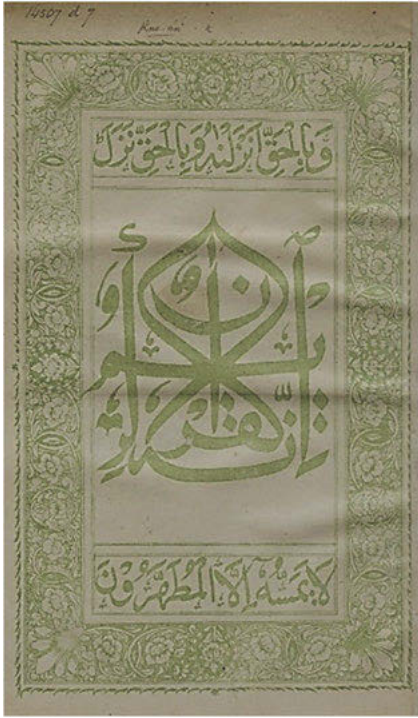
Fig. 7: *Innahu la qur'ān karīm* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1866). © British Library Board (14507.d.7, cover page [p. 2]); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
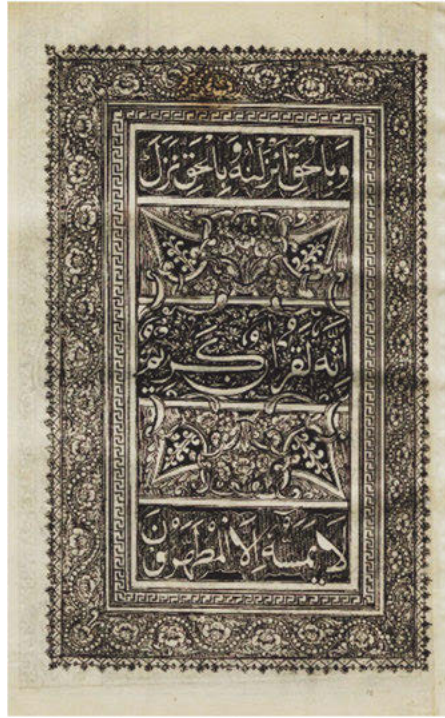
Fig. 8: *Innahu la qur'ān karīm* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1866). © British Library Board (14507.d.7, second cover page [p.3]); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
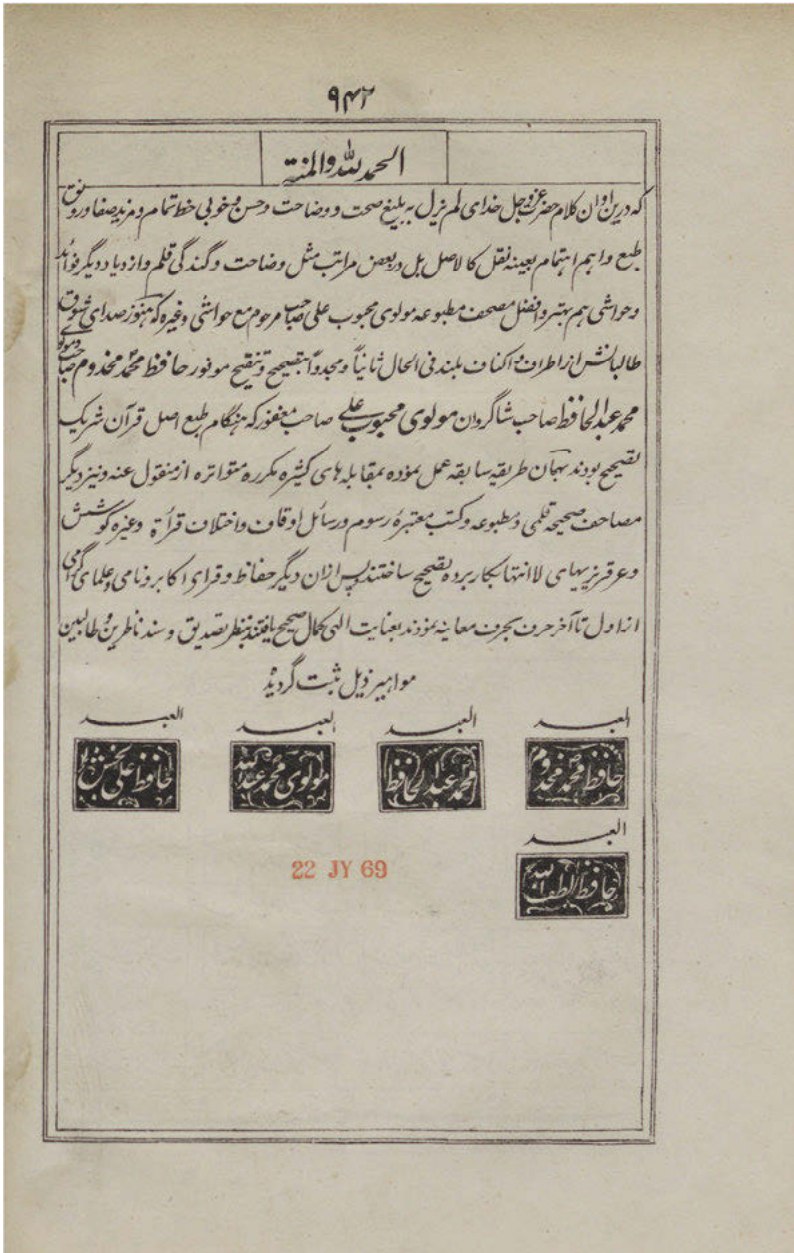
Fig. 9: Colophon page of large-letter Qur'an with seals (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1866). © British Library Board (14507.d.4, p. 942); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
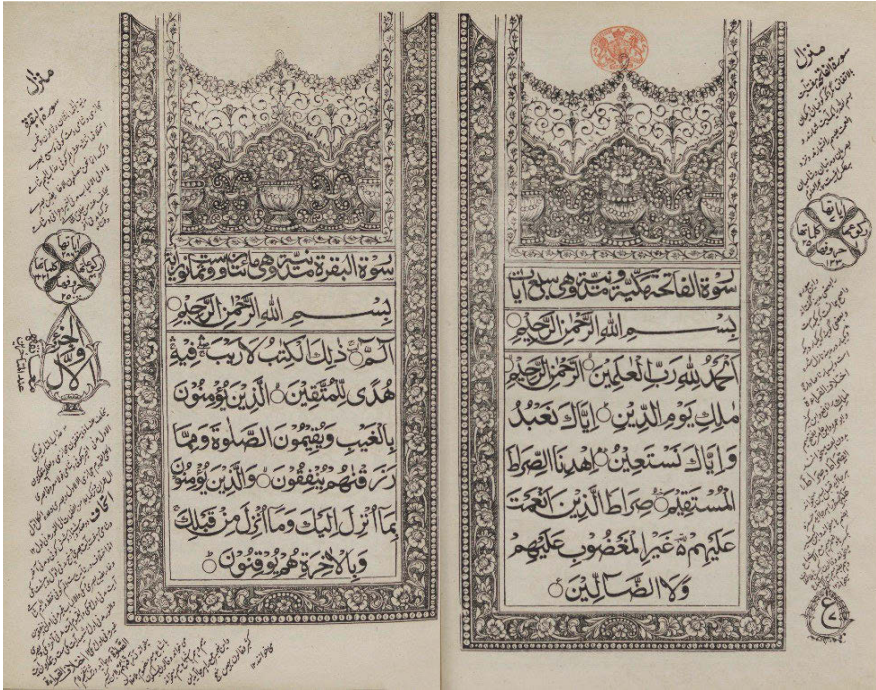
Fig. 10: Large-letter Qur'an (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1866). © British Library Board (14507.d.4, opening pages [pp. 1–2]); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.

Fig. 11: *Qur'ān mutarjam bi tarjamatayn*, *ma'a Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (Meerut: Hashmi Press, 1868). © British Library Board (14507.d.10, p. 1 [opening page]); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.

Figs 12a and 12b: Abu 'l-Faiz Ibn Mubarak Faizi, *Sawāṭiʿ al-ilhām* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1889). © British Library Board (14514.e.2, title page and opening page [p. 1]); image: Gale Digital Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library.
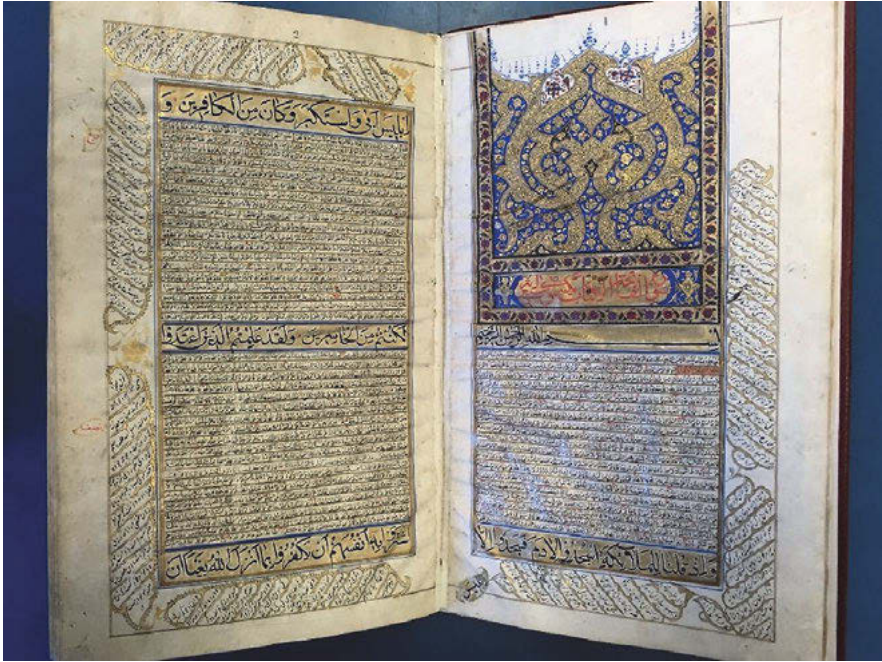
Fig. 13: Indian thirty-leaved Qur'an, manuscript (1849). © British Library Board (BL IO, Islamic 3534, fols 1ᵛ–2ʳ).

Holger Warnk

Cermin Mata ('The Eyeglass'): A Mid-Nineteenth-Century Missionary Journal from Singapore

Abstract: *Cermin Mata* ('The Eyeglass') was a unique missionary effort to convert Muslim Malays in nineteenth-century Singapore and Malaya to Christianity. Altogether, seven volumes were published in lithographic print and beautifully illuminated in the Malay *Jawi* script by the Singaporean Mission Press of Benjamin Peach Keasberry. This contribution will elaborate on the background of this Christian journal (its publisher, scribes, printers and former owners) and the relevance of the collaboration of European printing and local scribes for the production of Malay schoolbooks in the second half of the nineteenth century.

1 Introduction

> Generally the *munsyi* is an educated heathen of a higher caste, a Sudra or a Brahman. [...] But sadly such a *munsyi* stays for years in Christian service and teaches one missionary after another, even reads the Bible together with them, but after all – remains in heathendom! He knows much of Christianity, may even accept the superiority of it and admits the voidness of idolatry. But what is the use of all cognition of the mind, when the heart does not want? How many grow up at home in a Christian atmosphere, with many years of Bible and faithful confirmation classes. But what is the fruit of this? Often just indifference and superiority with a smile.[1]

> He was a staunch Mahomedan. (John Turnbull Thomson on Abdullah Munsyi)[2]

Scribes and language teachers, the so-called *munsyi*s, were an important group throughout the South and Southeast Asian world and played a pivotal role at royal and aristocratic courts, not only as producers of literary or religious texts, but also as authors of diplomatic correspondence at least from the eighteenth century onwards, if not earlier. As such, right from the beginning of their presence the Europeans recognized the importance of the local *munsyi* for their

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1 Heydenreich 1907, 315 (my translation).

2 Thomson 1864, 326.

interaction with their Asian environment.[3] *Munsyis* were hired to teach the local language to the newly arriving merchants, administrators of the various European East Asian companies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or Christian missionaries. Furthermore, they often served as translators on various diplomatic, economic or other occasions. An explicit sign of the recognition of the often pivotal role of local scribes and language experts is Francis Gladwin's book *The Persian Moonshee* published in Calcutta in 1801. Gladwin, an officer in the Bengal Army who became a professor of Persian at Fort William College in Calcutta, wrote an early handbook for training scribes for Persian in the British colonial service including many examples of proper Persian correspondence, phrases and dialogues as well as stories for entertainment.[4] This manual is an example that at least from the eighteenth century onwards there was for *munsyis* a new source of income which was independent from Indian and Southeast Asian courts: the European realm. In this respect it is not at all surprising that these scribal elites 'should have branched out into trade and other types of commercial activities'.[5]

Therefore, the frustrated lament of German Lutheran missionary Heydenreich on his South Indian language teacher cited above shows a great deal of misunderstanding between the European pupil and his local teacher: *Munsyis* taught to make a living from it, not for idealism or for spiritual enlightenment as was hoped by Heydenreich or European-American missionaries in the Malay Peninsula. It was the source of their livelihood and they developed working relationships with their employers if not spiritual ones.[6] The extension of European rule in Southeast Asia from 1800 onwards led to a rapidly increasing demand for educated local scribes in the colonial administration – the perfect candidate would be a person able to articulate himself in more than one Asian language. For example, the famous language teacher Abdullah bin Abdulkadir, called Munsyi, was fluent in Malay, Arab, Tamil and Hindustani and worked for colonial officials – e.g. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles – as well as for British and American missionaries. The scriptoria of Raffles and the Dutch in Batavia for Malay and the output of other scribes are well documented.[7] The function and the contributions of these *munsyis* as cultural brokers and literary agents cannot

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3 *Munsyi* is a term used in Persia, India and the Malay world for a scribe and language expert.
4 Gladwin 1801.
5 Chatterjee 2010, 457.
6 Van der Putten 2006, 413.
7 Voorhoeve 1964.

be overestimated.[8] They were not domestic servants, but they were closely associated with their employers,[9] as will be shown later in the relations between missionary Benjamin Peach Keasberry and the various scribes and printers he employed. However, while the literary products of some Malay *munsyis* are quite well-known, we know much less of the life of the men themselves. Abdullah Munsyi is a notable exception here, as he delivered an elaborate autobiography which gives detailed accounts on his daily work and routine.[10]

As local Asian intellectuals the *munsyis* played an active role in producing colonial knowledge and were far more than mere passive informants fooled by clever colonizers who in consequence were able to establish and consolidate their rule. Instead they were active partners in 'bringing their own forms of knowledge and epistemic regimes to the dialogue'.[11] It was their own decision to work with European colonial employers, which was determined by a variety of rationale, a secure livelihood among them. In colonial Malaya scribes promoted new forms of texts, new styles of writing, composition and illumination, even if stimulated by European employers. Many of these contributions later became schoolbooks which brought to pupils new views on science, the world and the immediate physical surrounding they lived in. The mission journal *Cermin Mata* was one of these publications which delivered these new forms of Malay texts.

2 *Cermin Mata*: The first owner of the Frankfurt set

The journal *Cermin Mata* ('The Eyeglass') was the most spectacular of all the missionary publications of Reverend Benjamin Peach Keasberry (1811–1875) in Singapore (see Figs 1, 4, 5 and 6). Beautifully illuminated and illustrated it outstripped any other of Keasberry's prints and periodicals. The set used for this essay is complete and located in the Library of Southeast Asian Studies at Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt where it belongs to the collection of former Methodist missionary Emil Lüring (1863–1937). According to Ian Proudfoot there is only one other complete set of this journal, located at the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta, but it lacks the illuminated covers.[12] The volumes of *Cermin Mata* in Frankfurt must have been bound together in one volume on behalf of Lüring

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8 Van der Putten 2006, 430; Alam and Subrahmanyam 2004, 61.

9 Wilkinson 2019, 1587.

10 Abdullah 1997; Sweeney 2008.

11 Wagoner 2003, 784–785.

12 Proudfoot 1993, 201.

in Singapore, as they have exactly the same book binding as the rest of his surviving collection. Several of the volumes bear the signature of a certain S. Ismail, all dated 25 April 1860 (see Fig. 2). Who was this person?

As it turned out Ismail and another Malay named Rajab were essential in writing, printing, producing and – in Ismail's case – also spreading *Cermin Mata*, although information on their activities are rather fragmentary and scattered in various sources. Nothing is found on Ismail in contemporary Singaporean newspapers like the *Straits Times* or the *Singapore Free Press*. In the unpublished autobiography of Methodist missionary and Bible translator William Shellabear located in the Archives & History Library of the Methodist Church in Singapore we find the information that Shellabear had a Malay language teacher named Ismail, who was a former pupil, printer and bookbinder of Benjamin Keasberry.[13]

Much more is known about the English soldier turned missionary William Girdlestone Shellabear (1862–1948), who came to Singapore in 1887 as an instructor of a regiment of Malay soldiers. He soon realized that his ambitions lay in a different field and received missionary training for the Methodist Episcopal Church in England in 1889.[14] When he returned to Singapore in late 1890 he brought typographic printing equipment from Lebanon for the American Mission Press (later renamed in Methodist Publishing House), which became one of the two leading publishers in Singapore until it was sold in 1928.[15] Shellabear was a profound scholar of traditional Malay literature and Islam in Southeast Asia and an experienced Bible translator, whose editions of the Bible from the 1890s onwards superseded the older versions of Abdullah Munsyi and Benjamin Keasberry.[16] When Shellabear came to Singapore as soldier in 1887, he employed a language tutor named Ismail for three years, whom he held in high regard:

> Ismail had a wide experience in teaching the language to the young officers of the Civil Service. He continued to teach me during the three years that I served in the army in Singapore and I found him an excellent teacher, so that it was not many months before I was able to dispense with an interpreter in dealing the drilling and instruction of my Malay soldiers.[17]

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13 Warnk 2010, 94.

14 Hunt 1996, 54.

15 For a history of the American Mission Press in Singapore see Warnk 2010.

16 Hunt 1989, 43–48.

17 *The Life of Reverend Shellabear*, 30–31.

Ismail not only taught him the local language, but also introduced him to the world of Malay literature and culture. It is highly likely that missionary Emil Lüring received the complete set of *Cermin Mata* from fellow Methodist missionary William Shellabear, who for his part had got it from his *munsyi* Ismail.[18]

Keasberry's letters, in selection edited by Teo Eng Liang (2009), and Shellabear's unpublished autobiography allow a reconstruction of parts of Ismail's biography. Neither his date of birth nor the year of his death are known. Ismail is mentioned for the first time in November and December 1858 as a Malay tract distributor for the Singaporean Ladies Bible & Tract Society for whom he dispensed (with little success) Bibles and other Christian literature in Malay in Singapore harbor to vessels from Bali, Lombok and Borneo.[19] He must have just finished Keasberry's school and been in his late teens then, as Keasberry described him in February 1860 as young man 'formerly educated in the Mission School' who had become an assistant in his mission as teacher and tract distributor.[20] If both assumptions are correct, then Ismail might have been born around 1840. The date of his conversion to Christianity is not mentioned by Keasberry. Ismail is described together with another 'young Malay' named Rajab as a 'convert', yet the ethnic background of both remains unclear: they were referred to as 'Malay' by Keasberry, but he also referred to other converts, who might have come to Singapore as former Batak slaves.[21] Thus, it seems that Keasberry, as several British scholar-administrators before him, used the term 'Malay' rather generally for 'race' than as clearly derived ethnic category.[22] Shellabear introduced Ismail as 'pure Malay', but did not define what he means by 'pure' in the context.[23]

However, it is obvious that Ismail spoke and wrote Malay very well, which enabled him to work for Keasberry for several years as printer, book binder and author, perhaps until the latter's death in 1875. When he was hired by Shellabear in 1887 he had served already for many years as interpreter at the Supreme Court in Singapore. Besides this he also was engaged for quite some time as language teacher for newly arrived officers of the colonial civil service in Singapore. After his employment as Shellabear's tutor nothing more is known about him.

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18 Lüring – who hold a PhD in comparative philology – was in the early 1890s the only other Methodist missionary in Singapore learning Malay and was close to Shellabear.

19 Teo 2009, 46. The Ladies Bible & Tract Society was founded by Sophia Cooke in 1857.

20 Teo 2009, 290.

21 Teo 2009, 314; Ché-Ross 2007, 59.

22 For further discussion on the term 'Malay' see e.g. Milner 2008, 75–78, 119–123; Kahn 2006, 37–55; Vickers 2004.

23 *The Life of Reverend Shellabear*, 30.

3 The publisher and the scribe

The missionary journal *Cermin Mata* was published and printed in seven volumes from April 1858 to the end of 1859 or early 1860 by the Mission Press of Benjamin Keasberry in Singapore.

Benjamin Peach Keasberry was born in 1811 in Hyderabad as the youngest of three sons of John Palmer Keasberry, a colonel in the Indian army. John Palmer Keasberry was appointed by Thomas Stamford Raffles as Resident of Tegal in Central Java in 1814 where he passed away a few months after his arrival. His widow married again, a certain Mr. Davidson a merchant in Surabaya. Keasberry's three sons were sent to school at Mauritius and Madras. While his two brothers returned to Surabaya, Benjamin decided to stop in Singapore and attempted to run a business which, however, soon failed. Keasberry left for Batavia in 1830 where he met Rev. Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857) from the London Missionary Society (LMS). He decided to become a missionary and worked with Medhurst in Batavia for three years. From Medhurst, Keasberry learned the arts of composing, printing, book-binding and lithography which were to serve him well later on.[24]

In about 1834 after receiving some money from his father's estate Keasberry went to America and enrolled in the New Brunswick Theological Seminary for a three-year training in theology. In 1837 he left the United States as a missionary under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) bound for China. When their ship called at Singapore Keasberry decided to disembark there, where several members of the ABCFM already were active in the field. Keasberry's activities covered mission among Malays, a small school, printing and publishing books and tracts at the press in Battery Road. When, due to the First Opium War, China was opened, the ABCFM decided in 1839 to move their missionaries to that country. Keasberry chose to stay in Singapore and became a member of the LMS.[25] He remained with the LMS until 1847 when they also closed the Singapore station to focus on their work in China. Keasberry resigned and stayed on in Singapore as independent missionary. However, he was allowed by the LMS headquarters to keep parts of the printing equipment and to stay in the former premises of the mission. To finance his missionary activities Keasberry had to keep the printing press as profitable as

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24 Buckley 1965, 320–321; *150 Years of Faithfulness*, 9–10.
25 *150 Years of Faithfulness*, 11.

possible.[26] The first two years after the dissolution of the LMS-station were per-haps his most difficult ones.

Keasberry converted the old LMS-chapel on Mount Sophia into a printing and bookbinding company, later moved to Battery Road – which turned out to be commercially successful and became his main source of revenue.[27] The profits from his printing works, supplemented by some governmental grants and donations, allowed Keasberry to maintain his Malay boys' school together with the Malay chapel. Contemporary commentators and observers frequently praised Keasberry's educational efforts among Malay boys and lamented the financial situation of his institution.[28]

The number of printing presses in use by Keasberry needs to be clarified. While some sources suggest that Keasberry was allowed to keep one (lithographic?) press,[29] Keasberry himself mentioned in a letter already in February 1846 that he was able to carry out printing of a *Natural History in Malay* (which was typed in Latin letters)[30] and the Psalms (which were lithographed).[31] Song Ong Siang wrote about Keasberry's 'printing establishment'[32] and had first-hand information: his father Song Hoot Kiam was closely associated with Keasberry from the late 1840s onwards and was in 1864 even listed as treasurer of Keasberry's Malay chapel.[33] Thus, it seems that right from the final departure of the LMS in 1847 Keasberry was equipped with lithographic presses – Abdullah bin Abdulkadir Munsyi famous autobiography *Hikayat Abdullah* ('The Story of Abdullah') was lithographed in 1849 – and typographic presses with which he printed orders from his European clients.

The bulk of Keasberry's revenue came from his printing for educational in-stitutions, the colonial government or many Singaporean trading firms.[34] So, we

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26 In order to keep a mission Keasberry ran a Malay boys' school in Singapore. He and his wife Ellen also tried to establish a school for girls in about 1857, but this effort turned out to be a failure (Bazell 1921, 448).

27 Teo 2009, 41.

28 *Singapore Free Press*, 10 April 1856, 13 September 1860; *Straits Times*, 22 August 1863; *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 31 May 1873, 19 November 1874. Besides the Raffles Institution (which was primarily for European students) Keasberry's school was for many years the only institution in Singapore for vernacular education in Malay.

29 Byrd 1970, 16.

30 A copy of this book is kept in the H. N. van der Tuuk collection in the Leiden University Library (<https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/1887190> accessed on 18 April 2022).

31 Teo 2009, 245.

32 Song 1923, 58.

33 Song 1923, 78.

34 *Straits Observer*, 17 December 1875.

find him in 1851 printing for the leading European school, the Singapore Institution.[35] In 1852 he and Abdullah bin Abdulkadir Munsyi finished the translation of the New Testament in Malay printed in Latin letters for the British and Foreign Bible Society.[36] Keasberry received for this effort 10,000 sheets of paper and 200 pounds.[37] Some of the great European trading houses in Singapore like Behn, Meyer and Co. and Messrs. Paterson Simons and Co. encouraged Keasberry in his missionary activities and gave him as much printing work as was needed to keep him solvent.[38] One cannot but wonder how Keasberry found time to run his Malay Chapel and mission besides his teaching and publishing duties. Several print jobs from the colonial administration in Singapore kept him busy as well: 'Mr. Keasberry's press is constantly occupied in printing Government papers'.[39]

Based on this evidence we are able to make an interesting observation concerning Keasberry's printing and publishing activities. His commercial printing was chiefly carried out in typographic print in the English tongue as his European customers did not have much use for Malay publications in *Jawi* script. Business records, governmental reports and other prints, perhaps as unpretentious as personal business cards, account books or invoice pads made up the bulk of his production. Thus, Keasberry's Malay (and perhaps also Chinese) lithographic prints were nearly exclusively intended for missionary purposes and use in Keasberry's Malay school.

The LMS and the ABCFM long employed local scribes and printers for translating the Bible and other works, compiling dictionaries and publishing books, not all were necessarily ethnic Malays. The most well-known among them were surely Abdullah bin Abdulkadir Munsyi and Husin bin Ismail, both good examples of the problematic use of the ethnic label 'Malay'. Both were active at the Mission Press in Singapore which was in operation from 1834 to 1843 and for

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35 *Singapore Free Press*, 23 May 1851.

36 Browne 1859, 229.

37 This Malay Bible in Latin script was for the use in Batavia and Bengkulu in Sumatra for the Dutch Missionary Society, in Banjarmasin on Borneo for the German Rhenish Mission, and in Sarawak for the Anglican missionary Francis McDougall (Browne 1859, 229). Whether these Bibles were of great use in regions with Malay dialects and slangs much different from Abdullah Munsyi's refined High Malay, is not quite clear. Already a contemporary Singaporean observer named 'Griff' complained 'that the pure Malay in Mr. Keasberry's handy vocabulary is a totally different language from that spoken or jabbered by the Chinese dealers who come to our godown' (*Straits Times Overland Journal*, 1 June 1872).

38 *Singapore Free Press*, 8 February 1893; Helfferich 1957, 123.

39 *Straits Times*, 27 November 1869.

sure must have known each other, although it remains unclear how their personal and/or professional relations overlapped.

Abdullah Munsyi, the great reformer of Malay language and literature of the nineteenth century, was of mixed Malay-South Indian (Tamil)-Arab descent and was able to communicate in all three languages as well as Hindustani fluently, while he spoke a rather 'broken English'.[40] He was born in 1796 in Malacca and passed away of cholera in Jeddah during his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1854. During his career Abdullah Munsyi was active as Malay language teacher, scribe for Malay texts and lithographic printer for a variety of colonial administrators and Protestant missionaries. As a teenager he and his father were employed by Thomas Stamford Raffles of the East India Company. As a young adult he worked for several members of the London Missionary Society in Malacca and Singapore and then became scribe, printer and Bible translator for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Singapore in the 1830s. Finally, when both LMS and ABCFM left Singapore in the 1840s he worked for Benjamin Keasberry as printer, Bible translator, scribe and teacher at Keasberry's Malay school. There he educated dozens of pupils who later became scribes, translators for the colonial government, printers, publishers and civil servants (in particular in the neighboring state Johor).

Besides his own, very often autobiographical works, we have a contemporary description of him by his friend John Turnbull Thomson (1821–1884), who served as Government Surveyor in Singapore from 1841 to 1853. Thomson described Abdullah as 'a staunch Mahomedan' with whom he had plenty of discussions on the nature of Christianity and Islam.[41] These conversations embraced all aspects of religion and daily Muslim life and were not without unintentional humour, e.g. when Thomson realized that '*the evils of polygamy were less apparent to him than to the Europeans*' (italics in the original).[42] However, their friendship was deep, and Thomson even translated into English an abridged version of Abdullah's autobiography in 1874, twenty years after leaving Singapore.

Abdullah was an extraordinary author and translator of his time. His printed works, often with an autobiographical point of view, were first lithographed by the various Singaporean mission presses. Some of these he wrote on the suggestion of his missionary employers. His autobiography *Hikayat Abdullah* ('The Story of Abdullah', published in 1849) or his travel account *Kisah Pelayaran*

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40 Thomson 1864, 326.
41 Thomson 1864, 326.
42 Thomson 1864, 327.

Abdullah dari Singapura ke Negeri Kelantan ('The Account of Abdullah's Travel from Singapore to Kelantan', published in 1838) were openly critical of traditional Malay rulers and society. Therefore, it may not come as a surprise that they were used as schoolbook editions in colonial vernacular education even after Malaysian independence. In fact, Bible translations aside, Abdullah's travel account to Kelantan and his autobiography were among the most frequently reprinted Malay books before 1920 due to governmental use.[43]

In other books the role of Abdullah is not so easy to identify. Keasberry's Mission Press published *Ceritera Ilmu Kepandaian Orang Putih* ('The Story of the Clever Sciences of the White Men') in 1855, in which Abdullah surely was involved before his death. But whether this was as author, translator, scribe or just as a lithographer remains unclear. In any case, this book also saw several later reprints under the title *Jalan Kepandaian* ('The Way to Cleverness') used as a schoolbook. Thus, both its content and 'proper' Malay writing style and grammar influenced generations of Malay students well into the twentieth century. The same applies to the *Hikayat Dunia* ('The Story of the World'), a book on world geography used in mission and government schools published in the same year.[44] The last known work of Abdullah Munsyi as author is the account of his pilgrimage in 1854 *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah dari Singapura sampai ke Mekah* ('The Account of Abdullah's Travel from Singapore to Mecca') which remained incomplete and was probably brought to Singapore by a traveling companion.[45]

As an educator he was outstanding: nine years after his death it was still lamented that he could not be replaced by another Malay teacher:

> The School has suffered a great loss in the death of the old Master, Abdullah, who has not yet been replaced, the task of tuition is, however, carried on by the Assistant, the average daily attendance being twenty-eight boys.[46]

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43 *Hikayat Abdullah* was printed 12 times and *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* 15 times before 1920, see Proudfoot 1993. Actually, the *Hikayat Abdullah* was already in 1879 used as schoolbook in governmental schools (*Singapore Daily Times*, 6 August 1879).

44 Milner 1995, 59.

45 Ché-Ross 2000, 200. Here is not the time and space to give a list of Abdullah Munsyi's complete oeuvre. Abdullah himself mentions in his autobiography several other works he translated or co-authored with Keasberry and perhaps other missionaries (Abdullah 1997, 331), see also the index entry and references in Ian Proudfoot's remarkable catalogue *Early Malay Printed Books* (1993).

46 *Straits Times*, 22 August 1863.

Abdullah was also highly influential in the handwriting style of future scribes and illuminations of printed books and manuscripts. If Roger Tol's observations on Abdullah's handwriting are correct,[47] then Keasberry's mission journal *Cermin Mata* as well as the Malay translations of the Gospels which Keasberry's had lithographed from 1866 onwards look as if they are all in Abdullah's hand. But they are not. Rather they are products of his intellectual progeny.

Much less is known about the second scribe employed by the ABCFM missionaries Husin bin Ismail as he left behind no autobiographical works. Husin was of – possibly mixed – Bugis descent and active as scribe for Malay and Bugis texts from the late 1820s to the 1860s. He was hired by the ABCFM to work on texts in Bugis, but Malay manuscripts are also known to be written by him. One starts wondering whether he was in competition with Abdullah as both ,seemed to have worked at the same time for the Mission Press in Singapore. But there is no indication that Husin was ever hired by Keasberry after he established his Mission Press in 1847.[48]

Roger Tol's pioneering study on the handwriting of the two 'master scribes' Abdullah and Husin is fascinating and needs more successors.[49] One of the results of Tol is that in his later manuscripts Husin tries to get closer to Abdullah's hand who perhaps – also due to the circulation of the lithographed editions – set a standard of what a 'proper' Malay handwriting should look like.[50] The training of several students at Keasberry's school might also have contributed to the similarity of the later lithographies from the Mission Press: the handwriting of *Cermin Mata* resembles closely those of Abdullah Munsyi, with many features identified by Tol.[51] However, although the handwriting looks very much like that of Abdullah Munsyi this is impossible, as, in the contents of *Cermin Mata*, a travel account entitled *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* is found, an installment which is the narration of Abdullah's pilgrimage to Mecca where he subsequently died in 1854 – and which therefore could not have been by his hand. Who, then, was the scribe of *Cermin Mata*? Abdullah Munsyi was dead for more than three years, and the hand – if we accept Roger Tol's findings – is not of Husin bin Ismail. The answer: it is the handwriting of the convert Rajab.

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47 Tol 2001.
48 Tol 2001.
49 The only other study on styles of Malay handwriting to my knowledge is by Fadzillah 2000.
50 Gallop 2015, 36.
51 Tol 2001, 123–125.

A contemporary government report on education in the Straits Settlements by C. Beadon describing Keasberry's – and before his death, Abdullah's – educational and printing activities, is illustrative:

> He [Keasberry, H. W.] has established Printing and Lithographic Presses, worked by his Malay boys, who share in the profits, and he designs other means of improving the practical education of the boys. [...] The number of Malay boys under Mr. Keasberry's charge is now 25; of those educated by him, 13 are now earning a comfortable livelihood in various capacities, and several young men now working at his Printing Presses, are expecting early employments elsewhere. The average expense of each boy is rated at about 6 Rupees per mensem, for which they are boarded, fed, clothed, and educated. I should have mentioned before, that the boys are all taught English, but do not commence it till they are well grounded in their own language. The elder boys are all exercised in translating from English into Malay and vice versa.[52]

What becomes clear here is that Keasberry and Abdullah had educated whole generations of scribes, printers and language teachers well trained in both Malay and English, who – according to the report – had quite bright future prospects.[53] Rajab and Ismail must have been among them.

Another contemporary account on Keasberry and his Malay printing comes from the report of the expedition of the Austrian frigate *Novara* around the world and was authored by the expedition's secretary Karl von Scherzer. The *Novara* visited Singapore from 15–21 April 1858 and von Scherzer and other members of the expedition also visited Keasberry's Malay school and printing house, exactly at the time when Rajab and his colleagues must have been busy preparing the first volumes of *Cermin Mata*. Although the Austrians received plenty of books from Keasberry, they unfortunately made no mention on the scribes, lithographers or *Cermin Mata*.[54]

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52 *Singapore Free Press*, 1 May 1856.

53 The networks of Abdullah Munsyi and his pupils were not limited to Singapore and Malacca alone. The first known indigenous printer-publisher of Indonesia, a certain Kemas Haji Muhammad Azhari lithographed a Qur'an in Palembang in August 1848 and received his equipment from a certain Ibrahim bin Husayn – perhaps of Indian background, as he was from a place named 'Sahab Nagur' of origin and a pupil of Abdullah Munsyi (Peeters 1995, 183).

54 Scherzer 1861, 119. Among these books were *Hikayat Abdullah*, *Hikayat Dunia* (an edition published *c.* 1856), *Perjalanan Orang Mencari Selamat* (a translation of John Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress*), *Ceritera Ilmu Kepandaian Orang Putih*, *Hikayat Si Miskin* or a *Kitab Teki-Teki Terbang* (an introduction to the Malay alphabet and the reading and composition of Malay texts, dated 1855 and perhaps one of the last works of Abdullah Munsyi). These books are now kept in the Austrian National Library in Vienna and have been digitized for open access. However, they are somewhat difficult to trace as they were catalogued by an expert of the Arab

On the life of Rajab we have only fragmentary information and data, extracted from materials of various origins. There are several variant spellings of his name in the sources: Rujap/Rujup, used by Keasberry, or Rejab, as missionaries Francis McDougall and Walter Chambers in Sarawak referred to him. According to Keasberry, Rajab was in his 'nineteenth year' when he was baptised on Sunday, 15 January 1855,[55] which means he must have been born around 1835/1836. As Keasberry is telling us that Rajab was in the Malay school since he was a 'child', his teacher besides Keasberry himself and his wife Ellen must have been Abdullah Munsyi, in particular in Malay language, writing and composition as well as printing.[56] About three years before baptism, Keasberry had serious problems with the pubescent boy. He refused to attend school regularly, showed disobedience towards Keasberry and was accused of stealing the missionary's books, which he admitted – according to Keasberry's version of the story.[57]

In December 1856 Rajab went to Kuching in Sarawak and was employed as Malay translator by the Anglican missionary Francis McDougall (1817–1886).[58] As such he was based in Quap (present-day Kampung Kuap, about 10 km south of Kuching). However, due to an uprising of Chinese goldminers of Bau which nearly ended the rule of James Brooke in Kuching, Rajab fled back to Singapore and was received by Keasberry with open arms in May 1857:

> Our young Malay convert, Rujap of the Mission School has done great service as witness for the truth; he has just returned from Sarawak in Borneo where he has been staying for some months, and laboring among the Malays and *Dyaks*; owing to the late disturbance there, he was obliged to return to us, and has since taken his former situation again as an assistant teacher in our school. I cannot tell you how my heart is cheered and comforted in having such a convert back me in my work among the bigoted Mohammedans. His knowledge both in the English and Malay languages but especially in the latter is considerable; he has made also good progress in Scriptural knowledge and is now preparing to become in future a preacher of the Gospel; I have just received a letter from one of the Missionaries at Sarawak in which he states 'Rujap was a great help to all connected with our Mission. I am glad to hear that he himself liked the work here exceedingly and did all

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language and not Malay and partly given wrong language hints, e.g. Malayalam instead of Malay (<https://www.onb.ac.at/>, accessed on 21 March 2022).

55 Keasberry 1855, 162–164.

56 The same might apply also for Ismail. However, in all versions of his autobiography, Abdullah Munsyi remained remarkably discreet regarding his pupils in Keasberry's school (Sweeney 2008). Yet it might be possible that both entered the school after Abdullah had finished the text of his autobiography.

57 Keasberry 1855, 164.

58 Saunders 1992, 62.

in his power to bring over the *Dyaks* at *Quap* to the truth. It would be a great pity if he now should give it up, not to speak of the loss to us all, for as a Malay and thoroughly conversant with Mohammedanism, his word will have a double force. We still hope he will return, for in him we should lose a powerful witness for the truth.' I still look forward with deep interest that, as Rujap is now again with us, he will be the means of leading others of his class mates, many of whom are of his age, to the truth. Every evening he holds family worship with them and now and then converses with one or more on the importance of giving their hearts to Jesus. O it is my daily prayer that God may bless his efforts and make him a powerful instrument of much good to his comrades![59]

The unnamed Sarawak missionary mentioned by Keasberry who commented so positively on Rajab was either McDougall himself or his colleague Walter Chambers (1824–1893).[60] So, it seems that Rajab made himself a name in Sarawak which led Keasberry to employ him as assistant teacher at his Malay school. Furthermore Rajab also – as Ismail before him – worked from 1859 onwards as tract distributor for the already mentioned Ladies Bibles & Tract Society.[61] As such he carried tracts in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil to Serangoon, from Telok Ayer to Bras Basah and Tanjong Katong.[62] He was also a keen observer during these activities as he noticed that Malays like to listen to stories of the prophets and encouraged the Mission Press to prepare more of these tales.[63]

It seems that during his stay in Sarawak and after his return as assistant teacher, Rajab had proved his worth for Keasberry, who then entrusted him in early 1858 with a bigger, highly challenging task: the writing, composing and printing of the ambitious new Malay mission journal *Cermin Mata*:

> The Mission Press is constantly employed issuing tracts and useful works for distribution and for the use of schools. I send by this opportunity a Malay quarterly pamphlet which is edited by Rujap who is becoming very useful in this way, most of the articles in the work are our own production, written in good idiomatic Malay and are much admired by those who are competent to judge in the language. The work is called 'the eye glass to those who seek knowledge'; most of the young men formerly educated in the mission school subscribe to it, so by this means we hope to establish a sound and useful literature among the Malays which by the blessing of God, may in time take the place of those romances, and legends which had so much to corrupt the minds of the natives.[64]

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59 Letter by Keasberry, dated 18 May 1857, cited after Teo 2009, 284–285, italics in the original.

60 St. John 1863, 389–401; Varney 2013, 44–51.

61 Teo 2009, 45.

62 Teo 2009, 46.

63 Teo 2009, 47.

64 *London Missionary Society Archives*, Letter from Keasberry, 20 February 1860.

Outstanding as *Cermin Mata* is, one cannot but wonder how Keasberry financed his project. Subscriptions might have brought a small revenue, but with the small print-run of the Mission Press surely not enough. Other income came from his other printing activities, in typography or lithography, and perhaps also governmental and other grants for his school, which he could have used also for printing schoolbooks and teaching materials. He received a particularly great sum in mid-1856,[65] and some of this money might have been channeled into *Cermin Mata*'s printing and composing, but we have to keep in mind that there is no proof for this so far. Why *Cermin Mata* was stopped after issue 7 is not mentioned in any contemporary source. But perhaps it was due to the lack of funds needed for such a cost-intensive production that always included several colorful illuminations.

Producing *Cermin Mata* and his engagement with the Ladies Bibles & Tract Society kept Rajab occupied in 1858–1859. His activities must have met the satisfaction of Keasberry who promoted him at some time between 1860 and 1863 from 2nd teacher to 1st teacher of Malay at the Mission School, thus becoming a successor of Abdullah Munsyi.[66] During this period Rajab also found time to be active as scribe and copyist of Malay manuscripts and other printing engagements. At least two copies of *Hikayat Indraputra* giving the day of finishing the text (but unfortunately not the year!) has been identified as copied by Rajab.[67] One is kept in the Leiden University Library, the other is preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. The Paris manuscript also provides Rajab's address as Kampung Bangkahulu, Bukit Ziun (Zion), Singapore which is the area of present-day Bencoolen Street.[68] The Leiden manuscript was acquired by the Dutch missionary and Bible translator H. C. Klinkert who was in Riau for two and half years before 1867.[69] He made use of it for at least two of his publications.[70] Keasberry had several Malay manuscripts which he sold in 1866,[71]

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65 *Singapore Free Press*, 1 May 1856, 3 July 1856.

66 Teo 2009, 307; van der Putten 2006, 426.

67 Mulyadi 1980, 25, 36.

68 Mulyadi 1980, 46. Actually this was the address of Keasberry's printing house so that it can be assumed that Rajab finished this manuscript there at some time between May 1857 and early 1864.

69 Van der Putten 2018, 18.

70 Mulyadi 1980, 45.

71 Questions arise from this list of manuscript published by van der Tuuk: was selling manuscripts another source of income for Keasberry's mission? How did he get access to these? Keasberry employed besides Rajab and Ismail other lithographic printers and scribes and might have received, perhaps even asked for manuscripts from them.

among them another *Hikayat Indraputra* which is not identical to these two copies: this third manuscript, recorded by van der Tuuk, contains 518 pages for instance,[72] while Rajab's copies both have fewer than 300.[73] But a search for the manuscripts listed by van der Tuuk might be promising to identify further manuscripts from Rajab's hand.

However, at some time in 1863 the relationship between Keasberry and Rajab soured again. Keasberry accused Rajab of a 'personal and vindictive spirit', being full of pride and self-esteem and having a 'flattery' character. Rajab was denounced for 'associating with many other young men who are of loose characters' and that he 'was easily allured to join them in their convivial meetings which eventually brought him into no small disgrace both before the boys of the school and others residing in the Mission premises.' Keasberry then mentioned in a letter dated 6 August 1864 that Rajab had to be dismissed from the office, 'though with the greatest reluctancy', and finally excommunicated.[74] After losing his employment with Keasberry, Rajab seemed to move to Labuan – an island off the coast of Brunei and a British Crown Colony – but at some point reappeared in Singapore at Keasberry's chapel:

> As regards Rujap, whose conduct has given us much anxiety and pain, I regret to say, is still impenitent. Some Sundays, he would appear in chapel but we fear he comes merely to cloak his sin, or to pacify his conscience, for I have been informed since he has gone to Borneo to become an interpreter, he has been for sometime living in open sin. We still hope and pray he may one day be brought back to the fold of Christ.[75]

This reference to some sort of illicit relationship is the only statement of Keasberry on the concrete misbehaviors of Rajab. The vague indication of Rajab's misconduct since 1863 does not allow precise conclusions why it came to the break of relationship between Rajab and his former teacher Keasberry.

Rajab seemed to have spent his last years in Borneo. In 1873 we hear of a 'Sheik [sic] Rejab', trained at Keasberry's School in Singapore and Malay interpreter at the General Court, who was hired as teacher by Sir Henry Bulwer, Governor of Labuan 1871–1875, to set up a government school that used English and Malay.[76] Whether Rajab made the Arab title *Syeikh* up by himself or whether he

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72 Van der Tuuk 1866, 473.

73 Mulyadi 1980, 25, 36.

74 Teo 2009, 307.

75 Letter dated 21 February 1866, cited after Teo 2009, 315.

76 Tarling 1971, 224.

really was of Arab descent, cannot be ascertained.[77] Rajab seems to have given up this position before 1880 when we find him employed in that year as an agent for the syndicate of Alfred Dent and Count Gustav von Overbeck trying to seek the syndicate's capitalization in Brunei.[78] The last mention of Rajab dates from mid-1887 when he was serving as agent for Sir Frederick Weld, Governor of the Straits Settlements, on his investigation trip on the situation in Brunei in 1887.[79]

In one respect Rajab's life shows a typical pattern of scribes in South and Southeast Asia: a *munsyi* has to be able to be mobile, as his employment leads him to work where he was hired and expected to travel when he is also needed as translator by his employer.[80] During his lifetime, fate led Rajab from Singapore to Kuching and back, and then to Labuan, North Borneo and Brunei. This mobility seems to be not untypical for *munsyis* within the Malay-speaking regions of Southeast Asia, where they could find employment in the multicultural environments of growing port cities like Singapore, Batavia, Penang, Kuching or Surabaya. It is not by chance that these were also the places where Malay printing activities were most numerous.[81]

Furthermore, what becomes evident from the fragmentary data on Rajab, but also from the numerous sources on Abdullah Munsyi is the remarkable independent-mindedness both scribes showed, despite being engaged by colonial administrators or European missionaries. In Abdullah's case it was accepted that he became a critical commentator on recent developments in his world as he admired European cultural and technical superiority in his autobiography, in particular personified in the iconic figure Thomas Stamford Raffles. Rajap, on the other hand, got into conflict with his employer and was finally dismissed, as a result of their obviously differing perceptions of living a morally acceptable life.

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77 One cannot but wonder about this title: if Rajab really was of Arab descent, would Keasberry (and also McDougall in Sarawak) not have proudly announced that they had an Arab convert?

78 Tarling 1971, 270.

79 Tarling 1971, 370.

80 Alam and Subrahmanyam 2004, 64.

81 Smaller places, again mostly harbour towns, followed as printing centres after 1900, e.g. Kota Bharu, Muar, Alor Setar, Banjarmasin or Patani.

4 The contents of the journal

The contents of the journal cover a variety of fields. Keasberry claimed that 'most of the articles in the work are our own production'.[82] Several works are translations, paraphrases and/or summaries of English originals. For example, an abridged translation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, to my knowledge, the first translation ever in the Malay language,[83] and a shortened version of Benjamin Morrell's travel account. The inclusion of *Robinson Crusoe* in a missionary journal is unsurprising as Robinson 'civilizes' Friday by imparting the fundaments of Christian religious knowledge, thus being a perfectly suitable text viewed from a Protestant Christian ethic.[84] However, not all the journal's contents were devoted to heavy-handed Christian parables.

Other essays also appear to have been adapted from European texts, like *Dari hal bangsa Dayak* ('On the Dayak [i.e. Sea Dayak = Iban] people'),[85] *Angkatan perang Napoleon ke negeri Rusyia* ('Napoleon's army in Russia')[86] or *Perjalanan di benua Afrika* ('Travels in Africa').[87] Other works might have reached Keasberry through his missionary networks to Indonesia or India (*Ceritera seorang perempuan Hindu* 'The story of a Hindu woman';[88] or *Seorang haji telah masuk Masihi* 'A haji who entered Christianity').[89]

Nevertheless, several articles, poems and squibs were original compositions either by Keasberry (and then translated into Malay) or by Rajab himself. In particular this seems to be the case of stories taken from the Bible (*Hikayat Ruth* 'The story of Ruth';[90] or *Perumpamaan Sulaiman* 'Proverbs of Solomon')[91] or on general morals and ethics (*Pada menyatakan malas* 'On laziness';[92] or *Kelakuan orang berlaki-isteri* 'The behavior of husband and wife').[93] But also the included

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82 *London Missionary Society Archives*, Ultra Ganges Mission, 20 February 1860.
83 Proudfoot 1997.
84 Wickham 1912; Guillermo 2014, 16.
85 *Cermin Mata*, 2, 1858, 75–82.
86 *Cermin Mata*, 6, 1859, 202–226.
87 *Cermin Mata*, 5, 1859, 131–140.
88 *Cermin Mata*, 5, 1859, 111–119.
89 *Cermin Mata*, 3, 1858, 190–194.
90 *Cermin Mata*, 3, 1858, 184–189.
91 *Cermin Mata*, 2, 1858, 128–129.
92 *Cermin Mata*, 3, 1858, 195–196.
93 *Cermin Mata*, 4, 1859, 75–82.

Malay poetry in *syair*-form require intimate literary knowledge and lyrical abilities of a native speaker (Figs 3 and 6).[94]

Surprisingly for a mission journal – as it documents the strength of a Muslim's faith – is the inclusion of Abdullah Munsyi's incomplete travel account of his pilgrimage to Mecca (*Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah dari Singapura sampai ke Mekah*.) It appeared as a serial in three consecutive volumes of the journal between July 1858 and April 1859 and is an abridged version of the text.[95] This text of Abdullah was very likely given to Keasberry by one of Abdullah Munsyi's three sons.

The strengthening of group identity and experiences of their pupils and potential converts was a special aim of the mission schools in Singapore and elsewhere.[96] The impact of Keasberry's and other colonial schoolbooks for this target cannot be underestimated. Royal and aristocratic elites from Johor, Kedah and other Malay states had been educated with books from Keasberry.[97] As Tony Day and others have convincingly demonstrated from the 1830s onwards Western knowledge notably on geography and astronomy entered Southeast Asia and brought a new view of the world. The result was not only the victory of one kind of knowledge over another, it also strengthened modernizing non-European elites.[98] Geographical texts played a particular crucial role in implementing new ideas.

Essays from *Cermin Mata* like *Dari hal benua Eropah* ('On the Continent of Europe')[99] or *Dari hal negeri Sarawak* ('On the State Sarawak')[100] or the already mentioned *Hikayat Dunia* brought a 'description of the real world' to maritime Southeast Asia, to borrow a phrase from Milner.[101] From the very beginning geography was considered of great importance in Malay vernacular education in governmental schools. In 1879 out of some 68,000 Malay boys 1,190 attended Malay vernacular schools in British Malaya, of these only 91 were taught in the

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94 *Syair* are longer poems with 4-lined stanzas with an identical end rhyme.

95 For an overview of the different manuscripts and printed versions of Abdullah Munsyi's text see Ché-Ross 2000, 173–180. However, Ché-Ross gives a wrong page number of the third part of Abdullah's account which made the text to appear rather complete although it is not (Ché-Ross 2000, 209).

96 Goh 2001, 60–61.

97 Gullick 1992, 102.

98 Day 2002, 101; Holmes 1967, 24; Watson 1982, 89.

99 *Cermin Mata*, 1, 1858, 13–22.

100 *Cermin Mata*, 1, 1858, 23–28.

101 Milner 1995, 59.

higher subjects of geography, composition and compound rules.[102] By establishing concepts like territorial states with fixed boundaries, like Sarawak, the existence of modern nations in Europe or the beginning classifications of 'races' living in their rightful territories they as de facto authorized sources gave a powerful impetus for the 'Malayness' and their increasing blood-and-soil relation to the territory and in consequence also to the development of later nation states.[103] The inclusion of maps in these geographic texts helped foster the notion of territoriality of their environment and connected it with statehood.

> Boundaries may be static (and even that is open to debate at some level) but their meanings are not. [...] Boundaries created by colonial powers acquired a reality and a meaning over time to many living within their bounds.[104]

Maps and the territories they presented promoted, legitimized and sustained the power of the colonial state and of elites and helped to define its shape.[105] Its assumed immutability was carried on into mission and governmental schools and entered the thoughts of the early, however small, groups of modernizing urban Malay elites. Nevertheless the practical use of this kind of knowledge for the daily life in the Singaporean tropics was quite limited: to receive a scholarship candidates had to answer examination questions in geography like 'Upon what river does the Capital of Austria stand?' or 'Where are the Straits of Bonifacio?', but they left behind in the mind of the pupils the idea that modern states must have a capital and that a strait can be a boundary between two of these modern states.[106] However, Keasberry's journal and other schoolbooks always included material on European geography and other affairs despite the fact most of his pupils would never be able to apply for a scholarship for further studies in the United Kingdom.

Besides their use as schoolbooks these texts were also put in libraries in colonial metropoles like Singapore, Penang or Kuala Lumpur, partly as a curiosity, partly as ethnographic or linguistic sources. Here not only Europeans had access to them, but also the tiny group of the European-educated urban Asian

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102 *Singapore Daily Times*, 6 August 1879.

103 Soda 2001, 189–190; Day 2002, 101. Sometimes schoolbooks remained in use for a long time: in some Qur'an schools in Malacca Keasberry's texts for learning to read and write Malay were still in use as late as 1957 (Azman 1993, 66).

104 Craib 2017, 17.

105 Edney 2007, 26; Edney 2019, 19; Culcasi 2017, 255; Noor 2020, 164–172.

106 *Public Record Office*, Kew: Colonial Office Records CO 273/9: Despatch to Home Department No. 15 of 1865, from the Governor of the Straits Settlements, dated 7 July 1865, 257.

elite. In this respect, again, these books were part of the European 'civilizing mission' and gave their readers the knowledge needed to maintain, expand and explain the empire.[107]

5 Keasberry's printers and printing after his death in 1875

Benjamin Peach Keasberry passed away on Monday, 6 September 1875 from a heart attack while preaching in his Prinsep Street mission chapel.[108] His former pupil, Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor, erected a tombstone for him with the inscription '[...] in testimony of personal esteem and in remembrance of friendly services rendered'.[109] What became of his Mission Press and the printers and scribes employed there? A look in contemporary newspapers allows some conclusions.

After Keasberry's death his printing house seemed to have been carried on until at least mid-1877. A note in the *Singapore Daily Times* from 8 May 1877 mentioned the reprint of Keasberry's *English and Malay Vocabulary* to be sold by the Mission Press which means that the press was still operating.[110] The Education Report for 1876 noted that there was 'a small industrial class to carry on the very useful labours of the late Mr. Keasberry in this direction particularly with regard to Book-binding'.[111] However, the Inspector of Schools A. M. Skinner noted in August 1879 that Keasberrys' School was closed and he had plans to revive an industrial school for printing and bookbinding.[112] Although now defunct, printed books of the Mission Press seem to have been still available until in 1881 when they were referred to as out of print.[113]

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107 Luyt 2008, 394.

108 *Straits Times*, 11 September 1875.

109 *Singapore Free Press*, 8 February 1893.

110 The complete title of this book was *School Vocabulary of the English and Malay Languages*. This book of 88 pages in Malay and Roman letters was printed as third revised edition under the approval of the Inspector of Schools for the Straits Settlements (Proudfoot 1993, 463).

111 *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 1 September 1877.

112 *Singapore Daily Times*, 6 August 1879.

113 *Singapore Daily Times*, 18 April 1881. It is not known who sold these books of the Mission Press. Besides being offered in their premises it was said in 1881 that they could be procured from the warehouse Messrs. John Little & Co. at a modest price (*Singapore Daily Times*, 18 April 1881; Buckley 1965, 350).

The Mission Press was no longer referred to after 1880. What happened to Keasberry's printing equipment has until now been unclear due to contradictory sources. Together with books from Keasberry in July and August 1881 'several lithographic presses in good working order' were advertised for sale by a certain Thomas Trusty, proprietor of Singapore Press.[114] Other sources mention that Keasberry's printing press passed into the hands of the Company of Fraser & Neave Ltd. in 1881 or 1882.[115] However, Keasberry's typographic presses had already been auctioned and sold to Fraser & Neave in July 1877,[116] while it seems that Trusty then was still in charge of the lithographic material. The lithographic presses were offered by him in the newspapers in 1881 for quite some while, it might be possible that he was not able to sell them. The few sources on Fraser & Neave's publishing activities all refer to typographic print.[117] Thomas Trusty himself started lithographic printing of Malay texts until from 1886 to about 1897, but it is not clear whether he used Keasberry's old equipment for his publishing activities.[118]

As Jan van der Putten notes, at least some of the scribes and printers of Keasberry's Mission Press were also instrumental in the development of the thriving Muslim printing industry of Singapore, Palembang, Penang and Johor from the late nineteenth century.[119] Several of them seemed to have been able to make a comparatively good living. The already mentioned Ismail became an interpreter at the Supreme Court and worked as freelance language teacher for newly arrived colonial civil servants and military men. Others might have done the same: John Cameron gave a lively description of contemporary freelance scribes in Singapore:

> Another remarkable feature of the streets, and one which carries the mind away back to a very early period of our own country, is made up of the letter-writers or penny-a-liners, who take up their stalls at various parts of the town. They are always to be seen in the mornings seated composedly at their desks in the verandahs or out in the streets. [...] When not engaged in taking down the thoughts of others, these penmen generally employ themselves in copying out stock pamphlets, or, it may be, composing original prose or verse suited for the popular taste. But their productions cannot be very deep, for they seem to write away with great facility, even when not copying; and I have never witnessed

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114 E.g. *Singapore Daily Times*, 23 July 1881.

115 Greer 1956, 25; Byrd 1970, 17; Lee 1989, 5; Proudfoot 1993, 66. The authors do not give any source for their statement, so they may have relied on each other.

116 *Straits Times*, 21 July 1877.

117 *1883–1983: The Great Years*.

118 Proudfoot 1993, 647.

119 Van der Putten 2013, 5.

them in anything like what we term the agonies of composition. As a rule, they are not more intellectual in appearance than their neighbours, though I have remarked one or two who clearly bore the print of letters on their features.[120]

Although many of them might also have been Chinese and despite Cameron's overbearing European arrogance on quality and taste – how can he judge about the intellectual depth of texts without being able to read them? – it becomes clear from the account that there was a demand for trained scribes in nineteenth-century Singapore.

Others entered new markets. In 1876, for instance, the first Malay-language newspaper *Jawi Peranakan* was published in Singapore and was in urgent need of experienced printers:

> An offer was received from the proprietors of the Malay newspaper [...] to accept apprentices in their new printing establishment. I understand they met with some difficulty in starting owing to the want of compositors. Only two or three now remain at work of all those trained by the late Mr. Keasberry; the rest having either left the Settlement or rejoined 'Islam', which, to their minds would probably involve, breaking off entirely from the trade they learned at the Mission School or at the Mission Press. Thus the Jawi Peranakan Company were compelled to train up two compositors, before they could set to work with the new press they had procured from England.[121]

While not stated specifically, it seems likely that at least *some* of Keasberrys' printers and scribes were able to receive employment at the *Jawi Peranakan*, the first vernacular newspaper in Malay in Singapore. Another former pupil of Keasberry started the short-lived lithographed newspaper *Peridaran al-Shams wa-al-Qamar* ('The revolution of the sun and the moon') in 1877 in Singapore.[122]

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120 Cameron 1865, 66–67.

121 *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 12 August 1879. The *Jawi Peranakan* actually was able to hire five apprentices in 1879 (*Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 2 August 1883).

122 Gallop 2014. Unfortunately the name of its editor is only given as 'murid Keasberry dan Abdullah Munsyi' ('a pupil of Keasberry and Abdullah Munsyi') (Adam 1994, 101). However, this person was not identical with Rajab: this can be assured from the handwriting of the reproduction of the title page of this newspaper given in Gallop 2014.

6 Conclusion: The importance of scribes for the production of literature and colonial knowledge

The story of *Cermin Mata* and its surrounding context illustrates the pivotal role manuscript scribes played in the production of early Malay lithographic printing. Hans Overbeck had already placed an emphasis on an unnamed scribe – who was Encik Ibrahim al-Riau[123] – who copied all the larger works for the lithographic printers in Singapore.[124] After his death at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century he could not be replaced, which, in concert with other factors, led to the decline of the Singaporean lithographic industry in the 1910s.[125] *Cermin Mata* could have never been completed and published without Rajab's active collaboration and interest in its contents, even though he later became a major disappointment to his employer and former mentor Benjamin Keasberry.

As former copyists of manuscripts and then producers of manuscript-like print works, Keasberry's and other scribe-printers kept the role of intellectuals who had access to script, texts and the knowledge embedded in and associated with these. Literacy in Singapore and the other colonial port cities of maritime Southeast Asia was still very low and even less outside the towns and cities.[126] In fact, in 1872 in the Straits Settlements existed only 16 Malay vernacular schools with about 600 male pupils.[127] In this respect the few literate individuals formed a rather exceptional elite, which had to orientate itself from declining royal patronage towards new ways of producing texts, closely connected with the urban environment of the emerging colonial cities like Singapore, Batavia, Penang or Surabaya.

Local *munsyis* were – due to their involvement in lithographic printing in Singapore, Penang or elsewhere in the Malay World – directly responsible for a wider spread of traditional and newly composed texts. As in Europe they were producers of literary works which, now due to their availability, their cheaper price and their consumer-oriented presentation, were available for a more general consumption.[128] The exception were, of course, printings for the colonial governments – which in general were not lithographed, but published in typography –

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123 Proudfoot 1993, 42.

124 Overbeck 1927, 6.

125 Proudfoot 1993, 42.

126 Watson 1982, 92; Holmes 1967, 9.

127 Stevenson 1975, 14.

128 Eisenstein 1983.

and publications from the various mission presses, which were released not to entertain and make money, but for other purposes and perhaps also for different readerships.[129]

But the scribes were not mere transcribers of texts from by-gone times. They were also authors of texts in new forms and with new contents. Keasberry's scribes and printers were creators of works to be employed in completely new contexts outside the former Islamic courts and Islamic religious institutions. Their lithographed works were used as instruments for Christian missions, as schoolbooks in educational facilities of missions and the colonial government or simply as entertainment literatures to be read aloud in one of the many Singaporean coffee shops. In this respect they were literary agents and mediators of modernity in the Malay World.[130] Due to their use in schools, open mission sermons or readings of stories and newspaper articles in front of audiences in coffee houses these printed works were highly important for the popularization of knowledge and if not also playing a role in the spread of literacy.[131] Local intellectuals were transformed into informants or sources of knowledge on colonized territories and peoples in nineteenth century.[132]

With colonialism came the triumph of Western science, technology and knowledge which also served as symbol of the superiority of European civilization and rule on 'ignorant' and 'uncivilized' subjects in Africa and Asia.[133] But the scribes behind these early Malay lithographic works were not mere passive repetiteurs of what European educators, missionaries, civil servants or others wanted them to put down in print. As the discussions of Abdullah Munsyi with John Turnbull Thomson have shown, he and many other scribes of the nineteenth century had an independent mind and also did not hesitate to become critical commentators on new developments in their world. This was in sharp contrast to the colonizers' perception that only a very limited (and already Western educated) number of natives can intellectually equal to Europeans.[134]

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129 While the educational titles of both the government and mission presses were intended for pupils in schools, the publications by the independent publishers had to rely on the sales of their publications. Thus, their output was directed to the group of mostly urban Malays who had the money and the means to afford these titles, read either for entertainment or political information. In general, it can be stated that the colonial government did not publish books, brochures or other printed material for entertainment purposes before the 1920s.

130 Van der Putten 2013, 1.

131 Robinson 1993, 242.

132 Day 2002, 143.

133 Bayly 2006, 337.

134 Day 2002, 143.

The relationship between European employer/benefactor and scribe was not always a harmonious one, as we have also seen. Keasberry treated Abdullah Munsyi as a leading expert of Malay language and literature, but never accepted Rajab as equal to Abdullah – a sense of rejection and contempt which seems to have been felt by Rajab too. A factor that certainly did not help their fractious relationship.

But we should also note that scribes were not wholly dependent on the largess of their European patrons. After his dismissal, Rajab as well as Ismail and the other scribes after the closing of Keasberry's Mission Press were able to make a comfortable living via their chosen profession. This was partly due to the education and training they received there from missionaries like Keasberry, but also to the existing networks of scribes in Singapore and beyond. Rajab went to Borneo and worked there as a scribe, in which capacity his reputation was enhanced. His work attracted the attention of the Governor of Labuan who hired him as teacher to set up a completely new government school. Ismail worked as translator and scribe for the colonial Supreme Court. Another former pupil of Abdullah Munsyi became instrumental for setting up lithographic publishing in Palembang in 1848.[135] Finally at least two or three former printers of the Missions Press managed to be taken on by the independent newspaper *Jawi Peranakan* after the former's closure. These examples illustrate the continued importance of scribes and *munsyis* even after the introduction of lithographic printing in the Malay World. They continued to serve as local intellectuals as well as literary mediators for new texts and new environments for traditional texts aimed at local audiences as well as European colonial agents.

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Fig. 1: Title page of *Cermin Mata*, No. 1, April 1858. © Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main.
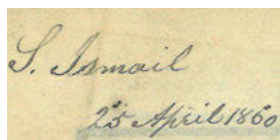
Fig. 2: Signature of S. Ismail, former owner of the Frankfurt set of *Cermin Mata* (detail from Fig. 1).

Fig. 3: Syair ('Poem'), from *Cermin Mata*, No. 1, April 1858, p. 88. © Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main.
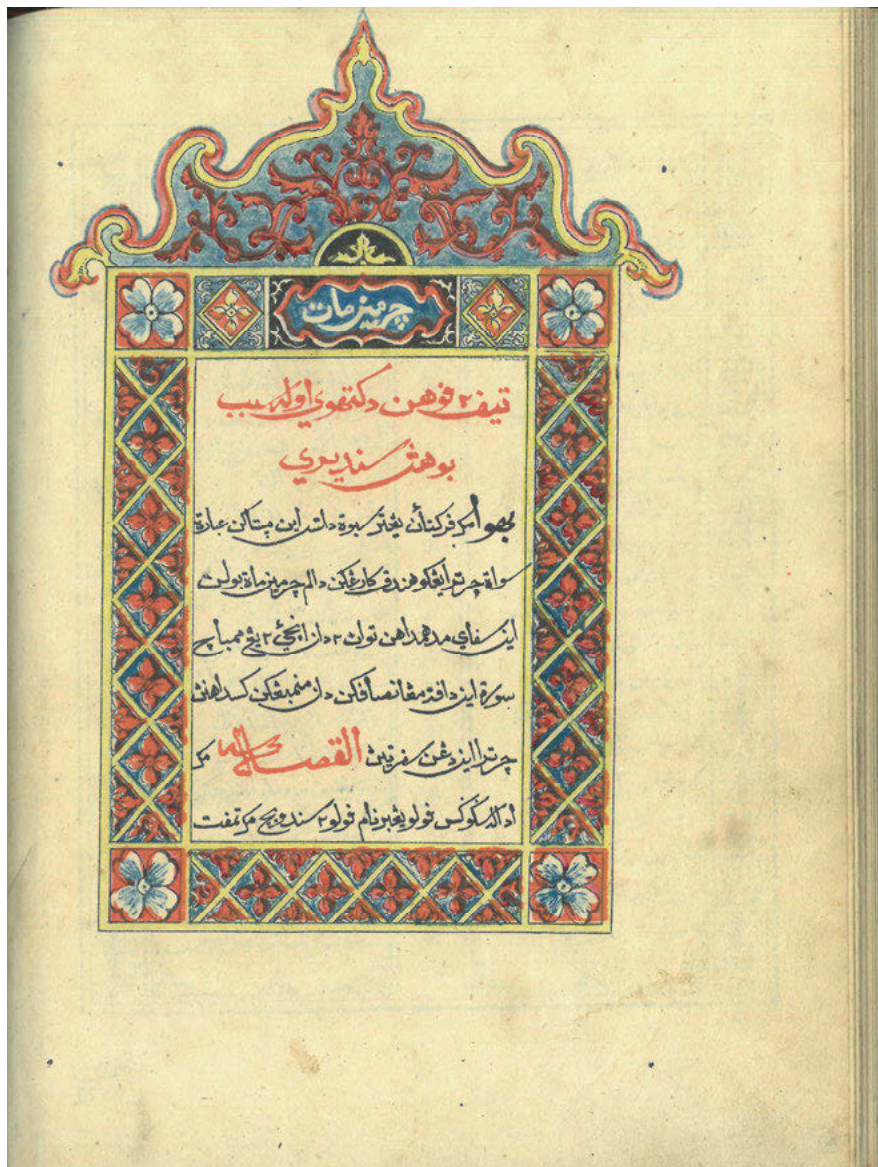
Fig. 4: Title page of *Cermin Mata*, No. 4, April 1859. © Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main.
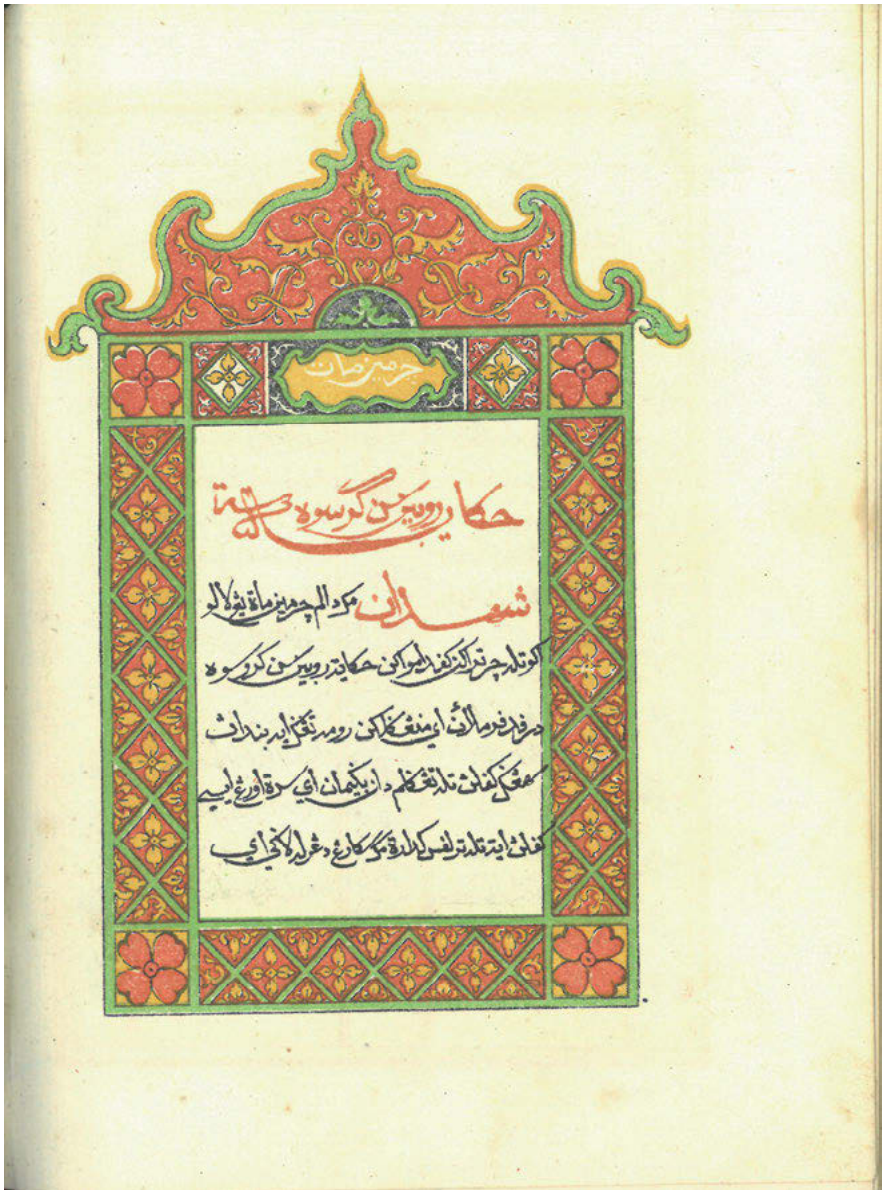
Fig. 5: Title page of *Cermin Mata*, No. 5, August 1859. © Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main.
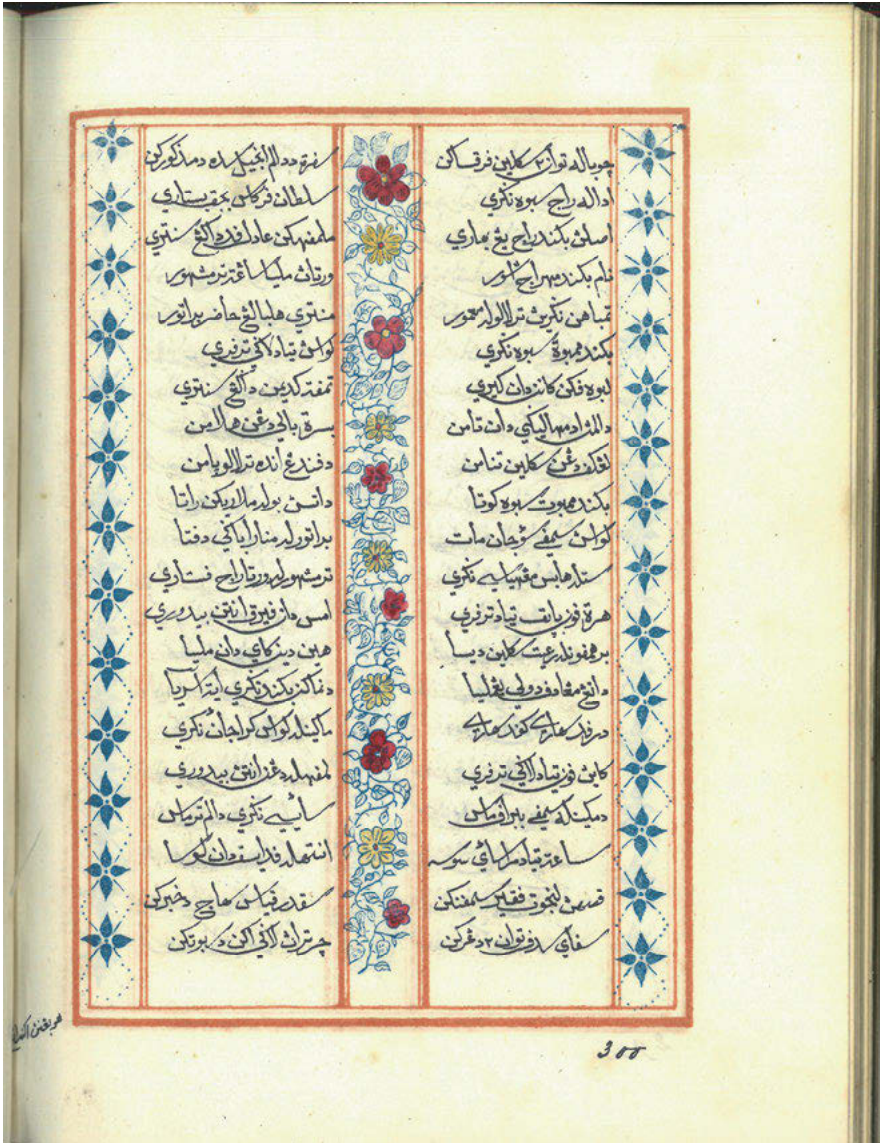
Fig. 6: *Syair* ('Poem'), from *Cermin Mata*, No. 6, October 1859, p. 300. © Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main.

Scott Reese

'The Ink of Excellence': Print and the Islamic Written Tradition of East Africa

Abstract: This article examines the social and intellectual ramifications of print as both an innovative new medium and an extension of the manuscript tradition, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the 1950s. Taking a broad trans-regional framework that highlights the emerging connectivity between the Islamic centers of learning and print production in Egypt, on the one hand, and Muslims in East and Northeast Africa, on the other hand, it examines how print created new sets of discursive webs and relationships that entangled Muslims across various physical and conceptual spaces. Furthermore, this piece surveys the elements of the manuscript tradition that find their way onto the printed page exploring how such elements persist from one media to the next and the transformations they undergo in the process.

1 Introduction

One evening in 1917, 'just at the moment between waking and sleep', the Somali religious scholar Qassim al-Barawi[1] was visited by his deceased mentor, Shaykh Uways b. Muhammad. They spoke of this and that, when al-Barawi offered up a curious bit of information. 'You know,' he said, 'Shaykh Yusuf b. Ismaʿil al-Nabhani has just written a book, *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ* ('A collection of the miracles of the saints'). Unimpressed, Uways replied, '*my* miracles exceed anything in *that* book. You need to compile *my* hagiography, asking all of your brethren [to contribute] before you do so.'[2]

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1 While many of the names included in this article are clearly Arabic, many of the individuals themselves were of Somali or Swahili origin. As such, the spellings of these names often differ from standardized Arabic in local post-colonial orthographies (both Arabic and Latin). As a result, rather than either shoe-horn non-standard names into Arabic formats or introduce a confusing mish-mash of transliteration symbols, personal names have largely been presented in plain text. Arabic terms, book titles and concepts, however have been transliterated in accord with the LOC standard.

2 Translation and emphasis mine. The text is cited from a photocopy of the original manuscript in my possession. The location of the original manuscript is unknown. Qassim al-Barawi, *Majmūʿa karāmāt*, manuscript dated to 1953, pp. 1–2:

A number of insights emerge from this exchange. First, appearing as a manuscript around 1920, al-Barawi's *Majmūʿa karāmāt* ['A Collection of Miracles'], an assemblage of Uways' miracles, is one of the earliest known written hagiographies in East Africa[3] – appearing to have been a largely oral tradition up to this point – and seems, at least in part, inspired by Yusuf Ismaʿil al-Nabhani (d. 1932) a well-connected Palestinian *ʿālim* and retired Ottoman Qadi with strong connections to the elite publishing circles of Cairo. Indeed, it seems to have sparked a small industry in written hagiographical production, with collections emerging from this point forward devoted to multiple local holy men. But what is truly striking is, not only did many of these – including the aforementioned *Majmūʿa karāmāt* – eventually make their way from manuscript into print, but they were produced by the same Egyptian publisher as al-Nabhani's work, Mustafa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.[4]

Scholars of Islam have regularly used early printed works to explore the religious, social, and political lives of Muslims in the colonial and post-colonial eras.[5] Until now, however, little attempt has been made to understand its significance on a more systemic level. In particular, how did the emergence of affordable printed works contribute to the creation of new discursive relationships while enriching or disrupting older connections? By the same token, what was the relationship between this new media and the manuscript tradition? How did the much deeper Islamic handwritten tradition shape emergent print and vice versa? What are the social, material and spiritual factors that drove such interactions?

Approaching print as both an innovative new medium and an extension of the written manuscript tradition, this article examines the social and intellectual ramifications of the former's development. In order to illustrate the extent of the transformations that occur, I have chosen to utilise a broad transregional framework that highlights the emerging connectivity between the Islamic centers of learning and print production in the eastern Mediterranean (especially Egypt) and Muslims in East and Northeast Africa from the second half of the nineteenth century to the 1950s. Doing so enables us to examine how print created new sets of discursive webs and relationships that entangled Muslims across various physical and conceptual spaces.

رايته بين اليقظة والمنام أخاطبه وأقول له انّ الشيخ يوسف بن إسمعيل النبهني رضي الله عنه ألف الكتاب جماع الكرامات الاولياء وكنت اطالعه فقال لي كراماتي تزيد عن هذا الكتاب فألّف مناقبي واسال اخاك باظير وكنت نويت قبل تاليفها.

3 Abu Bakr b. Sumayt's slim volume of saintly stories related to Alawi b. Muhammad b. Sahl is, of course, older. However, its subject was a non-local *Wali* from India. See Ibn Sumayt 1886.
4 Abd al-Rahman b. Umar 1954.
5 See for instance, Bang 2003; Green 2011; Reese 2008, and Reese 2018.

At the same time, this study examines print as an extension of the manuscript tradition rather than a break from it. In addition to uncovering networks of discourse, this piece surveys the elements of the manuscript tradition that find their way onto the printed page. This includes conceptual aspects such as the genres of works and their content, as well as material characteristics including the layout and organization of printed books in relation to their manuscript counterparts. But it also involves interrogating various discursive elements regarding proper formulation of texts (e.g. invocations, benedictions and endorsements etc.), claims to authority and guarantees of authenticity. All these components are essential for the authorized transmission of knowledge in the Islamic discursive tradition dating to the earliest period of the faith and all can be found when moving from manuscript into print. The ultimate objective is to understand how such elements persist from one media to the next and the transformations they undergo in the process.

This essay draws primarily on an examination of printed books from the collection of Maalim Idris b. Muhammad, located in Zanzibar. Currently the object of a digitization grant from the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP 1114), the Maalim Idris Collection (MIC) consists of more than 300 manuscripts and printed books dating from before 1950. While the manuscripts were generally produced in East Africa, the printed works have more varied origins, ranging from early lithographs produced by the famed Nawal Kishore press of India, to typeset works from Singapore, Mecca and even Dutch Indonesia. However, the overwhelming majority were produced by an Egyptian publishing houses located in Cairo: Maktabat ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-awlāduh. Assembled over the course of fifty years, largely from mosque collections and scholarly libraries, the MIC presents a snapshot of the scholarly curriculum and reading habits of Muslim religious intellectuals in an important Indian Ocean intellectual center. Equally important, the collection offers insight into the impact of print on the global *umma* and its emergence as a medium of Islamic discourse.

2 The age of steam and print

The technological advances of the second half of the nineteenth century – what Jim Gelvin and Nile Green have referred to as 'the age of steam and print' – were, of course, transformative for the personal and spiritual lives of many Muslims.[6]

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6 Gelvin and Green 2014, Huber 2013.

Advances in steamship technology from the 1850s, along with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, rapidly increased the mobility of Muslims across the various European oceanic empires. The number of Muslims traveling on the Hajj during the second half of the century, for instance, increased exponentially with more believers taking part in the pilgrimage to Mecca than at any other time in the history of the faith.[7] The development of regularized steamship routes also led to the development of new networks of commerce, labor, and religious scholarship.

Print in various Islamicate languages (most notably Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish) likewise exploded across the Muslim world from the 1850s onward aided by the corresponding development of regularized steamship routes across the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. Print was, in many ways, the great democratizer of Muslim public and religious discourse and its study is a well-established and growing field. Seminal articles such as Francis Robinson's 'Technology and Religious Change' and Juan Cole's 'Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean', along with monographs like Ulrike Stark's *Empire of Books*, Nile Green's *Bombay Islam* and Ami Ayalon's *The Arabic Print Revolution* have created a nuanced picture of a vibrant publishing industry that ranged across the Muslim world from Egypt to India since the second half of the nineteenth century.[8] The focus of most of this work has been the world of the publishing house and the efforts of pioneering entrepreneurs to develop a printing industry that served political as well as religious ends. Undoubtedly important, the approach taken by scholars of Islamic print up to now has paid less attention to its social and cultural contexts or the manuscript tradition from which it emerged.

Advances in print technology, particularly the invention of the lithographic steam press and later linotype in the early twentieth century, revolutionized the accessibility of knowledge among Muslims.[9] A great deal of research, over the last decade and a half, has focused on the proliferation of Islamic texts that accompanied the development of cheap lithographic printing as well as advances in moveable type.[10] Ami Ayalon, in particular, has greatly enriched our understanding of mass Arabic printing especially in the important centers of Cairo and Beirut through the second half of the nineteenth century. Most of his work, and that of others, has tended to focus on what we might refer to as the most elite circles of the publishing world, that backed and promoted by intellectuals and business

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7 Tagliacozzo 2014; Low 2008.

8 Robinson 1993; Cole 2002; Stark 2008; Ayalon 2016; Kaptein 2014.

9 Cole 2002; Nemeth 2017.

10 Kathryn Schwartz has recently noted the preference among Egyptian printers for moveable type over lithography. See Schwartz 2015.

men associated with the *naḥḍa* or 'awakening' movement or adherents of scripturalist reform – in either the Arabic speaking lands of the Middle East or Persianate South Asia.[11]

The progress of mechanical print certainly enabled the mass publication of the great classics of Islamic learning in fields such as law, theology and mysticism, previously available only in manuscript form, and thus accessible to only a limited audience. But the rise of cheap, rapid printing in its various forms (e.g. lithographic, moveable type, and later, linotype and off-set printing) also led to the proliferation of enumerable voices that were for the first time able to simultaneously participate in larger, global currents of Muslim discourse while also giving expression to local views and concerns.

3 Print's progress

The print revolution, as it has been called, produced countless texts by authors reflecting their parochial interests, but also demonstrating their engagement and understanding of issues of concern to the larger, global community of Muslims. Commonly referred to as chapbooks, such works included hagiographies (the tales of saints), legal primers, essays, sermons and collections of poetry among many other genres. Generally printed in limited numbers, with cheap bindings and on poor quality paper, such works fall into the category of what Ami Ayalon has termed 'pious print'.[12] They were, by and large, not intended for sale. Instead, they were meant to be distributed to particular constituencies for various devotional, ideological or ritual purposes, usually for free or at a nominal cost.

It is important to point out that the trajectories of print were not unidirectional. Nor was it the monopoly of elite intellectuals or scripturalist reformers. By the early twentieth century, for instance, African Muslims were avid consumers of print, but they were also emerging as producers. By the early 1900s, religious texts printed in Cairo and Bombay were readily available in the coastal towns of East Africa, as were reformist newspapers such as Rashid Rida's *al-Manār*.[13]

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11 See for example, Cole 2002; Green 2011, and Robinson 1993.

12 Ayalon 2016, 87–96.

13 Literally 'The Lighthouse'. *Al-Manār* was founded in 1898 by Rashid Rida as an outlet devoted to the promotion of scripturalist reform. One of numerous Islamically oriented newspapers published in this era, *al-Manār* is notable both for its longevity (remaining in publication until 1940) and its nearly global reach. Jomier 2012.

By the second decade of the century, Muslim scholars in the region were also producing a small but steady stream of religious texts and periodicals of their own. These ranged from local newspapers to dense theological works as well as popular – and easy to read – collections of poetry and hagiographies aimed at extolling the virtues of the *ʿawliya*. Such works were concerned with matters ranging from language politics and local practice to broader reformist issues such as the application of *sharīʿa* (sharia) and *kafāʾa* (the Islamic legal notion that a woman may only marry one who is of the same – or superior – social, genealogical or moral rank) as well as the metaphysical and the shape of the cosmos.[14]

From one perspective, as I have detailed elsewhere, such works represent engagement with the intellectual, especially, reformist trends of the period on the part of those we might describe as regional scholars.[15] As such, these materials demonstrate a dynamic, multidirectional flow of knowledge and the emergence of a more horizontally integrated and intellectually engaged global community of Muslims.[16] Thus, not only are the ideas of what we have come to regard as the foremost voices of reformist thought – such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida – disseminated to a large audience; but we begin to see local scholars actively engaging with those ideas, seeking to become part of a broad globalizing discourse.

However, we need to bear in mind that these newly emergent discourses were not driven by a few stray copies of *al-Manār* or other like-minded publications. Instead, they were made possible through sustained interactions brought about by new networks of transportation and print.

By 1900, regular steamer connections developed a transportation web that helped expand the circulation of East African laborers and merchants between the ports of the western Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Regional ports such as Berbera and Mogadishu in Somalia, Mombasa and Zanzibar in British East Africa were linked to a wider world via larger imperial hubs such as Aden in southern Arabia, Durban in South Africa and Suez in Egypt. Many of these routes were not new. Movement along them, however, was now faster, more regular and less expensive than ever before, allowing increasing numbers of Muslims – mostly men – to transcend what we might view as their traditional geographic networks.

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14 Reese 2008, especially Chapter 5, and Matthews 2013.

15 Reese 2015.

16 For instance, in addition to being commented upon in international centers of learning such as Cairo and Beirut, al-Qutbi's work was read and positively remarked upon by more regional figures, most notably Muhammad Ali Luqman and al-Qadi Daʾud al-Battah, two important reformist figures in British Aden, both of whom, upon reviewing the collection for colonial censors, remarked on its positive moral message. See Reese 2015.

A number of historians of South and Southeast Asia have, in recent years, written about the transformative effect of imperial transportation on the Muslim intellectual networks of India and island Southeast Asia.[17] Such links, however, were no less important for Muslims scholars in East Africa. There are numerous, well-known examples of ʿulamā who found their way to the cities of the Mediterranean from the late nineteenth century. The famed Comorian scholar Sayyid Ahmad b. Sumayt Ba Alawi seems to have initiated this shift when he journeyed to Istanbul in the mid-1880s; while the Zanzibari ʿālim, Muhammad Barwani published an extensive account of his travels in Egypt and the Levant just before the outbreak of World War I.[18] It needs to be noted that such movements were in fact an expansion of older networks of movement.

Traditionally, the ʿulamā of East Africa and the Horn of Africa had looked to the holy places of the Hijaz (Mecca and Medina) and the learned centers of the Hadramaut (such as Tarim) for spiritual instruction. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, they were beginning to discover first-hand the erudition of al-Azhar in Cairo. Somali students were reportedly attending the university in significant numbers as early as 1905 and by 1914 a full page announcement appeared in a special issue of the *Zanzibar Gazette* encouraging Swahili students to study there.[19] By 1912 not only was the notable Somali Qadiri shaykh Abdullahi al-Qutbi there in self-imposed exile, but there was at least one Somali ʿālim to be found among its professorate.[20] This nexus is important because it was from the printing houses of Cairo that we see the development of East Africa's print tradition.

4 Al-Ḥalabī and the 'Boutique' print industry

Cheap print led to the rapid development of a lively print culture in urban Egypt from the second half of the nineteenth century. But the real explosion in widespread print did not occur until the early twentieth century and seems linked to the introduction of the linotype press and other kinds of 'hot type'. By 1900, Cairo was regarded as a capital of Arabic printing and book production.

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17 Green 2011; Laffan 2014.

18 More about this below.

19 Colonial Office Record 535/3 Correspondence 1905, Somaliland, British National Archives; Sadgrove 2008, 170.

20 See also Reese 2008.

Literally dozens of small 'boutique' firms, mainly in Cairo and Alexandria, produced an eclectic array of books, pamphlets, and newspapers for the consumption of a growing reading public.[21] Concentrated in the area of 'old' Cairo around the Khan al-Khalili and al-Azhar, a few of these, such as the *Maktabat al-Salafiyya* established in 1909, tended to serve particular ideological agendas, in their case, scripturalist reform.[22] Most, however, were modest establishments that subsisted largely by printing what they judged the public wished to read and producing works on commission or for a flat fee. These might include scholarly commentaries, collections of sermons, mystical poetry or hagiographies of local saints among many other texts. Among the scholars of East Africa and the Indian Ocean the twin firms of Mustafa and ʿIsa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī were increasingly popular venues for the publication of their work.

The Halabi[23] family constituted one of the most prominent presences in the Cairo publishing world, whose involvement in print production dates to the earliest days of private printing in Egypt. As a firm whose client base spanned the Indian Ocean littoral – especially East Africa – their history is worth relating in some detail.

The family's Cairo patriarch was Shaykh Bakri al-Ḥalabī (1824–1894) who traveled from his home in Aleppo to study *fiqh* at al-Azhar. During the course of his studies, however, he turned to the new world of private printing as a way to make ends meet.[24] The print industry in Egypt dated to 1820 when Mehmed Ali Pasha, Governor and effective ruler of Egypt, established a government press at Bulaq.[25] Although concerned primarily with printing works for the state, from 1839 the Bulaq press undertook commissions for the printing of books and pamphlets for private parties referred to as *multazim*s or 'contractors'.[26] Bakri al-Ḥalabī appears to have gotten his start in publishing in this manner around 1856 when he, along with his nephew Ahmad, funded the private publication of a work by Muhammad Damanhuri, one of the former's al-Azhar professors.[27] This first foray into print turned into a lucrative side line for a time as he 'earn[ed] his

21 Reese 2008.

22 Though its owners only began to publish their own books around 1919, see Lauzière 2010, 379.

23 In keeping with the conventions noted earlier when Halabi is being used as the family name it does not include transliteration.

24 Al-Azhari 2019, vol. 3, 166–167.

25 Ayalon 2016, 22, although as Ayalon notes the first books did not appear until 1822.

26 Schwartz 2015, 199–200.

27 The work was *Ḥāshiya laqṭ al-jawāhir al-saniyya ʿalā al-Risāla al-Samarqandiyya* and published under the imprint Dar al-Tibaʿa or House of Print. Schwartz 2015, 205 n. ar-132.

living from the printing of books'.[28] As the demands of printing grew, Bakri arranged to bring three nephews (Mustafa, Issa as well as the aforementioned Ahmad) from the village of al-Bab near Aleppo to support his efforts. Bakri soon left the publishing concern to return to teaching, ultimately taking up a number of religious posts in the Nile Delta under the Khedival government.[29]

It was the three brothers who formalized the firm around 1859 with the establishment of al-Matbaʿa al-Maymaniyya.[30] All three spent some time engaged in the study of the Islamic sciences in addition to their publication business. Ahmad, however, soon left the family business to study full time at al-Azhar where he would ultimately take up a permanent teaching post.[31] As such, it would be Mustafa and Issa who oversaw the press's growth. However, their connections to al-Azhar that would play a considerable role in their fortunes.

The al-Babi al-Halabi family firm and its various iterations and imprints – hereafter referred to simply as al-Halabi – would become one of Cairo's most prominent publishers. Al-Halabi was a commercial publisher that printed works brought to it by private individuals as well as occasionally issuing print runs of classic works such as al-Ghazali's *Ihya ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, for the general market. However, the business was not driven solely by a capitalist entrepreneurial spirit. Instead, as partly illustrated by their long-lasting connection to al-Azhar, they were a family dedicated to Islamic learning and the perpetuation of the Arabo-Islamic written tradition. Furthermore, these same factors appeared to play a role in their emergence as the most important publisher of Arabic print across the western Indian Ocean.

By the 1920s, it was a press with a growing reputation for publishing a wide variety of works. Our knowledge of the al-Halabi catalog for the first half of the twentieth century is fragmentary at best. However, the firm appears as the publisher of choice for religious scholars from East Africa and the Horn of Africa, Southern Arabia and across the Indian Ocean as far as Southeast Asia.[32] Appearing under their imprimatur we find Shadhili and Qadiri hagiographies, theological primers, commentaries on grammar, *fiqh*, and Hadith all by local authors. In addition, they also frequently produced bespoke editions of classical texts by prominent figures such as al-Ghazali or Zayni al-Dahlan for particular markets

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28 Al-Azhari 2019, vol. 3, 166.

29 Al-Azhari 2019, vol. 3, 166–167.

30 Al-Dasuqi 2015. Thanks to Alessandro Gori for providing access to this reference.

31 Al-Azhari vol. 3, 166–167 and 232–233. We will hear more from Shaykh Ahmad below.

32 British Library, India Office Record, R/20/A/3031 Govt of Bombay Notification, 30 August 1921. Laffan 2014; Bang 2011, 103–104.

paid for via the patronage of local benefactors. The number and variety of al-Halabi editions afford us the opportunity to examine the various ramifications of print. On the one hand, certain texts offer insight into the new and expanded networks that developed among Muslim scholars that were a direct result of the age of steam and print. On the other, the volume and regularized structure of al-Halabi books allow us to observe the many elements of the manuscript tradition that are carried over and modified in the era of print. Developments, we should note, that were not mutually exclusive.

To illustrate the latter, let us turn to a number of works written by East African ʿulamā and published by al-Halabi in the period before the Second World War. The first, Abdullahi al-Qutbi's *al-Majmūʿa al-mubāraka,* was a *tawhīd* or theological text published in 1919 (and then reprinted in 1959). Second, are two books by Ahmad b. Sumayt: *Tuḥfat al-labīb sharḥ ʿalā lāmiyyat al-ḥabīb* published in 1913 and possibly Ibn Sumayt's earliest work with al-Halabi; and *al-Ibtihāj fī bayān istilaḥ al-minhāj* written shortly before his death in 1925 (and apparently still somewhat incomplete) and published by his son Umar, with significant additions, via al-Halabi in 1935.

5 The growing reputation of Abdullahi al-Qutbi

Al-Qutbi's *Majmūʿa* is variously regarded as a screed against supposed heterodox beliefs of Sayyid Abdullah Hasan and his Sufi Order, the Salihiyya; a didactic primer for correct behavior and belief aimed at a lightly Islamized and largely nomadic population; or an anti-scripturalist polemic. It can, in fact, be read as all three. As part of an ongoing dispute between the Salihiyya and al-Qutbi's own Qadiriyya Order, elements of the collection attack the former as dangerous extremists who were no better than other heretics like the *Khariji*s, the *Mu'tazili*s and, worst of all, the *Wahhabi*s.[33] As such, he also regarded the Salihiyya as 'innovators' who denied the efficacy of the saints, particularly Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and Abu Bakr al-Aydarus. The former being the eponymous founder of al-Qutbi's own Sufi *ṭarīqa,* the Qadiriyya, while the latter was the patron saint of the city of Aden and an important regional holy figure.[34] The overwhelming bulk of

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33 Al-Qutbi 1919, 61–62.
34 Indeed, these elements of the text were the source of tension and even street level violence when al-Qutbi took up temporary residence in the British port of Aden during the spring and summer of 1921 on his way from Cairo to Somalia. Stones were regularly thrown at the mosque where Shaykh Abdullahi preached and there were a number of violent scuffles between Salihi

the collection, however, is concerned with spiritual guidance and what one *should* believe rather than what one should not. If the writings of al-Qutbi and other oral accounts are to be believed, Muslim orthopraxy was hardly widespread in the Somali hinterlands of the nineteenth century.[35] According to a number of sources, including al-Qutbi himself, un-Islamic practices such as alcohol consumption, mixed dancing and the blending of camels' blood with milk as a dietary staple were rampant while regular prayer and fasting during Ramadan were hardly observed with any kind of rigor.[36] As such, much of the collection is in fact, a primer on proper religious belief and behavior aimed at improving the faith of the average Muslim.[37]

I have discussed this aspect of al-Qutbi's work in detail elsewhere.[38] Here we focus on Shaykh Abdullahi's choice of publisher, and how, rather than happenchance, it reflects what appears to be the increasingly entangled scholarly world of East African ʿulamā that transcended their traditional intellectual networks.

The *Majmūʿa* was a series of four pamphlets written largely at al-Azhar during al-Qutbi's period of self-imposed exile in Egypt between 1915 and 1919.[39] Published by al-Halabi in an initial print-run of approximately 300 copies, the collection was an example of what Ayalon has termed 'pious print', works that were printed not for sale but for distribution to the faithful as sources of guidance and spiritual inspiration. Al-Qutbi returned to northern Somalia with virtually all of these via Aden in the spring of 1921. Two hundred were seized and destroyed by British authorities because of their anti-Salihiyya rhetoric. But the remaining

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and Qadiri adherents, apparently provoked by the book's dissemination. As a result, British authorities declared it a threat to public order, seized at least 200 copies of the work and had them pulped. Reports of these local scuffles appear in the records of the Aden Residency, India Office Record R/20/A/3031 located in the British Library.

35 See Reese 2008.

36 Al-Qutbi 1919, 99–140; India Office Record R/20/A/3031. For a fuller discussion see Reese 2008, Chapter 6 and Reese 2015.

37 For instance, al-Qutbi devotes himself to educating the faithful on a variety of matters. These include both the *zāḥir* or external elements of religion as well as the *bāṭin*, the internal components of one's faith. With regard to the former, for example, the Shaykh provides an extensive discussion of personal behavior ranging from proper comportment when in a mosque, ethical business dealings and table manners to the permissibility of coffee, qat and alcohol (the first two are acceptable, while the last is not). With regard to the *bāṭin*, he offers a lengthy discourse on the avoidance of sin and seeking the guidance of the saints (*awliya'*) and one's shaykhs as the only sure path to developing the purity of a believer's soul. Reese 2008, 193–195.

38 Reese 2015.

39 Though parts may have been written somewhat earlier.

100 or so, were distributed by the shaykh to Qadiri teachers in the Somali interior free of charge.[40]

The Collection was a book produced for a very small target audience and never intended for a broad reading public or meant to achieve wider popularity. However, appended to the end of the work were two endorsements (Arabic, *taqrīdh*) that praise the work's erudition. The first was by a Somali *'ālim*, Umar Ahmad 'al-Somali', a scholar resident at al-Azhar. Shaykh Umar praised al-Qutbi as one of those who suppresses 'emerging *bid'a*' and 'answers and negates the party of wicked religious error', i.e. the Salihiyya.[41] It should come as little surprise that a fellow countryman would endorse Shaykh Abdullahi's efforts and praise him as a champion of the 'well-trodden path' of the Prophet and his followers. But is also demonstrates that not only were Somali scholars represented on the highest rungs of scholarship, but that concerns regarding largely regional issues – such as the Salihiyya insurgency led by Sayyid Abdullah Hasan from 1899 until his death in 1920 – were now known in the lesson circles of Cairo.

Of even greater interest is the second endorsement that reads in part: 'I have read this book which is one of the best religious works written in our age [...]. It will be of great benefit to Muslims, bringing them guidance sufficient to counter the mischief of the envious and the innovators'.[42] These were, in fact, the words of Shaykh Yusuf Isma'il Nabhani. The shaykh was a retired Qadi from Ottoman Palestine who was a vociferous opponent of scripturalist reformers, particularly Rashid Rida.[43] More pertinent, for our purposes, not only was he a product of al-Azhar, he was also a former student of Ahmad al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, the brother who eschewed publishing for a life of scholarship. The shaykh also had a long list of works published by al-Halabi.[44]

Nabhani's 'blurb' is much shorter than Shaykh Umar's, and it is likely that he and al-Qutbi were not personally acquainted. Instead, it seems that the much better-known *'ālim* was prevailed upon by his Cairo publisher to provide a plug for a less well-known regional author. This, however, did not stop him from being appropriately effusive as we saw above. Indeed, Nabhani concluded that for his efforts, al-Qutbi would certainly 'earn the love of the Prophet'.[45]

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40 Reese 2008.

41 Al-Qutbi 1919, 194: البدعة الفاشية and الرد والانكار.

42 Al-Qutbi 1919, 194:

فقد اطلعت على هذا الكتاب فوجدته من أحسن الكتب الدينية التي ألف في هذا الزمان [...] أن ينفع به المسلمين ويهدى به الضالين ويكفيه شر الحساد والمبتدعين.

43 Ghazal 2001.

44 Al-Azhari 2019, vol. 2, 232; vol. 4, 92–93.

45 Al-Qutbi 1919, 194.

Al-Qutbi's association with al-Ḥalabī brought him into contact with a larger world of reformists but it also meant that the publisher and Levantine scholar became better known in East Africa as a result. Not long after the publication of al-Qutbi's *Majmūʿa*, a fellow Somali and Qadiri, Qassim al-Barawi began to regularly reference Nabhani in his own works. At the same time, al-Ḥalabī increasingly became the region's publisher of choice.

As we have already seen, al-Barawi credited Shaykh Nabhani as the muse for his own hagiographical collection which dates to around 1920 in manuscript form (though not printed apparently until the 1950s). In the mid-1920s he published a collection of mystical poems, *al-Majmūʿa al-qasāʾid*, with al-Halabi. Not only did al-Barawi avail himself of what seems to be a Somali-Qadiri connection with al-Halabi, he noted in the book's introduction that one inspiration for the collection was his hearing tell of '*al-mujadid fi zamaninā*' (المجدد في زمننا, 'the renewer of our age') named Yusuf bin Ismaʿil Nabhani who would remedy the troubles of the age. Indeed, al-Barawi drew extensively from Nabhani's *Wasāʾil al-wuṣūl* ('The Means of Attainment') as support for the permissibility of Prophetic intercession.[46] What is particularly interesting here, is that al-Barawi never traveled to Egypt and his knowledge of both Nabhani and al-Ḥalabī came only second hand. Yet, this contemporary fellow traveler along the path of the saints became an important spiritual touchstone.

Such endorsements and references clearly suggest that what we are witnessing with print is the emergence of a much larger discursive stage; one that believers – who circulated in previously much more regionally circumscribed networks – now found themselves able to join with greater ease. What is particularly important is that such engagement did not require personal interaction. The age of steam certainly created new mobilities that introduced East African religious scholars to the intellectual networks of the Mediterranean for the first time in significant numbers. But, the dissemination of print was also responsible for the creation of new virtual relationships where scholars need not travel far from home to engage with, and be influenced by the ideas of 'fellow travelers'. It was a world where, in addition to being able to cite the traditional canon, scholars could engage and find common cause with distant contemporaries much more readily. To accomplish this, however, an association with a well-established Egyptian publisher could facilitate entry to new and correspondingly larger intellectual networks.

A great deal of al-Halabi's catalog appears to be anti-scripturalist in nature. However, by itself, their penchant for publishing such texts certainly does not

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46 Reese 2008, 188–190; al-Barawi 1955.

imply an ideological bent on their part. Nor is there any suggestion that like-minded authors necessarily encouraged one another to publish there for any reason other than they were a reliable operation that turned out a reasonable product at an affordable price. But what made al-Halabi so attractive to authors and patrons? The answer may lay, at least in part, in their conscious fidelity to the Arabic written tradition.

6 What does a book look like?

Print was certainly revolutionary. But it is important to remember that it emerged from an already extensive tradition of the written word. As such, ideas about the shape, purpose and value of printed Islamic books were all fashioned by this larger tradition. Even a cursory examination of the works printed by al-Halabi reveals a connectivity to the manuscript tradition not just in form, but with regard to the social, cultural, and spiritual function of writing within a Muslim context.

The written tradition in Islam, in the shape of manuscript production, dates to the earliest centuries of the faith, ultimately emerging as the dominant paradigm for the transmission of knowledge. With the evolution of the religious sciences (*ʿulūm al-dīn*) beginning in the seventh century, we witness the development of specific genres of texts that took on particular hallmarks. The question and answer format of classical *fiqh* texts, the marginalia commentary used to annotate classical theological works and augmented five hemistich poems of *takhmīs* collections are all standard forms that date to the height of Islamic learning in the medieval centuries of Islam. In addition, various conventions developed that served to legitimate and authorize texts as correct, authentic knowledge. The concept of the *ijāza*, or literally a 'license to transmit', is well known, but this was hardly the only safeguard put in place to ensure that not only were those who transmitted texts qualified to do so, but that the knowledge contained therein was 'correct' and rightly guided. Dictation, formal recitations, drafts and 'clean' copies that were checked and checked again, notifications of which were carefully placed in the final manuscript.[47]

The material relationship between manuscript and print is considerable. With the appearance of the latter – far from being abandoned – many conventions of the manuscript tradition found their way into the new medium, although often undergoing certain transformations along the way. Lithography or 'stone

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[47] See Pedersen 1984; Messick 1993; Déroche 2006.

printing', for instance seems to have remained popular – especially in South Asia – through the nineteenth century at least in part because it enabled the creation of printed texts that *looked* like manuscripts. Indeed, as Francis Robinson points out, moveable type did not make inroads into the Indian market until the first decades of the twentieth century and has never completely supplanted lithography.[48]

However, even after the popularization of various forms of moveable type, authors and printers continued to incorporate elements of format associated with the manuscript tradition. Thus, we continue to find works of commentary (legal, Quranic etc.) with the *maṭn*, or original text at the center of the page ringed by commentaries placed in the margin. Multiple works are regularly produced within a single volume; while information regarding date of publication, publisher and other information pertaining to a work's production were generally found on the last page in prose form mimicking the display of similar information in the manuscript tradition.

A typical example of these characteristics is Ahmad b. Sumayt's post-humously published book *al-Ibtihāj*. The book's front piece contains the title of Ibn Sumayt's commentary and the author's name, but also a great deal else. As is de rigueur in the manuscript tradition, the author is not simply named, but praised: 'the learned, perfect Imam, highborn of nobility, Ahmad b. Abi Bakr b. Sumayt al-Alawi al-Hadrami, God's beneficence be upon him, Amin'. In addition, like in many manuscripts, the work was not published on its own. Instead, it was coupled with a short biographical dictionary of jurists, titled *Fawā'id nafīsa*, mentioned in the main text as well as an entry for Ibn Sumayt, penned by Sayyid Ahmad's son, Umar. Finally, the reader is informed that the work was made possible through the patronage of Shaykh Ahmad Ba Shaykh al-Qahtani.

To anyone familiar with early twentieth-century Islamic print these features will hardly seem surprising, nor will the invocations praising God, His Prophet and the latter's family that always preface the main text (which only begins with '*wa-baʿd*' or 'and so...'). So regular are these, that we might think of them as almost subconscious elements of structure, so deeply embedded in the written tradition that they simply flow from one medium to the other with hardly any notice or comment.

Two other notable features of the manuscript tradition made their way into print. First to establish the authority of a text the idea of *al-taṣḥīḥ* began as an outgrowth of earlier methods aimed at certifying the authority of a text. Second, was the frequent inclusion of *taqrīdh* or 'blurbs' that extol the virtues of a work

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48 Robinson 1993, 239–240.

whose use can be traced to at least the fourteenth century. Both practices ultimately relate to ideas of authority, rigor, doctrinal propriety and 'correct' knowledge. While these practices came from the earlier written tradition, each experienced its own transformations in their transition to print.

7 Processes of correction

Unsurprisingly, one of the most pressing concerns among publishers and authors was fidelity. Printers and consumers were concerned with accurate copies of classical texts that were faithful to the originals. At the same time, they were similarly anxious with regard to new works with regard to the correctness of their Arabic prose as well as worries related to the potential scope for the introduction of doctrinal error that print seemed to offer. In the age of handwriting, these dangers were mitigated via a number of labor-intensive processes. As Pedersen notes, in the classical tradition, before a text gained authority it had to:

> [...] first be read in public by the author himself, then it is read publicly three more times in different versions by a copyist in the presence of the author. In the meantime, the changes and addenda are produced by being dictated to a famulus, who then reads the dictated version back to the author. The work only attains authority by being read aloud to the author in the presence of the public, and the author gives his authorization to this version.[49]

Modern publishers and their customers were no less concerned with works produced by the new medium of print. Thus, a number of safeguards emerged aimed at guaranteeing the accuracy of a work's contents. In some cases, authors and publishers seem to have replicate the manuscript system. A book by the Meccan scholar Abu Bakr b. Muhammad Shatta, *Iʿānat al-ṭālibīn*, for instance was 'printed from a copy written by the hand of the author and read in the Mosque of the Haram, next to the noble Kaʿaba'.[50]

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49 Pedersen 1984, 31. Brinkley Messick notes the continued practice of a similar process in late twentieth-century Yemen (Messick 1993, 28–29).

50 Abu Bakr b. Muhammad Shatta, *Iʿānat al-ṭālibīn*.

هذه الطبعة قوبلت على نسخة المؤلف التي بخطه حين قراءته بالمسجد الحرام تجاه الكعبة المشرفة رحمه الملك العلام.

Published in Cairo by the firm of Mustafa's sibling, ʿIsa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, unfortunately it does not include a publication date. However, the colophons indicate that the manuscript was completed between 1880 and 1884 in four parts. Given this, as well as the lack of features that become hallmarks of all later al-Halabi publications – most notably reference to a process of 'emendation' or correction – it appears to be a fairly early printing.

Ultimately, the needs of mass production appear to have warranted a more streamlined approach to authentication. Thus, most publishers – from Singapore to Cairo – began introducing practices aimed at securing the fidelity of their products. The most common was the concept of *al-taṣḥīḥ* or 'correction', a regimen aimed in part at proofreading, but more significantly served as a guarantee that the teachings of a given text met the standards of permissible knowledge and correct belief.

The extent and seriousness with which 'correction' was undertaken seems to have varied with the press. Some, such as the Mahmudiyya Commercial Press in Cairo, simply stated on the title page that a text was 'corrected' with no further explanation. Others went to much greater lengths to reassure readers of the quality of their purchase. In a 1928 lithograph edition of al-Jazuli's *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* ('The Guides to Benefits') from Bombay, the editor notes that 'a weighty first-rate textual correction has been carried out of a copy whose writing appeared on loose pages.'[51] The printing, he goes on, was conducted with 'proper tools' with the support of the press's two 'esteemed proprietors.'[52]

Al-Halabi took the issue of correction no less seriously. Reproductions of classical works and the writings of contemporary authors were subject to a process of critical revision. In the case of classical texts this was in order to insure fidelity with the original. With regard to recent works, the goal was to assure doctrinal reliability. Utilizing their connections to al-Azhar, both branches of al-Halabi established a 'committee for correction,' overseen by experts from the university. The seriousness with which the press approached this element of the publishing process is revealed by the fact those they employed were not simple proofreaders. Instead, the head of the committee was usually an esteemed *ʿālim* from al-Azhar with his own scholarly reputation. [53]

Among the most prominent of these was Shaykh Muhammad al-Zahri b. Mustafa al-Ghumrawi. Presiding over al-Halabi's 'committee of correction' from the late nineteenth century until at least the mid-1920s, al-Ghumrawi had a reputation as one of Cairo's great editors who oversaw the production of numerous classics but also many works by his al-Azhar colleagues and mentors. Shaykh Muhammad's editorial weight, however, also seems to have emanated

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51 The copy from which this lithograph was created was, in fact, from a printed edition originally produced in Islamabad. Al-Jazuli 1928, 135.

52 Al-Jazuli 1928, 135.

53 Usually located on one of the last pages of text before the index, every al-Halabi publication has a declaration of the work's reliability signed by the 'Head of the Committee on Emendation'. This practice is a regular feature of al-Halabi books from at least 1900, but may date earlier.

from his own scholarly *bona fides*. A scholar of Shafiʿi jurisprudence, he was also a respected author in his own right compiling commentaries on various classical *fiqh* texts.[54] Known as a 'detailed and elegant editor'[55] his attestation at the end of the work stating that it had been 'corrected' with his knowledge carried significant weight to those with knowledge of Cairo's intellectual scene.

Even at a press like al-Halabi where *al-taṣḥīḥ* was viewed as a critical element of publication process, statements guaranteeing the reliability of a text could vary widely. A good example of this are two works by the noted Comorian-Zanzibari scholar Ahmad b. Sumayt, *al-Ibtihāj*, a brief commentary – only about seventeen pages – on the famous juridical primer, *Minhāj al-ṭālibīn* by Nawawi ends with the following simply statement:

> *Bi-hamdillah* the almighty, so ends the printing of the book *al-Ibtihāj* [...] written by the learned, Ahmad b. Abi Bakr b. Sumayt al-Alawi al-Hadrami, *corrected with my knowledge*.[56]

Beneath, it is signed by Ahmad Saad Ali 'One of the ʿulamā of al-Azhar and president of the committee of emendation [of al-Ḥalabī]'. In addition, there also appear the names of Muhammad Amin ʿAmran 'Superintendent of the Press', and Rustam Mustafa al-Halabi 'Director of the Press'.[57]

Not all such attestations to the rigor of a work, however, were so concise. In an earlier work by Ibn Sumayt, *Tuḥfat al-labīb sharḥ ʿalā Lāmiyyat al-Ḥabīb*, an account of the origins, spread and traditions of the Alawi Sufi order published with al-Halabi in 1913 the statement of the *muṣaḥīḥ*, Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghumrawi is far more involved:

> And here ends, with the praise of the almighty, the printed book *Tuḥfat al-labīb ʿalā lāmiyyat al-ḥabīb*, by *al-ustādh al-fāḍil* [...] a pioneer in the field of *adab* [...] *al-sayyid* Ahmad bin Abi Bakr b. Sumayt al-Alawi al-Hadrami [...]. This book is one of the greatest deeds of the age, it is a precious pearl of this time. [58]

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54 Al-Azhari 2019, vol. 3, 204–205.

55 Al-Azhari 2019, vol. 3, 204–205.

56 Ibn Sumayt 1935, 46 (emphasis added, author's translation):

بحمد الله تم طبع "الابتهاج في بيان اصطلاح المنهاج" تأليف العلامة أحمد بن أبي بكر بن سميط العلوي الحضرمي مصححا بمعرفتي.

57 Ibn Sumayt 1935, front piece: .أحد علماء الأزهر الشريف ورئيس لجنة التصحيح

58 This is one of a number of known al-Halabi imprints, Ibn Sumayt 1913, 179:

فقد تم بحمده تعالى طبع كتاب تحفة اللبيب على لامية الحبيب لحضرة الأستاذ الفاضل [...] .وحازأ قصبات السبق في مضمار الأدب السيد أحمد بن ابي بكر بن سميط العلوي الحضرمي [...] .وكتابه هذا من محاسن الزمان بل هو الدرة الفريدة في جيد هذا الأوان.

Ghumrawi goes on to list the book's contents including a synopsis of the *ṭarīqa ʿalawiyya* and their history as well as an abridgement of certain sections of al-Ghazali's *Iḥyā* [*ʿulūm al-dīn*] related to the reconciliation of Sufism and morality, noting that:

> The seeds of [this] are contained in the writings of al-Azhar and the abode of Hadramaut, home [lit. headquarters] of the Sada, thus enhancing the work's piety and magnify its benefit[s].[59]

As such, Ghumrawi's statement does more than simply attest to the work's propriety with regard to language and doctrine. Instead, he engages in the active praise and promotion of both the work and its author. His statement thus blurs the line between these statements of authority and another feature of the manuscript tradition, *taqrīdh*, literally 'praise'.

8 Praise!

The tradition could make itself felt in other ways, as in the case of the authorization of texts, we find further evidence of an evolving tradition. Earlier, I noted the increasing use of textual endorsements in the shape of statements provided by prominent members of the *ʿulamā* that served to lend texts authority. The use of this literary device, known as *taqrīdh* (literally 'praise') dates at least to the thirteenth century and probably earlier.[60]

Franz Rosenthal has defined *taqrīdh* as 'comparatively brief statement[s] of praise solicited for the promotion of a newly published work and, incidentally, its author'.[61] While admitting the term is not a perfect fit, he noted the term 'blurb' is probably the most accurate English translation. Furthermore, such statements appear largely contemporaneous with the emergence of a text and, he notes, were rarely – if ever – spontaneous. Instead, the majority of pre-modern blurbs seem to have been solicited by the author from 'obliging friends of recognized stature', in deliberate effort to promote the book. Indeed, we witness the continuation of this practice in many books produced by al-Ḥalabī.

Many of the endorsements contained in al-Ḥalabī books follow the model laid out by Rosenthal. All are relatively succinct, running from just a few lines to

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59 Ibn Sumayt 1913, 178–179.
60 Rosenthal 1981.
61 Rosenthal 1981, 178.

approximately a page worth of text. Each praise's both the content of the book and the author in varying degrees of effusive language. As we have already seen, Abdullahi al-Qutbi's work *al-Majmūʿa al-mubāraka* was praised as a book that would benefit 'all believers' while he was personally lauded as one who worked tirelessly to quell 'emerging *bidʿa*' and 'answer and negate' those who promote 'wicked religious error'.[62]

The words used to endorse Ibn Sumayt's *Tuḥfat al-labīb* are even more effusive. Shaykh Muhsin b. Nasir Shaykh Ruwaq al-Yamani al Azhari praised the book as one that 'dismisses feeble ideas' and constitutes 'a garden among the gardens of paradise in which the calm spirit may take refuge as the radiant flickering beams in its brilliance [...]'. Furthermore:

> It is the reviver of hearts, the nourishment of the knowing, inciting the heedless about the knowledge of the unseen and the curriculum of the worshippers in the brilliance of the *madhāhib* and the ladder of the followers to the brilliant gifts and the enlightenment of the pious on the brilliance of the paths [...][63]

Even more notable is the praise heaped upon the author by the Azhari scholar, Ahmad Husayni al-Shafa'i al-Masri al-Qahiri who wrote:

> I was asked by the highly learned, overflowing sea, who few others equal [...] the noble *sayyid* al-Alawi by *nisba*, al-Sayyid Ahmad b. Abi Bakr, may God preserve him [to write a few words]. Muslims are advantaged by the truth of his knowledge and have the good fortune to become acquainted with his writing in the eloquence and understanding that springs from the book *Tuḥfat al-labīb* [...] it is a sea of understanding, light of perception, a guide for consultation, and a fountain of provisions.[64]

Like the endorsements found in al-Qutbi's book, these illustrate continuity with the manuscript tradition. Aimed primarily at extolling the author's erudition, they also demonstrate the vast extent of Ibn Sumayt's reputation that stretched not only to Yemen – as one would expect, given his Alawi heritage – but also to the esteemed lecture halls of al-Azhar where a noted professor would describe him as an 'overflowing sea, who few others equal'. These were, however, not the

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62 Al-Qutbi 1919, 194.

63 Ibn Sumayt 1913, 177–178:

فهى احياء القلوب وقوت العارف وتنبيه الغفلين عن علام الغيوب ومنهاج العابدين الى المذاهب ومعراج السالكين الى أسنى المواهب وتبصرة الناسكين الى وضح الطرق.

64 Ibn Sumayt 1913, 178–179:

يا طلب منى العلام الكبير والبحر الزاخر من ليس له نظير [...] السيد الشريف العلوى نسبا السيد أحمد بن أبى بكر بن سميط العلوى لقبا أدام الله نفع المسلمين بحقيقة علومه ووفقهم لادراك تصنيفه في منطوقه ومفهومه أن اطلع على كتابه تحفة اللبيب [...] وبحر غرفان ونور أبصار وهداية مسترشد وسبيل منزود.

only types of endorsements found in Arabic books of this period. A small number of works among those surveyed include praise and exhortation for texts in the shape of poetic verse.

The historical use of praise poetry to endorse Islamic scholarly texts is unclear at best. There exists some tradition of *sabab al-ta'lif* (reason for composition) poems that praise an author's sources or teachers. Kathryn Schwartz has referenced the use of rather unsophisticated rhyming *saj* verse to extol the virtues of certain technical works emerging from the Bulaq press in the early nineteenth century.[65] However, there is scant evidence for the use of verse composed by others to honor an author's work in religious texts.[66] With that said, the Maalim Idris collection holds at least three separate texts that end with *taqrīdh* in verse rather than prose. Two of these – as we will see below – are modern works, but one is an edition of the well-known fourteenth-century *fiqh* text, *Reliance of the Traveler* (*'Umdat al-sālik wa-'uddat al-nāsik*) by Shihab al-din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn al-Naqib al-Misri (1302–1367 CE).

Published in 1935, this al-Halabi edition included five lines of verse praising the work and its author which reads in part:

> O Seeker of knowledge, consume its attainment
>> To harvest its manifold fruits [from the branches] of *fiqh*
> With the *Reliance* of Ibn Naqib you are elevated
>> You are enriched by its exceptional, clear *fiqh*
> Other works can hardly be counted
>> While this [work] is the sustenance which will increase your faith
> So, incline to it – may you be guided – if you are devoted to
>> Understanding religion, and ask your master's forgiveness
> If you were to purchase this book for its weight
>> In gold, the seller would be cheated.[67]

It is unclear by whom these lines were composed or when it became associated with the text – there is a 1982 Qatari imprint that includes these, but only notes

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65 Schwartz 2015, 182.

66 Personal communications, Christiane Gruber and Samer Ali, 20 February 2019.

67 Al-Misri, *'Umdat al-sālik* (1935 edition), 69. Thanks to Shuaib Ally for assistance with this verse.

يا طالب العلم إن رمت الوصول له * لتقتطف من ثمار الفقه أفنانا
عليك بعمدة لابن النقيب سمت * تغنيك عن غيرها في الفقه تبيانا
إذ التآليف لا يحصى لها عدد * وهذه عدة زادتك إيمانا
فاجنح هديت لها إن كنت محتفلا * بفقه دين وسل مولاك غفرانا
هذا كتاب لو يباع بوزنه * ذهباً لكان البائع المغبونا

that this represents what 'those among the best and most generous say about it'.[68] However, the verses associated with two, more contemporary, works possess clearer provenance and are thus somewhat more useful.

The first, *al-Durrur al-bahīya* is another *fiqh* text written by the Meccan *ʿālim*, Sayyid Abu Bakr b. Muhammad Shatta (1811–1892/1893) discussed above. The scion of an old scholarly family, Sayyid Abu Bakr (often referred to as al-Bakri) had the good fortune to be the protégé of Sayyid Ahmad Zayni Dahlan, probably the most prominent Mufti of Mecca in the nineteenth century.[69] However, he was also a noted author and teacher in his own right, especially revered among scholars from East Africa and Southeast Asia.[70] Curiously, *al-Durrur* is not his most famous work. Instead, the *Iʿānat al-ṭālibīn*, mentioned earlier, is both better known and more widely published. The former, however, seems to have held a special place in the hearts of Muslims around the Indian Ocean. A brief, didactic *fiqh* text, this edition was published by a small firm in Cairo, the Maḥmūdiyya Commercial Press for a firm of Bohra Ismaili booksellers, Mulla Karim Jee Mulla Mohamed Bhai & Sons, specifically for sale in Zanzibar. While the penultimate page ends with a fairly typical statement regarding the fact this is an 'inspected' copy, the last page contains something very different: two poems in praise of Sayyid Abu Bakr. The first, by far the more interesting, begins by declaiming, 'the treatise *al-Durrur al-bahīya*, is rightly guided; it gathers excellently in it, the noble elements'. And later declares that 'our Shaykh is the ink of excellence, Sayyid al-Bakri, master of excellence'.[71] Of further note, the poem is attributed to Shaykh Abdullah al-Azhari al-Falambani, a student of the Sayyid, resident in Cairo but – at least according to his *nisba* – originally from Palambang, Indonesia.

The other work surveyed, *Rihlat Abī Harith*, differs from all of the above texts in two important respects. First, it is not strictly religious in nature, but a travel account, written by Muhammad b. Ali al-Barwani, an Omani *ʿālim* and a member of the Sultan's court in Zanzibar. Second, it was printed in Zanzibar (on the Sultan's Press) and not Egypt.[72] Al-Barwani's *rihla* is an account of his travels from East Africa to the Mediterranean on the eve of World War I. Providing a riveting account of modern steamers, Cairo streetcars and Beirut hotels, it

68 Al-Misri, *ʿUmdat al-sālik* (1982 edition published in Doha), 3.

69 ‹أعلام الحجاز عائلة شطا بمكة المكرمة›<http://www.alhejaz.org/aalam/113101.htm>, accessed on 23 March 2022.

70 See Bang 2014.

71 Shatta 1940, 40.

برسالة (الدّرر البهية) يهتدي * جمع وطاب بها فؤاد نبيل
أعني به حبر الأفاضل شيخنا * السيّد البكرئ ذا التفضيل

72 Al-Barwani 1915.

became an enormously popular work that highlights the marvels of the modern world and the ways in which these led to a new connectivity for the *umma*.[73] I have discussed this work in greater detail elsewhere.[74] Here we are concerned with the end the book's final pages, which like the ones above concludes with poems of praise for Shaykh al-Barwani's accomplishment; in this case written by two of the most important scholarly luminaries of twentieth century Zanzibar, Ahmad b. Sumayt and Burhan al-M'kelle.

Ibn Sumayt praises the achievements of his colleague, declaring:

> Great honor is the trip of the master of secrets
> > Lifting the boundary to its highest estimation
> His language to me is a wonder (lit. 'determined')
> > It is a book commendable of praise[75]

While M'kelle, in a much lengthier tribute writes rather more mundanely:

> He found the people of his destination pleasant
> > Similarly, the food he saw was wonderous[76]

Within the confines of such a limited survey, it's difficult to speak definitively about the significance of these poetic tributes. However, the data is suggestive. The presence of this verse in *The Reliance of the Traveler* suggests that praise for works in poetic form was a part of the Islamic written tradition, if a minor one. But a sample of one is far too small to argue as such with certainty. Perhaps more likely, this may be a tradition primarily borne of – or at least preserved by – the intellectual networks of the Indian Ocean from East Africa to Southeast Asia. We can speak with a bit more confidence regarding what we learn from the other more targeted editions aimed at more specific audiences. These, I would argue, have a great deal to tell us about the shifting intensification of various intellectual networks in the age of print.

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73 Al-Barwani, in fact, tells his reader about unexpectedly running into a cousin in his Beirut hotel.

74 See Reese 2004.

75 Al-Barwani 1915, 60:

سر مجد امير مولى سرى* رأفع الطرف للعملا المعي
بلغته المني عزيمة نفس* دابها اكتساب الثناء الوفى

76 Al-Barwani 1915, 64:

وجت بمورد للناس عذب * يمثل طعم شهد في بديع.

9 Conclusion: What do we make of print?

The rise of cheap print, as numerous scholars have shown, constituted a media revolution within the community of believers, providing an opportunity for the emergence of numerous, diverse voices. In particular, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a veritable explosion of print culture. This included not simply the 'classics' of Islamic learning, but new works by regional authors seeking to enlighten their communities while simultaneously engaging larger audiences on a transregional stage.

The combination of 'steam and print' created new networks and shifted old ones. The opening of the Suez Canal – and consequent steamer routes – served to bring increasing numbers of East African scholars into the orbit of Egypt and the Mediterranean. But this was not a simple matter of so-called 'center-periphery' interactions. Certainly, the draw of al-Azhar provided an opportunity for Mediterranean based scholars to exert new influence in East Africa attested by Nabhani's rising star among Somali Sufis. But the relationship with Egypt also created relationships that were not based on the intellectual and spiritual primacy of Egypt, 'Mother of the World' (*Umm al-Dunya*). As we also find a legal text written by a Meccan scholar, endorsed by an Indonesian printed for the East African market. Print, in this case, makes apparent the relationships and inter-actions that could emerge via the new mobilities created by steam.

But even as print was a new technology, it represented a continuation of the past rather than a break from it. As I have noted throughout this article, elements of the manuscript tradition remained not only implicitly present but were, in fact, consciously maintained. In particular, notions of authority that had their origins in the 'classical' past continued to be employed by authors and publishers albeit somewhat reimagined. At the same time, it seems certain regional traditions (e.g. the use of poetic praise) began to find their way in to a wider arena. It is too soon to determine what, if any, impact this had on intellectual circles beyond the recognition that others from disparate parts of the *umma* valued the same literary conventions. However, at the very least it provides testament to the existence of an increasingly horizontally integrated community whose commonalities were being steadily drawn into sharper relief through the printed word.

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Alessandro Gori

Early Ethiopian Islamic Printed Books: A First Assessment with a Special Focus on the Works of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn al-Annī (d. 1882)

Abstract: Muslims of Ethiopia – and of the Horn of Africa in general – have a venerable and still living manuscript tradition, whose dated antecedents can be traced to the beginning of the eighteenth century, even if codicological and paleographical analysis (in particular of the lay-out of manuscripts and of the styles of the handwriting) points to its earlier origin. Manuscripts have been continuously produced until now and there are many available examples of texts copied during the twentieth and even the twenty-first century. Moreover, as in other regions of the Islamic World, since the 1960s the practice began to spread to mechanically reproduce manuscripts, bound and sold just as printed books on the market. As a major turning point in the intellectual history of the Muslim communities of Ethiopia, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Islamic books authored by Ethiopian learned men started to be printed in Cairo at different printing presses. Taking as case studies the publication in Cairo of the works of the Ethiopian Muslim scholar *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn al-Annī (d. 1882) this paper describes the origins and the further development of an Islamic printing press in Ethiopia and tries to tentatively assess the impact the diffusion of printed books has had on the production and circulation of manuscripts in the Muslim communities of Ethiopia.

1 Introduction

As a general consequence of the late establishment of Ethiopian Islam as an independent field of scholarly activity, research carried out so far on the history of Muslim literary production in Ethiopia is extremely scanty. Islamic learning in Ethiopia, as everywhere else in the Muslim world, traditionally made use of manuscripts to spread and preserve knowledge. The oldest dated testimonies of the Ethiopian Islamic manuscript tradition can be traced back to the end of the

seventeenth century.[1] A paleographical and codicological analysis of these early manuscripts clearly points out the existence of a set of established features both in the writing style and page lay-out, which certainly suggest the first dated codices were produced within the framework of an already functioning Islamic manuscript tradition. The practice of handwriting texts in the different Islamic communities of Ethiopia can be followed through more than three hundred years well into our twenty-first century. Examples of manuscripts copied a few years ago are not uncommon, witnessing the liveliness of a tradition, that managed to successfully continue developing despite the changing cultural environment. One of the most powerful challenges to the development (and survival) of the Ethiopian Islamic manuscript tradition was posed – quite naturally – by the spread of print.

The study of the establishment and development of the printing press among the Ethiopian Muslim community is still in its infancy. The so-far available scholarly bibliography is actually limited to only three titles.[2] Thanks to a recent wide-scale research project on the Islamic literature of the Horn of Africa, its way of production, transmission and circulation, a substantial amount of new information has been discovered and collected,[3] which tremendously enhances our previous knowledge of the Muslim written tradition in Ethiopia, including printed books. Using the data collected during this project,[4] the first phases of the spread of print among the Ethiopian Muslims can now be retraced with unprecedented precision.

In comparative historical perspective printing arrived relatively late in the regions of Ethiopia and Eritrea.[5] The first presses publishing books in different languages of the region using the Ethiopian syllabary, were all opened in the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to the initiative of European

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1 According to the presently available information, the earliest dated Ethiopian Islamic manuscript is Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 001856 (containing a copy of the *Minhāǧ al-ṭālibīn* by al Nawawī), the colophon of which (fol. 181ᵛ) indicates the date of 18 *raǧab* 1104 AH / 25 March 1693 CE.

2 Hussein Ahmed 1998; O'Fahey 2003; Gori 2015.

3 *Islam in the Horn of Africa: A Comparative Literary Approach* (*IslHornAfr*), an ERC funded research project, Advanced Grant no 322849 for the period 2013-2018 (further details at: <http://www.islhornafr.eu>, accessed on 4 Oct. 2021).

4 Most of the information collected during the research is stored in project database which is freely accessible online at <https://islhornafr.tors.ku.dk/> (accessed on 4 Oct. 2021).

5 For an introductory article on the history of printing press in the Ethiopian/Eritrean area see Pankhurst 2010 and Metikou Ourgay 1992.

Catholic and Protestant Evangelical missionaries.[6] The Italian colonial state opened the first secular press in Eritrea in 1885 (the *Tipografia Militare in Massawa*, which predates the official establishment of the colony in 1890), soon followed by some private and commercial printing presses also owned by Italian colonial companies (the *Tipografia e Libreria Italiana*, Asmara, 1890; *Tipografia del Corriere Eritreo*, Asmara, 1891).

In Ethiopia, the Lazarist French missionaries opened a printing press in Harar in 1905, in direct connection to the activities of the leprosarium, run by the mission in the city.[7] The printing press was moved to nearby Dire Dawa in 1911.[8] The first secular and purely Ethiopian printing press was founded by emperor Mənilək in 1906 under the name *Yä'ityoṗya Mattämiya Bet* ('The Ethiopian Printing Press'). It was the forerunner of the state owned *Bərhanənna Sälam* ('Light and Peace') publishing house, which was established in 1923 by the Täfäri Mäkwännen (who became Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase in 1930). In the same timespan some private presses were opened in Addis Ababa but none of them had a Muslim owner nor printed any Islamic books.[9]

The first Ethiopian printing presses were more or less directly connected to a foreign Christian community, a foreign colonial power, a Christian private structure or the basically Christian Ethiopian Empire. It can be easily surmised that, due to the tension which characterized the relationships between the Ethiopian Muslim communities and the surrounding Christian environment from the second half of the nineteenth century and until the period after the end of World War II, Islamic scholars in Ethiopia had no opportunity to have their texts printed locally. The difficulty Ethiopian Muslims had in acquiring printed

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6 In 1863 the Italian Lazarist father Lorenzo Biancheri (d. 1864 in Massawa) established a printing press in Massawa (at the time under Ottoman rule) as the first ever typography in the Ethiopian/Eritrean region. The Lutheran-Swedish mission (*Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen*, EFS) followed in 1885 opening a printing press in Ǝmkullu (Moncullo) on the Eritrean coast, in a mostly Islamic area.

7 The initiator of the press, Father Marie-Bernard, was also a dermatologist and active in the cure of lepers hospitalized in the French clinic. The printing press published the monthly paper *Le Bulletin du Léprosarium de Harar* (later *Le Semeur d'Éthiopie*), which was sold to gain economic support for the mission and the leprosarium (Pankhurst 2003).

8 It has to be noticed that both cities are located in eastern Ethiopia, in an overwhelming Muslim region. Harar is possibly the most important Islamic centre of learning in the Horn of Africa.

9 In 1926 the *Goḥa Ṣəbaḥ* printing press, the Greek *Hermes* and the *Louc* (owned by H. Bagdassarian) were founded; in 1929 the *Imprimerie du Courier d'Éthiopie* was opened by the Frenchman Léon de Robillard and in 1931 the brothers Elias and George Djerrahian established the Artistic Printing Press. All these presses were located in the capital city.

material in Christian Ethiopia is indirectly confirmed by the report of an Ethiopian Christian source, according to which the first books circulating among Ethiopian Muslims came from abroad as a gift.

Dästa Täkla Wäld (1901–1985), was a renowned Ethiopian Christian Orthodox scholar, as well as an early Ethiopian proof-reader, text corrector, and language consultant at the *Bərhanənna Sälam* publishing house, Lazarist Printing Press and Artistic Printing Press. He recounts in the introductory chapter to his monolingual Amharic dictionary (*Addis yamarəñña mäzgäbä qalat*)[10]: 'However, during Mənilək's rule the Turkish king, Sultan ʿAbdul Ḥamīd[11] sent 30 boxes with 30 different kinds of books in Arabic as a tool to preach and teach the Muslims. Therefore the Oromo of Arsi and Hararge fully embraced Islam'.[12] This short note is contained in the author's description of the diffusion of the Amharic language in the different regions of Ethiopia. Dästa acknowledges that Muslims took part in this process by translating the Qur'an into Amharic:

> Ǝccäge Ǝnbaqom translated the Qur'an from Arabic into Amharic, and Zurambe Ǝngəda transposed it from Amharic into Gəʿəz. The Amharic and the Gəʿəz Qur'an is found in Aksum and Goǧǧam. As a proof of this, in 1925 (Ethiopian Christian calendar) an Argobba shaykh told me [he was] in possession of an Amharic Qur'an written on parchment. This is a huge, fundamental work for Ethiopia, because thanks to that [i.e. the Amharic translation of the Qur'an] the Abyssinian Muslims love their country and their government and the Amharic language spread much. [13]

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10 Dästa Täklä Wäld wrote the dictionary, the first in its genre, on the Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase's order and completed it in 1957/1958. It was published much later, in 1970. On Dästa's biography and activity see Wolk 2005.

11 Abdülhamid II ruled from 1876 to 1909, when he was deposed in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution.

12 Dästa Täklä Wäld 1970, 12, Amharic text: ነገር ፡ ግን ፡ ሡልጣን ፡ ዐብዱል ፡ ሐሚድ ፡ የቱርክ ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ በሦላሳ ፡ ሣጥን ፡ ሦላሳ ፡ ዐይነት ፡ ያረብኛ ፡ መጽሐፍ ፡ ለእስላሞች ፡ መስከቢ.ያና ፡ ማስተማሪያ ፡ ባጤ ፡ ምኔልክ ፡ መንግሥት ፡ ወደ ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ፡ ላከ ፡ ከዚህ ፡ የተነሣ ፡ የሐረርጌና ፡ ያሩሲ ፡ ጋላ ፡ ፈጽሞ ፡ ስለመ።.

13 Dästa Täklä Wäld 1970, 12; Amharic text: ዕጨ ፡ ዕንባቆም ፡ ቁርኣንን ፡ ከዐረብ ፡ ወዳማርኛ ፡ ተርጉመዋል ፤ ዙራምቤ ፡ እንግዳም ፡ ካማርኛ ፡ ወደ ፡ ግእዝ ፡ መልሶውታል ። ያማርኛውም ፡ የግእዙም ፡ ቁርኣን ፡ በአከሰምና ፡ በጐ፡ገማም ፡ ይገኛል። ዚህም ፡ ማስረጃ ባ፲፱፻፲፯ ዓ ፡ ም ፡ አንድ ፡ የአርጎባ ፡ ሸጎ ፡ በብራና ፡ የተጻፈ ፡ ያማርኛ ፡ ቁርኣን ፡ አለኝ ፡ ብሎ ፡ በድሬ ፡ ዳዋ ፡ ነግሮኛል ። ይህም ፡ ለኢትዮጵያ ፡ መሠረትነቱ ፡ ያለው ፡ ታላቅ ፡ ሥራ ፡ ነው ፤ በዚህ ፡ ምክንያት ፡ የሐበሻ ፡ እስላሞች ፡ አገራቸውንና ፡ መንግሥታቸውን ፡ ይወዳሉና ፡ ያማርኛም ፡ ቋንቋ ፡ በጣም ፡ ይሰፋል። The detail that the Amharic Qur'an was written on parchment is extremely interesting, as Islamic manuscripts in Ethiopia, differently from the Christian ones, are exclusively on paper. As for Zurambe Ǝngəda the translator of the Qur'an from Amharic into Gəʿəz, the person is not attested elsewhere but the name possibly points to someone originally from the region of Zuramba,

However, the arrival of the Arabic books donated by the Ottoman Sultan, according to Dästa, hindered the further spread of Amharic among Muslims and on the contrary triggered the conversion of some polytheistic people in South-Eastern Ethiopia to Islam. Dästa does not mention any source for the claim about the Arabic books coming from the Ottoman Empire. From the context it can be easily hypothesized that he probably got the information in Dire Dawa, where he worked for the Lazarist publishing house, and possibly from the same Argobba shaykh who had the parchment manuscript Amharic Qur'an.[14]

2 *Al-Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya*: The first printed Ethiopian Islamic book

From what precedes, it is clear that it was practically impossible for Ethiopian Muslims to print books in their country before the end of the Second World War. To have access to a printing press, they had to travel abroad. Cairo maintained a vibrant Arabic book industry since the 1820s and the establishment of the Būlāq press by Muhammad Ali.[15] Because of this well-developed industry, it was apparently the most convenient place for Ethiopian Muslims to look for publishing houses to print Ethiopian Islamic texts.

According to the available data, the first ever Islamic Ethiopian printed book was produced in Cairo at the end of 1906. This book, entitled *al-Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya fī al-ʿaqāʾid al-dīniyya* ('The precious stones of Ḥaydar about the principles of religion') was printed, together with glosses by the author's hand

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in Central Ethiopia. The passage underlying the importance of the Amharic version of the Qur'an for the patriotic education of the Ethiopian Muslims can be easily interpreted as explicit praise of the Amharic translation carried out under the auspices of the Emperor Ḫaylä Śǝlasse in 1961 Ethiopian Christian calendar / 1968–1969 CE (one year before the publication of Dästa's dictionary) with the goal of fostering the loyalty of the Muslim Ethiopians to the ruling dynasty.

14 The passage on the Arabic books donated by Abdülhamid II, the reliability of which could be questioned, can be interpreted as a consequence of the mission of the Ottoman envoy Ṣādiq al-Muʾayyad *pasha* al-Aẓm's to Ethiopia in 1904. I will show in the following that there can be another possible background to Dästa's statement.

15 The bibliography related to the first Egyptian printing press called *al-Maṭbaʿa al-amīriyya* is substantial: see for example Riḍwān 1953, ʿAzab and Manṣūr 2005. Būlāq's first publication appeared in 1822 (Rāfāʾīl Anṭūn Zākhawra (Zākhūr; known in Europe as Raphaël de Monachis), *Dizionario Italiano e Arabo – Qāmūs iṭalyānī wa-ʿarabī*). In general on the first wave of printed books in Egypt see among many others al-Ṭanāḥī 1996, al-Ṭanāḥī 2002, 625–707, and the impressive Mayeur-Jaouen 2015 focusing on Sufi literature and printing.

in the margins *taqrīrāt sharīfa wa-ḥawāsh munīfa mujarrada min khaṭṭ al-mu'allif al-madhkūr* ('Valuable statements and excellent marginal notes drown from the hand of the mentioned author'), by the Maktaba al-Maymaniyya, in *dhū al-qaʿda* 1324 H / December 1906 CE. The existence of this book is mentioned by R.S. O' Fahey and Hussein Ahmed but it was considered lost,[16] until two copies were located during the above-mentioned research project: one in the collection Aggaro Shaykh Kamal in Aggaaro, Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia, 17 and the second in the collection of Haro Abba Dura in Haro, Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia, 98 (shelfmark: HAAD00098). Both locations are libraries of Sufi Tijānī establishments run by local, West Ethiopian learned men, who were educated in Wällo (Northern Ethiopia), one of the most prominent Ethiopian regions for students and scholars of Islamic learning.

The author of the book is Jawhar b. Ḥaydar b. ʿAlī[17] (d. 1937) of Shonke (300 km North-East of Addis Ababa) a renowned scholar and leader of the Qādiriyya and the Sammāniyya mystical brotherhoods in Central Ethiopia.[18] The book is fifty-five pages long, including the index (page 55) and the corrector's colophon (page 54) and made up of twenty chapters, an opening section (*khuṭbat al-kitāb*) and, a conclusion (*khātima*). The text focuses on a few basic aspects of Islamic theology, which the author analyzes on the basis of two well-known treatises widely circulating among Ethiopian Muslims (as elsewhere in the Islamic world): al-Sanūsī's *Umm al-Barāhīn* and al-Faḍālī's *Kifāyat al-ʿawāmm*.[19]

Nothing precise can be said about the process through which the book was produced. Also, the manuscript which was used as a template for the printed version remains so far unknown. According to ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿAbd al-Ghānī Ibrāhīm the text was completed in 1321 AH / 1903–1904 CE, some two years

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16 See O' Fahey 2003, 52; Hussein Ahmed 2004, 48 and note 3.

17 The name of *shaykh* Jawhar's grandfather is confirmed by the incipit of the *Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya* on page two.

18 On him see Hussein Ahmed 2004. See also Ibrāhīm, 1994, 85; Muḥammad Walī 2004, 260–266; Abbebe Kifleyesus 2006, 173–176 describes his shrine.

19 These titles are explicitly mentioned in the opening section of the *Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya* on page two together with a commentary (*sharḥ*) written by the renowned Ethiopian learned man Sayyid al-Bā' al-ḥājj Bushrā (d. 1863) (see Hussein Ahmed 2001, 104–113; Hussein Ahmed 2003; Ficquet 2003), which I could not further identify. Chapters deal with e.g. faith (*imān*), attributes of God (*ṣifāt Allāh*) and *taklīf* (charging legal duties) but also *maʿrifa* (knowledge) and *naẓar* / *naẓar al-muṭlaq* (in connection with the debated issue of a believer's first duty).

before it was printed.[20] Some further vague information can be gleaned from the title page of the book (Fig. 1). The person who covered the unspecified costs of printing (ʿalā nafaqa) is a certain Sirāj Jaʿfar from the town (balda) of Madīnà in the country (bilād) of the Ḥabash.[21] The publisher which carried out the publication was the famous Maṭbaʿa al-Maymaniyya, one of the very first private presses[22] in Egypt, which played a crucial role in the development of printing in the country and in the production and circulation of printed books in large parts Islamic world.[23]

The text was proofread by Muḥammad al-Zuhrī al-Ghamrāwī (d. 1337 AH / 1918 CE), a famous scholar of al-Azhar and an outstanding representative of the *shāfiʿī* school[24] who worked as a corrector and proofreader (*muṣaḥḥiḥ*)[25] at

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20 Ibrāhīm 1994, 85.

21 According to Hussein Ahmed 2004, 54 he accompanied *shaykh* Jawhar to the hajj. Mädinä is a well-known village inhabited by the Argobba people in the Aallu province (*wäräda*) in the Southern Wällo zone. It can be wondered whether this Sirāj Jaʿfar could be identical with *shaykh* Sirāj al-Darrī mentioned as an oral source in Muḥammad Walī 2004, 264, while writing about the same *shaykh* Jawhar.

22 *Maṭābiʿ ahliyya* following the terminology of Ṭanākhī 1996, 81; *maṭābiʿ al-miṣriyyin* in Ṣābāt 1966, *passim*.

23 Despite that al-Maṭbaʿa al-Maymaniyya and its further spawns (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-kubrā / Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-aḥawayh Bakrī wa-ʿĪsā; Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya / ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī; Maktabat wa-maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Halabī wa-awlāduh from 1919) occupy an outstanding place in the history of book printing and marketing in Egypt (and in the whole Islamic world), the history of this press and publishing house and of the family who owned it is still only partially known. The company was originally founded in 1856 (1276 AH / 1859–1860 CE according to al-Ṭabbākh 1926, 466) in Cairo by the Syrian scholar and book lover Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (d. 6 *rabīʿ al-awwal* 1316 AH / 2 July 1898 CE; on him see al-Tabbakh 1926, 465–466, al-Ḥāzimī 1998–1999, 553–555, al-Marʿashlī 2006, 153, al-Azharī 2019, 232) and possibly named after one of his business partners (Ṣābāt 1966, 200). Some information on the avatars of al-Maṭbaʿa al-maymaniyya and on the vicissitudes of the al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī family can be found in al-Ṭanāḥī 1996, 92–93 (reprint in al-Ṭanāḥī 2002, 660–661); Ṣābāt 1966, 200, 236; al-Dasūqī 2015; Mayeur-Jaouen 2015, 47). According to the colophon of shaykh Jawhar's book the al-Maṭbʿa al-Maymaniyya was at that time located near to al-Azhar in the vicinity of the mosque/shrine of sayyidī Aḥmad al-Dardīr. See also, Reese 'The Ink of Excellence' in this volume.

24 He is the author of the famous *al-Sirāj al-wahhāj* a widespread commentary on al-Nawawī's textbook *Minhāj al-ṭālibīn* and of the *Anwar al-masālik* a *sharḥ* on Ibn al-Naqīb's ʿUmdat al-sālik wa-ʿuddat al-nāsik. Both books circulate widely in the whole Horn of Africa. He is mentioned as a famous *muṣaḥḥiḥ* in Ṭanāḥī 1996, 111, 139, where the characteristic epithets he attributed to himself in the colophons of the book he revised are also cited: 'Yaqūl rājī ghufrān al-masāwī muṣaḥḥuhu Muḥammad al-Zuhrī al-Ghamrāwī' ('His reviser, who hopes in the remission of the

different publishing houses managed by the al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī family for which he revised also outstanding classics of the Islamic theology and law as the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, published in six volumes in 1895, and a new edition of Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* in four volumes, printed in 1911.[26] The *shaykh* wrote a short colophon to Jawhar b. Ḥaydar's work where in a kind of short *taqrīẓ* ('Commending blurb for a book')[27] he praises the Ethiopian *shaykh* Jawhar and his work using an elaborate series of epithets (e.g. *aḥad fuḍalāʾ al-aqṭār al-najāshiyya*; *qudwat ʿulamāʾ al-asqāʿ al-ḥabashiyya*, 'One of the eminent learned men of the regions of the Najāshī'; 'Model of the learned men of the territories of *al-Ḥabasha*').[28] At the same time, however, the meticulous corrector describes how during the publication process he selected 'from the author's draft copies precious marginal glosses and valuable notes', thanks to which the 'imperfections of his [i.e. *shaykh* Jawhar's] expressions can be clarified'.[29]

The publication of the *al-Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya* was not to remain an exceptional event, nevertheless it seems that the printing of Islamic Ethiopic texts did not really develop any strong momentum after this first book. It apparently took twelve years for a second Ethiopian Islamic book to see the light in Cairo and whose circumstances of production we are fortunate to be able to describe in some detail.

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evil deeds, Muḥammad al-Zuhrī al-Ghamrāwī says:'). These phrase is used by al-Ghamrāwī also in *shaykh* Jawhar's book.

25 On the role of the *muṣaḥḥiḥ* in the printing process and his way of work see El Shamsy 2020, 79–91.

26 In the colophon of the book (volume 4, page 562) al-Ghamrāwī is called 'Raʾīs lijnat al-taṣḥīḥ bi-maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā' ('Head of the revision committee at the typography of the Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā'). Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā is the name that al-Maktaba al-Maymaniyya had under the management of Muṣṭafā, ʿĪsā and Bakrī, the three nephews of Aḥmad al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.

27 About the *taqrīẓ* as a literary genre in classical Arabic literature see the seminal article by Rosenthal 1981.

28 The colophon is on page 54 of the *al-Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya* and covers 15 lines disposed a triangular shape, typical of colophons in Islamic manuscripts.

29 '*Istanārat bi-waḍʿihā khilāl ʿibārātih*': a subtle critique to *shaykh* Jawhar's mastery of Arabic is detectable on the background of these words. The fact is interesting not only as a proof of the straightforwardness of al-Ghamrāwī but also as a hint to the way *shaykh* Jawhar's Arabic style could be perceived and judged by a learned Egyptian expert in language.

3 Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī: An Ethiopian ʿālim and the production of Ethiopian Islamic books

Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī was a revered scholar, teacher and Sufi guide,[30] he was born in 1211 AH / 1796–1797 CE in the village of Gogolo east of the city of Mäkoni (Mäkhoni) in the Rayya-Azäbo area of northern Ethiopia's Tigray region. He studied under the best teachers available at that time in various disciplines of the traditional Islamic curriculum. He was also initiated to the Sammāniyya and Qādiriyya brotherhoods becoming one of the most revered representatives of the latter in the Horn of Africa. He settled in the learning centre of Anna near the town of Alamaṭa in Tigray, and became a renowned ʿālim , or religious scholar, and the spiritual father of many Muslim scholars, who came to study with him from every corner of Ethiopia. He was forced to move away from his native area to Korame (Yajju, Wällo, Central Ethiopia), because of the Ethiopian Christian king Yoḥannəs IV's persecution of Muslims in 1880–1881.[31] He died in Korame in *rabīʿ al-awwal* 1299 AH / January–February 1882 CE and was buried there.[32]

According to a list compiled by Jīlān b. Khiḍr, al-Annī authored thirty-five titled works in prose and poetry.[33] Fifty texts are attributed to him in the database of the *IslHorAfr* project: many of them are untitled devotional poems, some of which are collected in a kind of *Dīwān* or collection of poetry, preserved in a manuscript in Addis Ababa at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.[34] A discussion of the literary production of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn is beyond the scope of this

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30 Despite his fame, a full-fledged critical analysis of the life and works of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn is still a sorely felt desideratum. A long biography and bibliography of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn, based on various local sources of different nature and reliability, the analysis of which would need a separate essay, is provided by Jīlān b. Khiḍr 2018, 9–141, as an introduction to his edition of al-Annī's *fatāwā. Shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn is mentioned also in Trimingham 1952, 241; Hussein Ahmed 2001, 69–70, 90, 108, 175; O'Fahey 2003, 52–53. Biographical information on al-Annī and a short history of the site of Anna can be found in Kemal Abdulwehab and Ficquet 2014.

31 About the aggressive politics conducted by Yoḥannəs IV against the Muslims and its specific consequences in Wällo see Hussein Ahmed 2001, 167–187.

32 For different traditions about the date of death of al-Annī see Jīlān b. Khiḍr 2018, 139–140.

33 Jīlān b. Khiḍr 2018, 84–90.

34 Institute of Ethiopian Studies 1896, fols 1ʳ–71ʳ. For a description of the manuscript see Gori et al. 2014, 26.

paper, however, a quick description of the texts which are available in print can be found in appendix A.

The very first of al-Annī's texts to be published in print was the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn fī maʿrifat mahammāt al-dīn*. During the research carried out in the framework of the *IslHornAfr* project one manuscript[35] and three printed copies[36] of this text were discovered. We are therefore in the lucky position to be able to compare printed and manuscript versions of the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn*. Moreover, the data which can be collected from the title page of the printed book and from the content of some final notes, which the management of the publishing house attached to al-Annī's text, allow an at least partial description of the circumstances which framed the printing of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn's work.

4 From a manuscript to a printed book: Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī and his *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn*

The first edition of al-Annī's *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn* was printed in Cairo at the Maṭbaʿat Maṭar in 1337 AH / 1918–1919 CE.[37] No specific data on this publishing house can be found in the available scholarly literature, but a search of various on-line library catalogues and other bibliographic resources shows that the

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35 Manuscripts Wälqiṭe (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, Gurage Zone, Central Ethiopia), Zabi Molla 9 (shelfmark of the project WOZM00009). The *Kifāya* occupies fols 20ᵛ–112ʳ. The manuscript is dated 13. vii. 1322 AH / 23 September 1904 CE and was written by a certain Muḥammad. The library in which the codex is kept belongs to the Rashādiyya brotherhood a local branch of the Qādiriyya order.

36 Aggaro (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), *shaykh* Kamal 22 (shelfmark: AGSK00022); Jimmata (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), Mukhtār b. Abbā Jihād al-Tijānī 86 (shelfmark: JTMK00086); Jimmata (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), Muḥammad Abbā Jamāl 51 (shelfmark: JTMJ00051). All the three libraries, where the copies of the book, were found are establishments of the Tijāniyya brotherhood (but *shaykh* Kamal's establishment became Qādirī under his son).

37 At the end of the text there is a kind of *taqrīẓ* signed by Abū al-Barakāt Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Duwaydār al-Shibīnī al-Shāfiʿī and dated 15 *rabīʿ al-awwal* 1337 AH / 19 December 1918 CE, a date which can be used as a *terminus post quem* for the actual publication of the book. This first printed edition of the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn* was unknown to both O'Fahey 2003, and Jīlān b. Khiḍr 2018, 84 who mention only the 1378 AH / 1959 CE publication carried out in Cairo.

company was apparently active from 1909[38] to 1925. Among the few (less than ten) titles of identifiable works printed by Maṭbaʿat Maṭar, probably the most important are the *risāla fī ḥukm tarjamat al-Qurʾān al-karīm wa-qirāʾatih wa-kitābatih bi-ghayr al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya* ('Treatise about the legal status of the translation of the noble Qurʾan, of its reading and its writing in a language different from Arabic') by the famous Egyptian Azharī scholar Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Makhlūf al-ʿAdawī (d. 1936) published in 1925 and the *Riḥla al-sulṭāniyya wa-taʾrīkh al-salṭana al-miṣriyya qadīman wa-ḥadīṯan* by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Miṣrī published in two volumes in 1921.[39] From the end notes to this latter book,[40] we are informed that Maṭbaʿat Maṭar was owned and managed by Aḥmad *effendi* Maṭar, from whom it evidently took its name.[41] Moreover, on the title page of al-Annī's *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn* (Fig. 2) the name of the Maṭbaʿat Maṭar is followed by the indication *dākhil al-murūr bi-al-ʿataba al-khaḍra*[42] ('inside the traffic circle in the ʿAtaba al-khaḍra'), a reference to the location of the press in the area around the square of *al-ʿAtaba al-khaḍra*. This is in the centre of Cairo relatively outside the main area of print shops around al-Azhar but close to al-Uzbakiyya the area where the Egyptian intelligentsia generally met and where at the beginning of the twentieth century a used book market developed, which is renowned also nowadays.[43]

According to the title page, the printing of al-Annī's book at Maṭar's publishing house was supported by someone called al-Sakkāf and his partners ('Ṭubiʿa ʿalā nafaqat al-Sakkāf wa-shurakāʾih'), who together owned a company called Dār al-ʿUlūm al-Muḥammadiyya located in Addis Ababa ('Aṣḥāb dār al-ʿulūm al-muḥammadiyya fī addīs ābābā ʿāṣimat al-bilād al-ḥabashiyya'; 'Owners of *The house of Muhammad's sciences* in Addis Ababa, capital of the Abyssinian country'). No information is available on this person and his

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38 A book under the title *al-Mawāhib al-ʿaliyya fī al-murāfaʿāt al-ahliyya wa-al-sharʿiyya* by a Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Wāḥid published by Maṭbaʿat Maṭar in 1909 is mentioned as a reference in a juridical article (al-Daylamī 2007). I could not find any trace of this book in any library catalogue available on-line.

39 The book is a description of a series of travels that Sultan Fuʾād (King Fuʾād I from 1922) made to different regions of Egypt and the meetings he had with the local officers and personalities.

40 Al-Miṣrī 1921, 334.

41 In a recently published article (*al-Shurūq*, 3th June 2019 <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=03062019&id=21ea6a02-036f-426d-8294-39d5235c94ae>; accessed on 4 Oct. 2021) the name is given as Aḥmad Muḥammad Maṭar.

42 In other books printed by Maṭar the indication becomes shorter: *bi-al-murūr bi-Miṣr*.

43 The word *murūr* remains unclear to me in this context. It could be a reference to the traffic circle of the square or to *idārat al-murūr* ('the traffic directorate') which has an office in the area.

associates, nor on the company that they ran together in the Ethiopian capital. The name al-Sakkāf almost certainly originates from Yemen and most probably points to a Yemeni family, settled in Ethiopia or having tight business relationship with that country. The existence of an Islamic cultural organization or educational establishment called Dār al-ʿUlūm al-Muḥammadiyya in Addis Ababa during the first half of the twentieth century, where also Islamic books were sold,[44] is not attested in any other available source. It is, however, possible to retrace some scattered but useful hints which cast a partial light on the Dār al-ʿUlūm al-Muḥammadiyya in Addis Ababa and possibly the partners of al-Sakkaf.

In a report about Ethiopia published in 1923 the Ottoman Turkish weekly paper *Sebîlürreşâd* briefly described the life and activities of *shaykh* Tevfik effendi – whom they refer to as a 'Sayyâh-i şehir' ('a famous traveler') – who went to Ethiopia (Habeşistan) a year before the outbreak of the First World War and settled there. The text states that Tevfik worked in Ethiopia as a bookseller ('kitapçılıkla meşgul oluyor') and was in close contact with the Ottoman Consul in Ethiopia, Mazhar bey.[45] According to another account, Tevfik (called Hacı Tevfik in this source) acted already in 1913 as the consulate's imam. A document in possession of an Ethiopian descendant of Tevfik, who showed it to the author of this contribution, proves that the position as imam was given to the *shaykh*/Hacı by the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hariciye) as a cover for his intelligence activities conducted on behalf of the Ministry of War (Harbiye). More interestingly, the same document mentions that Tevfik had a connection to a merchant called Muḥammad al-Sakkāf ('Muhammed effendi El-Sakkaf') in Addis Ababa.[46]

Tevfik certainly played a role in spreading Islamic literature in Ethiopia in the 1910s and later.[47] It is also very possible that Tevfik was one of the partners

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44 One could speculate whether the Dār al-ʿUlūm al-Muḥammadiyya was a school, a full-fledged cultural institution or a simple bookshop. The latter activity clearly appears to have been the core of the enterprise but it cannot be excluded that the 'Dār' worked also in other fields.

45 On *shaykh* Tevfik effendi see also Kavas 2006, 123 (reprint Kavas 2011, 149), which refers to the same source. On Mazhar bey see Finke 2007. After Mazhar bey's death in 1920, Tevfik succeeded him as Ottoman *chargé d'affaires* in Ethiopia, until the consulate was eventually closed in 1921–1922: see on this Smidt and Gori 2010, 79.

46 'Necasi'nin ülkesinde son Osmanlı konsolosu Dünya Bülteni': <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/tarih-dosyasi/necasinin-ulkesinde-son-osmanli-konsolosu-h14794.html> (accessed on 28 Febr. 2022).

47 He could also have been involved in the arrival of Abdülhamid II's 'thirty boxes with thirty kinds of books' referred to by Dästa Täklä Wäld in the abovementioned introduction to his

who cooperated with al-Sakkāf in the management of the Dār al-ʿUlūm al-Muḥammadiyya in Addis Ababa and covered the costs for the printing of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn al-Annī's *Kifāya* and of other books at the Maṭar press in Cairo in 1918–1919.[48]

Additional information about al-Sakkāf and his printing activities comes from al-Annī's book itself. A final note[49] signed 'Al-Sakkāf and his partners' ('*Al-Sakkāf wa-shurakā'uh*') and addressed to the readers, hails the publication of the *Kifāya* and invites all the interested public to rush to buy it before it is sold out ('*Fa-bādirū li-al-ḥuṣūl ʿalayh qabl an yanfad*'). 'Because we could print' – the note continues – 'only a few copies due to the expensiveness of the paper, its high cost, and the difficulty in obtaining it'.[50] Moreover the note announces that 'We could print the remaining books of the author' listing the following four titles:

1) *Nuzhat al-sālikin*,
2) *Bahjat al-ʿārifin*,
3) *Istimdād al-nafḥa fī sharḥ al-minḥa*,
4) a miscellany (*majmūʿ*) containing three treatises (*rasā'il*):
   a) *al-Risāla al-maymūna*;
   b) *Anfaʿ al-wasā'il*;
   c) *al-Nafḥa al-ilahiyya*.[51]

These books 'will arrive in a few days to the bookshop one after another' ('*Wa-baʿda ayyām qalīla taṣil ilā bayt al-kitāb ʿalā al-tawālī*'). The note ends with an additional list of ten books printed by al-Sakkāf and his partners with

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Amharic dictionary, even if he apparently arrived in Ethiopia four years after the end of that sultan's rule.

48 It is worthwhile noticing that the second edition of al-Annī's *Kifāya* (1959, Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī), the only known so far, was realized with the economic support of ʿAbdallāh Qāsim al-Ḥarrāzī, who like al-Sakkāf was also the owner of bookshop in Addis Ababa (called *Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya*), and was of Yemenite origin too. The research project *IslHorAfr* has located six books printed in Cairo and commercialized in Ethiopia by al-Harrāzī's bookshop.

49 The text fills page 74 and follows al-Annī's text, the colophon/*taqrīẓ* by the *muṣaḥḥiḥ* and the index.

50 '*Li-annanā lam natbaʿ minhu illā aʿdādan qalīla li-asbāb ghuluw al-waraq wa-irtifāʿ ashʿārih wa-taʿadhdhur al-husūl ʿalayh*'. These affirmations are obviously very interesting as they cast some light on the economic conditions which impacted the printing of Ethiopian Islamic books.

51 The *Nuzhat al-sālikin* does not appear in the bibliographical list of Jīlān b. Khiḍr 2018, 84–89 but a testimony of the work was located by the *IslHornAfr* project in manuscript Limmu Gannat, (Suntu, Oromia, Jimma Zone, Western Ethiopia), 00092, fols 2ʳ–80ᵛ.

the editing and the revision of the most famous scholars of al-Azhar (‘*Muṣaḥḥaha maḍbūṭa ‘alā ashhar ‘ulamā’ al-Azhar al-sharīf*’). The list is detailed in Appendix B.

From these data, it seems that al-Annī’s texts were only one component of a manifold and conspicuous series of editorial initiatives taken by al-Sakkāf and his partners (at least one of whom was an Ottoman). It is impossible to ascertain who selected among *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn’s works the six to be brought to Cairo for publication or when and how this selection was carried out.[52] As for the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn*, a hint regarding why it was deemed worthy of print can be found in the words of the corrector Abū al-Barakāt Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Duwaydār al-Shibīnī al-Shāfiʿī.[53] In his colophon, he says that the text ‘on the three fields of the sharia, which are the quintessence of the disciplines of the sharia, i.e. theology, jurisprudence and mysticism’ harmonically combines ‘simplicity of structure and sublimity of content’.[54] It seems therefore that al-Annī’s *Kifāya* perfectly satisfied the need of Ethiopia’s Muslims for a locally produced handbook on the basic Islamic sciences as conceived in an intellectual landscape strongly influenced by Sufism.

The printed version of the *Kifāya* apparently was aimed at a public looking for a comprehensive, clear and precise introductory book to be used as a quick reference and a teaching/studying tool: students and their teachers seem to be the readership targeted the commissioners of the publication. The effort to produce an easy manageable handbook can also be detected in the way the printed book accommodates the marginal notes.

The above mentioned manuscript of the *Kifāya* the sole available at the moment, can give us an idea of how the template of the printed version could have looked, even if it is impossible to ascertain whether this codex is identical to the model on which the book was realized or (more probably) not.

Despite this caveat, it is still useful to compare the manuscript at our disposal with the printed book to get a first picture of how the editors handled the commentaries on the margin. A fast but accurate analysis of the margins of the manuscript shows especially on the first ten folios a thick mass of entangled glosses of different length that aim to clarify and deepen linguistic, juridical and theological issues, which are only touched upon in the *Kifāya*’s main text. With

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52 Also, the logistical and practical organization of the transfer of the manuscript template of the texts to the printers/publishers in Cairo remains shrouded in obscurity.

53 It was impossible to identify this individual with certainty.

54 ‘[…] *Muṣannaf fī al-funūn al-sharʿiyya al-thalātha allatī hiya nukhbat funūn al-sharīʿa (al-tawḥīd wa-al-fiqh wa-al-taṣawwuf)*’; ‘*Jamaʿa bayna suhūlat al-mabnā wa-ʿuluw al-maʿna*’.

a few exceptions, the marginal notes were written by one and the same hand. The quantity of these marginal notes diminishes as the text proceeds and becomes scanty towards the end. Most of the glosses are attributed to *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn, while a smaller number of them are made up of direct quotations from various other sources, mostly handbooks and reference texts of law according to the *shāfiʿī* school.[55] In the printed *Kifāya* it is apparent that the marginalia are drastically limited in number, becoming few after ten pages, and are overwhelmingly taken from the annotations and observations of the author (indicated by the term 'al-muʾallif' as in the manuscript).[56] It can therefore be hypothesized that the printing of al-Annī's book entailed a strict selection, as to which marginal notes were to be included into the book (Figs 3–4). Preference was given to the glosses attributed to the *shaykh* himself.[57]

In this way the result was a well-amalgamated and well-shaped work in which the main text and the marginal notes fully integrate without running the risk of fuelling any further discussion of unclear points and passages. The right prerequisite for a compact and user-friendly handbook (Figs 5–6).

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55 A detailed analysis of all the texts and authors quoted in the marginal notes of the manuscript remains outside the scope of the present contribution. Such an analysis would however provide with a very precise picture of the literature which Ethiopian Muslim scholars of the shāfiʿī school were acquainted with at the end of the nineteenth century. Among the titles which are attested in this source, I limit myself to mention here some of them, without any attempt at being exhaustive and without giving any further detail: *al-Minhāj al-qawīm - Sharḥ al-Muqaddima al-ḥaḍramiyya* and *Tuḥfat al-muḥtāj* by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *Nihāyat al-muḥtāj* by al-Ramlī, *al-ʿUbāb al-muḥīṭ* by al-Madhḥijī al-Muzajjid, *al-Mawāhib al-ladūniyya bi-al-minaḥ al-muḥammadiyya* and *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qasṭallānī, *al-Ḥawāshī al-madaniyya ʿalā sharḥ ibn Ḥajar li-al-muqaddima al-ḥaḍramiyya* by Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Kurdī, the *Ḥāshiyat Ibn Qāsim al-ʿAbbādī ʿalā Tuḥfat al-muḥtāj bi-sharḥ al-Minhāj* by Aḥmad b. Qāsim Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās al-ʿAbbādī, *Fayḍ al-Mannān bi-sharḥ Fatḥ al-Raḥmān* by Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. Ḥasaballāh al-Makkī and *Ḥashiya ʿalā Tuḥfat al-ṭullāb* by ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥijāzī b. Ibrāhīm al-Sharqāwī.

56 There are exceptions to this practice: in the printed version it is possible to find few excerpts from *Nihāyat al-muḥtāj*, *al-Ḥawāshī al-madaniyya*, *al-ʿUbāb al-muḥīṭ*, *Ḥāshiyat Ibn Qāsim al-ʿAbbādī* and *al-Tuḥfa*.

57 For example, the short chapter on (the major) impurity ('Bāb al-ḥadath') of the *Kifāya* contains only one marginal gloss on page six of the printed edition: it is a simple three line note by the author saying that he is reporting the opinion of al-Rāfiʿī and al-Nawawī. The same section in the manuscript version (Wälqiṭe, Zabi Molla 9 -WOZM00009, fol. 25ʳ⁻ᵛ) has 35 marginalia of different length, both explanatory notes by the author and excerpts from the abovementioned works of *fiqh*.

5 Concluding remarks

Research on the origins and early circulation of printed books in the Muslim communities of Ethiopia is still in its infancy. Thanks to some recently discovered material it is possible to now sketch a preliminary description of the earliest phase of the history of the printing of Islamic Ethiopian texts. From the end of the nineteenth until the middle of the twentieth century, Ethiopian Muslims apparently faced insurmountable obstacles to having their works printed at home. Lack of access to the necessary technical equipment and facilities and a generally unfavorable cultural environment pushed Muslim scholars to go abroad to look for suitable places where they could print their works. Cairo, where printing had blossomed since the 1820s and developed into a vibrant and variegated entrepreneurship, was the best choice. This paper, however, has proved that at least from the beginning of the twentieth century Islamic books were imported and distributed in Ethiopia and some years later a bookshop was active in Addis Ababa, which also sponsored the publication of works by local Islamic authors in Cairo.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a few Ethiopian Islamic texts reached Egyptian printing houses and were published. It is impossible to describe all the details of the procedure transforming a manuscript template into a printed book but a few actors in the process can be at least vaguely identified: 1) the patrons who selected the texts (and manuscripts) to be printed (possibly in accordance with the authors' disciples) [58] and covered the printing costs; 2) Azharī learned men working for Egyptian printers and publishers, who prepared the Ethiopian manuscripts for printing, intervening on a technical, linguistic, philological and literary level; 3) the booksellers who circulated the books in Ethiopia: in some cases it seems that the patrons and the booksellers were the same people. An unclear role was played also by external actors – Yemenis settled in Ethiopia, Ottoman envoys, scholarly networks – who participated at different levels in the process of production and commercialization of the books: further research will cast new light on this point.

We should note, however, that books printed in Egypt were very expensive products: the biggest cost was apparently that of paper, but it may be easily surmised that also the expenditures incurring to take the manuscripts to Cairo, the costs of the import of the items (including Egyptian and Ethiopian taxes), and in general the logistics of the whole enterprise must have had an influence

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58 Most of the Ethiopian Muslim authors were representatives of some mystical brotherhoods and had a wide group of students and followers.

on the final price of the books. The books were eventually available only in a few copies in the capital city and it was probably extremely difficult – but apparently not impossible – to distribute and sell them in other regions of Ethiopia.[59] In the end, the impact of the books printed in Egypt on the manuscript tradition of the Ethiopian Muslims remained relatively limited: copying texts by hand remained by far the simplest and cheapest and therefore also the most widespread way of preserving and circulating knowledge in the Muslim communities of Ethiopia until the 1990s.

Among the possible consequences that the slow spread of printed books had on the Ethiopian Islamic manuscript tradition was the production of bound photocopies of manuscripts and printed books for private and public distribution as well as for sale on the market. Moreover, it has to be remarked that printed books were used exactly as manuscripts: passages were excerpted and copied by hand, marginalia, bibliographical and critical observations and other notes (possession, selling and buying certificates, *waqfiyyas*) were accommodated in different places in the printed items.[60]

A real radical change of this situation occurred after the fall of the Socialist regime in 1991.

Islamic book production was almost completely liberalized in the country under the federal state and quickly boomed. A full-fledged Islamic book market started to flourish, where books imported from abroad were still available but only as a niche product in comparison with the many locally printed items. From the end of the 1990s it happened that old Egyptian books (of both Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian authors) were reprinted and distributed in Ethiopia by Ethiopians: a circle opened at the beginning of the twentieth century was closed after 100 years.

A further development can be seen during the last ten years. The extremely rapid spread of electronic tools and the easy circulation of texts on the internet

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59 It has to be noticed that all the copies of the first Ethiopian Islamic books so far known have been discovered in libraries located in the countryside and not in the capital. How the books reached the remote areas where they were found is not clear. A full-fledged Islamic book market in Ethiopia developed only after the fall of the Socialist regime (*Därg*) in 1991, even if distribution outside the main cities has been difficult until very recent times. Earlier interest for printing among Ethiopian Muslims was probably due to (1) need or desire for a tool perceived as more effective to preserve texts; (2) attraction exerted by a new and promising technology.

60 It is noteworthy that a reader of the printed copy of the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn* kept at the library of Jimmata (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), Mukhtār b. Abbā Jihād al-Tijānī (item 86, shelfmark: JTMK00086) glossed the book with excerpts from texts which are not mentioned in the marginal notes of the manuscript version.

has caused many works to skip the phase of printing entirely. So, now a manuscript may be scanned or retyped, transformed into a PDF, JPG or MSWord file and uploaded on the internet where it can find a potentially unlimited readership. It is not yet clear what influence this tendency will have on both the manuscripts and printed books circulating among the Muslims of Ethiopia but it will surely cause a shift in the practices which have so far dominated the transmission of knowledge in the whole region.

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Appendix A: Texts of *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn available in print: a short critical list

A miscellany (*majmūʿa*; 150 pages) containing:
1) *Rawḍat al-asrār fī al-ṣalāt ʿalā al-nabī al-mukhtār* (3–74);
2) *al-Tuḥfa al-rabbāniyya bi-al-ṣalati ʿalā imām al-haḍra al-qudsiyya* (75–96);
3) *Miftāḥ al-madad fī al-ṣalāti wa-al-salām ʿalā rasūl Allāh al-sanad* (118–147).

Moreover, following the *Tuḥfa al-rabbāniyya* there are also the texts of:
4) *al-Ṣalawāt al-maydāniyya* (97–106);
5) *al-Ṣalawāt al-asrāriyya* (107–113);
6) *al-Ṣalawāt al-ʿashr* (116–117)[61]
which are not listed on the title page.

This collection of devotional prayers and invocations was published at an unknown date in Cairo by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā. The Cairo edition was apparently economically supported by the owners of the typography/ publishing house themselves ('*Ṭubiʿa ʿalā nafaqat aṣḥābihā Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-akhawayhi Bakrī wa-ʿĪsā*', 'Printed at the expenses of Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī and his two brothers Bakrī and ʿĪsā'). In a short *tarjama* ('biographical note'), which is actually just a long series of epithets praising Jamāl al-Dīn al-Annī put at the end of the book (pages 148–150), *shaykh* Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Muḥammad *al-shaykh* al-Bātī says that he was the one who 'took the initiative' ('*bādartu*') to have the book printed in Cairo: it is not clear but it can be surmised that he also contributed to the printing expenses. Unfortunately no further detail is retrievable

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61 *Al-Maydāniyya fī al-ṣalāt ʿalā khayr al-bariyya* is mentioned in the bibliographical list of Jīlān b. Khiḍr 2018, 84–89, where on the contrary the *Asrāriyya* and the *al-Ṣalawāt al-ʿashr* are missing.

on the way the publication was conceived, carried out and finalized. A manuscript *Vorlage* for the printed book is also so far unknown.[62]

7) *al-Najm al-munīr fī irshād man yurīd al-safar ilā al-ākhira wa-yasīr*, a handbook of theology and a guide to the basic Islamic practices, which *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn completed on a Thursday in the second half of the month of *shaʿbān* 1257 AH / October 1841 CE published in Addis Ababa at the Maktabat al-Sunna in *ramaḍān* 1433 AH / July–August 2012 CE.[63]

8) *Jāmiʿ al-fatāwā*, a collection of the juridical opinions issued by *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn, published for the first time in Addis Ababa, by al-Najāshī printing press in *rajab* 1424 AH / August–September 2004 CE by Muḥammad al-Mubārak al-Annī.[64] Another enlarged edition including an extensive biographical essay on al-Annī, a comprehensive analysis of the texts, and critical assessment of their content was carried out and published by Jīlān b. Khiḍr under the title *Fatāwā al-imām Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Rawbsaw al-Ithyūbī al-Annī (1211–1299)*, in Addis Ababa at the Maktabat al-Quds in 1439 AH / 2018 CE.[65]

Appendix B

List of books printed in Cairo at Maṭar's publishing house by 'al-Sakkāf and his partners' and available in Addis Ababa at al-Sakkāf's Dār al-ʿUlūm al-Muḥammadiyya:

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62 The collection was reprinted in Addis Ababa by Maktabat Addīs (Amharic: Addis Mattämiya bet) at an unknown date. The content and the very structure of the book remained exactly the same as in the Egyptian edition. The Ethiopian volume looks like a photomechanical/photocopy reproduction of the Egyptian one, and only the title page has been slightly modified to accommodate the name of the local Ethiopian printer in Arabic and Amharic.

63 The publication of the *Najm al-munīr* was carried out by Muḥammad b. Ḥāmī al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Wallawī al-Būranī, who collated the text on 'several manuscript copies' ('Ḥaqqaqahu wa-qabālahu bi-ʿiddat nusakh khaṭṭiyya'). The sayings of the prophet mentioned in the text were identified and listed by Mūsā b. Yūsuf al-Kujjāmī al-Darrī.

64 The person is elsewhere unknown. It is not clear whether the *nisba* al-Annī refers to a family connection to *shaykh* Jamāl al-Dīn or to some other kind of relationship to him and his circle. At the end of his introduction Muḥammad al-Mubārak defines himself 'Dāʿiya islamī wa-khaṭīb masjid Khālid b. al-Walīd bi-Maghalā ṣ. b. 1806 Tijrāy' ('Islamic propagandist and preacher of the mosque Khālid b. al-Walīd in Mekelle, P.O. Box 1806, Tigray'). The way the name Mekelle (Tigrinya actually: መቐለ, Mäqälä) is spelled in Arabic script probably points to a Tigrinya speaker.

65 The editor of this new edition levels a harsh criticism to the previous edition: it is also noteworthy that he avoids to call him by the *nisba* al-Annī and uses instead the *nisba* Ḥashanghī (referred to the lake Ḥashange/Ašänge in Southern Tigray).

1) *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar al-ṣaghīr fī fiqh al-imām al-Shāfiʿī*;
2) *Kitāb Abū Shujāʿ*;
3) *Kitāb al-Juljulūtiyya maʿ sharḥihā*;
4) *Kitāb Waṣiyat al-nabī li-al-imām ʿAlī*;
5) *Kitāb Abū Maʿshar*;
6) *Kitāb Safīnat al-najāḥ*;
7) *Kitāb ʿUmdat al-sālik*;
8) *Fatḥ al-Raḥmanī fī al-ṣalāt ʿalā ashraf al-nawʿ al-insānī*;
9) *Kitāb Rabīʿ al-qulūb fī manāqib sayyid al-ʿārifīn shaykhinā al-shaykh Nūr Ḥusayn qaddasa Allāh sirrah*;
10) *Kitāb Ibn Qāsim ʿalā Abī Shujāʿ*.[66]

Beside the presence of some basic handbooks of Islamic jurisprudence according to the *shāfiʿī* school and a couple of books of mystics/magic, of particular interest in the list is the mention of two works directly related to Ethiopia:

– the *Fatḥ al-Raḥmanī fī al-ṣalāt ʿalā ashraf al-nawʿ al-insānī*, a well-known collection of devotional prayers and invocations composed by *shaykh* Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Hararī, which is widely circulated in Harar. The so far known first printed edition of this book was the one realized in Cairo at *Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī* in 1368 AH /1949 CE;[67] and

– the *Kitāb Rabīʿ al-qulūb fī manāqib sayyid al-ʿārifīn shaykhinā al-shaykh Nūr Ḥusayn*, one of the hagiographies of the local holy man (Nūr) Ḥusayn of Bale, possibly the most respected and venerated Muslim saint in the whole Horn of Africa, the first edition of which was so far considered to be the one carried out in Cairo at the Maktaba al-Ḥusayniyya / Maṭbaʿat al-Sharq in 1927.[68] The list thus provides new dates for the first print of these two books, which occupy an outstanding position in the panorama of the Islamic literature in the Horn of Africa.

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66 A detailed analysis of this list, which give us a first-hand picture of the kind of literature Muslims in Ethiopia were exposed to and interested in goes beyond the scope of this paper. The presence of all the most widespread basic handbooks of Islamic jurisprudence according to the *shāfiʿī* school and a couple of titles in occult science can be easily noticed. Moreover, after the list, the note continues saying that one can also ask for books of a long series of different genres, corresponding to the various branches of the traditional Islamic learning (e.g. *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *taṣawwuf*, *adhkār*, *fiqh* according to the four schools of law): all of them are available at the bookshop ('Bayt al-kitāb').

67 For some information on *shaykh* Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Hararī and for a first analysis of the *Fatḥ al-Raḥmānī* see Gori 2019.

68 On *shaykh* Ḥusayn and his hagiographies see Gori 1996.
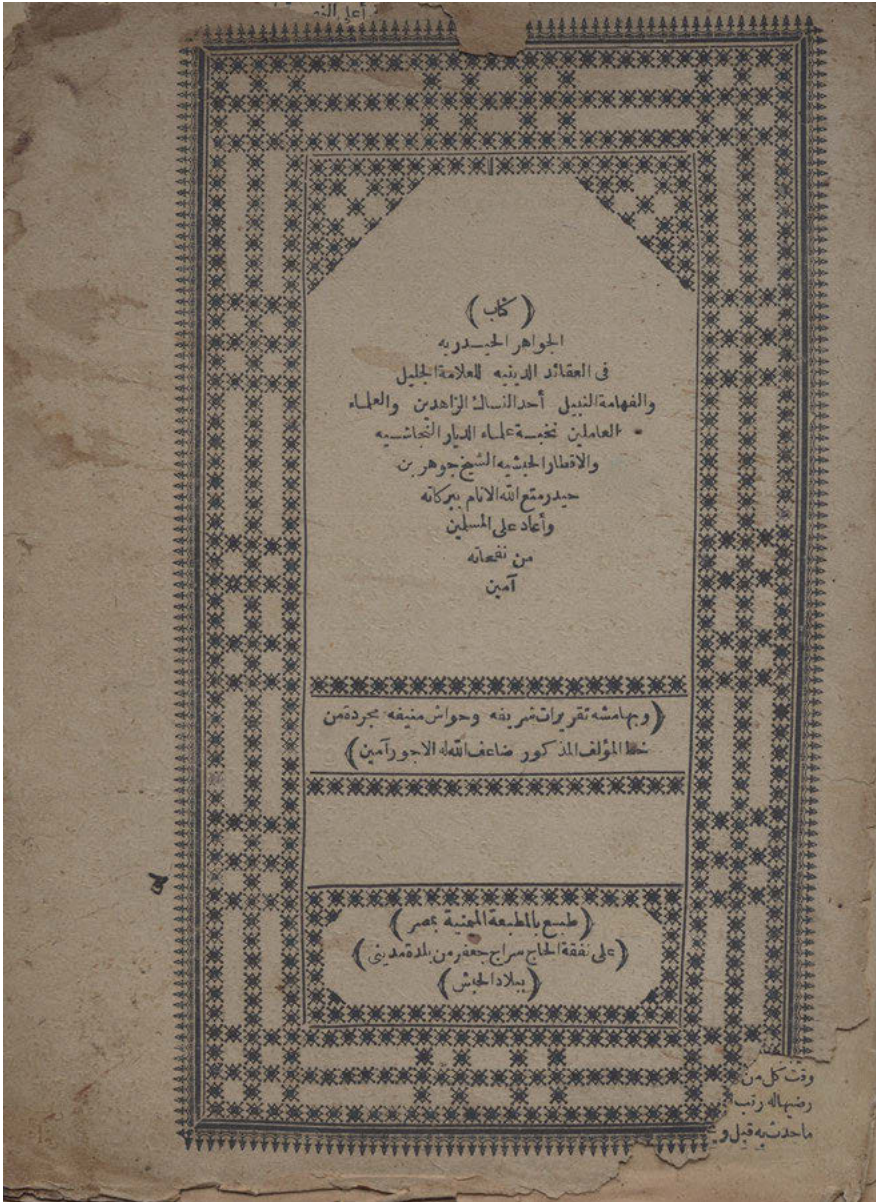
Fig. 1: Haro (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), Haro Abba Dura, 98. Title page of *al-Jawāhir al-ḥaydariyya fī al-ʿaqāʾid al-dīniyya* with on the margin *taqrīrāt sharīfa wa-ḥawāsh munīfa mujarrada min khaṭṭ al-muʾallif al-madhkūr*, Cairo: Maktaba al-Maymaniyya *dhū al-qaʿda* 1324 AH / December 1906 CE. Credits Figs 1–6: Sara Fani, Adday Hernández López, Michele Petrone IslHorn project, 2014, 2016.

Fig. 2: Jimmata (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), Mukhtār b. Abbā Jihād al-Tijānī, 86.
Title page of Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī, *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn fī maʿrifat mahammāt al-dīn*,
Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Maṭar in 1337 ᴀʜ / 1918–1919 ᴄᴇ.
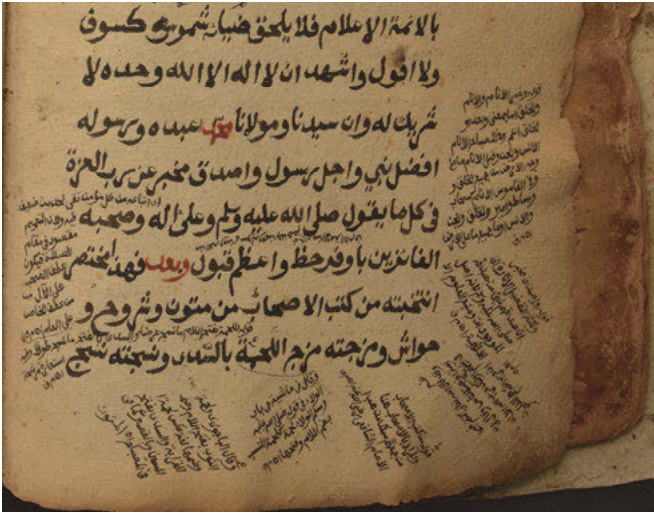
Fig. 3: Wälqiṭe (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, Gurage Zone, Central Ethiopia), Zabi Molla 9, fol. 20ᵛ. Detail of nine marginal notes attributed to the author.

Fig. 4: Jimmata (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia), Mukhtār b. Abbā Jihād al-Tijānī, 86. Printed copy of the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn*. Detail of the glosses on page three: two author's notes are printed on the margin. A reader of the book added two more notes: they are quotations from the *al-Miṣbāḥ al-munīr* by al-Fayyūmī, not attested in the manuscript version I had access to.

Fig. 5: Wälqiṭe (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, Gurage Zone, Central Ethiopia), Zabi Molla 9, fols. 24ᵛ–25ʳ. Text, glosses of the author and excerpts from different works.
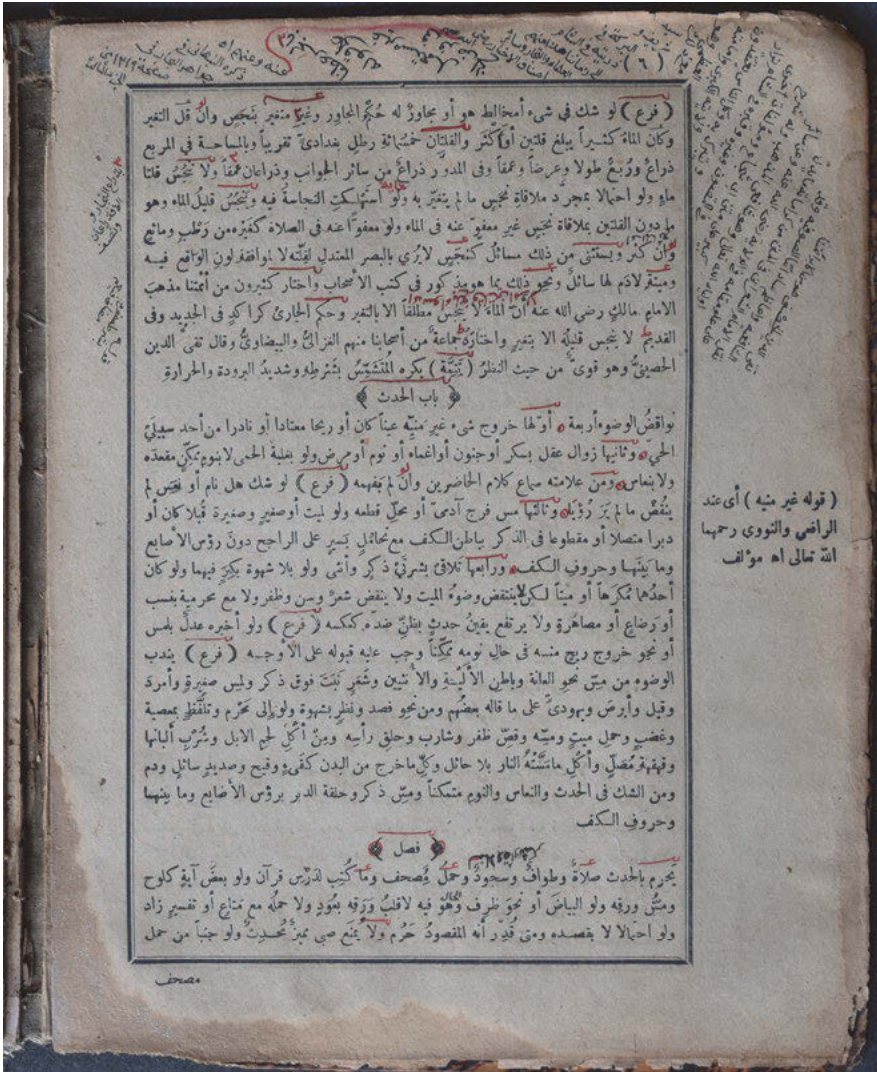
Fig. 6: Jimmata (Jimma Zone, Oromia, Western Ethiopia) Mukhtār b. Abbā Jihād al-Tijānī, 86. Printed copy of the *Kifāyat al-ṭālibīn* (p. 6). The printed book contains only one gloss of the author. The other marginal notes are penned by a reader of the book and are quotation from different other books.

Jeremy Dell
Printing and Textual Authority in the Twentieth-Century Muridiyya

Abstract: Printed poems known as *xasida* are some of the most common forms of reading material in Senegal today. How they became so ubiquitous is directly tied to the twentieth-century trajectory of the Muridiyya and its place in the broader history of African-run printing presses in Senegal. This chapter recounts the history of early efforts to print the *xasida* of Shaykh Amadu Bamba (1853–1927), the Muridiyya's founding saint. Through private papers and oral histories, it tracks the efforts of Murid leaders to assert control over the printing of Bamba's *xasida* after his death. It further shows that these efforts were largely a response to the unregulated dissemination of Bamba's works by some of the first Senegalese-owned printing presses. Such competition, while perhaps evidence of a lack of centralized oversight, helped popularize Bamba's writings. Alongside these developments, a market for handwritten copies of Bamba's *xasida* remained active, influencing the aesthetics of printed *xasida* and informing Murid attitudes towards manuscript and print.

1 Introduction

Xasida – Wolof for the classical Arabic ode, or *qaṣīda* – are some of the most common forms of reading material in Senegal today.[1] Printed as cheap paper booklets, these poems are commonly sold in markets, bookshops, and bus stations across the country. They are also frequently performed and recorded by singers whose renown extends beyond circles of aficionados, thereby forming an integral part of the Senegalese soundscape. How they became so ubiquitous is directly tied to the twentieth-century trajectory of the Murid Sufi order, or Muridiyya, and its place in the broader history of African-run printing presses in Senegal. This chapter recounts the history of early efforts to put *xasida* into print – especially those composed by the Muridiyya's founder Shaykh Amadu Bamba (1853–1927) – and the conflicts over authority that they sometimes engendered.

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1 In Wolof, the consonant 'x' shares the same pronunciation as the Spanish *jota* and the Arabic *khā'*. See Samb 1983, 18.

In Wolof, the term *xasida* has come to encompass any poetry whose primary purpose is to express themes related to Islam. Although Bamba wrote different kinds of poems for different purposes, his entire poetic *œuvre* is often referred to somewhat indiscriminately as *xasida*. When viewed against the backdrop of Wolof expression more generally, *xasida* are but one form of many kinds of spoken genres that include *kañ* (work songs), *woyi baawnaa* (rain songs), *taaxuraan* (harvest songs), *tagg* (genealogies), *bàkk(u)* (fight songs performed during wrestling matches) and many others.[2] Unlike *xasida*, these poems were usually not put into writing, though some of them, such as the *woyi gàmmu* (songs for the celebration of the Prophet's birthday) and the *woyi yalwaan* (formulas that Qur'an school students pronounce while seeking alms), were associated with Islamic institutions and thus shared certain references with *xasida*.

The term *xasida* itself derives from the Arabic word *qaṣīda* (pl. *qaṣā'id*), often translated into English as 'ode', but which is in fact its own unique poetic genre. Its origins, as far as they are known, date to the sixth century CE, when 'classical' Arabic *qaṣā'id* such as the famous 'Hanging Poems' (*al-muʿallaqāt*) were performed. Given that these poems reflected the values and conditions of life in pre-Islamic Arabian society, it was not a foregone conclusion that they would come to have such wide influence across geography. Yet because poems like the *Muʿallaqāt* were understood as having captured the speech of seventh-century Arabian society, they became important sources for Qur'anic exegesis. The grammar of classical Arabic, crucial to linguistic Qur'an commentary, was often taught using such pre-Islamic poetry as source material.[3]

From its origins on the Arabian Peninsula, the *qaṣīda* form spread throughout the Islamic world, where it was adopted in its original Arabic but also adapted to non-Arabic languages like Persian and Urdu. African languages such as Hausa, Swahili and Fulfulde were also part of this dynamic. Although the earliest *qaṣīda* were copied, canonized and used to teach principles of grammar and prosody, the genre itself did not become fossilized. New contexts pushed the *qaṣīda* form in novel directions. Under the influence of Islam, for instance, the *qaṣīda* took on an increasingly panegyric function. Prophetic eulogy (*al-madḥ al-nabawī*) and pious admonition (*waʿẓ*) became its most common subjects, and ones that Bamba frequently addressed in his own poetry. Bamba resembled other African poets in this regard, for they too had adopted the *qaṣīda* as a vehicle for pious action and the dissemination of Islamic principles.

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2 One Senegalese sociolinguist has tabulated more than 25 types of songs. See Cissé 2010, 96–98.
3 Allen 1998, 123.

In West Africa, collections of pre-Islamic poetry are commonplace.[4] Most scholars were therefore familiar with the rules of the *qaṣīda* form, even if they did not elect to compose poetry themselves.

Although the *qaṣīda* was adapted over a wide geography, its general structure remained relatively uniform. Its core features included monorhyme, regular meter, and the division of each verse into equal halves known as hemistichs.[5] The number of verses, and thus the overall length of the poem, varied tremendously. Majaxate Kala, one of Bamba's teachers, held that the *qaṣīda* form required a minimum of either seven or ten verses depending on which classical work of Arabic prosody one considered authoritative. Meanwhile, there was no upper limit. Kala elaborated on these points in a 313-verse poem titled *Mubayyin al-ishkāl min ʿilm al-ʿarūḍ wa-l-qawāfī li-l-faṭin*, a remarkably compact work that details the types of meter and rhyme used in Arabic poetry, including the *qaṣīda*.[6] Though the *qaṣīda*'s structure is quite rigid, the varieties of meter at a poet's disposal, along with the Arabic language's propensity for end-rhyme and a consistent verbal root structure, made for a rather supple form of expression.

Religious assembly was the main setting in which the technical skill required to construct a *qaṣīda* was displayed. Murids learned Bamba's poetry by heart and recited it collectively, thereby giving voice to the *qaṣīda* form that Bamba had mastered and becoming, in Johannes Pedersen's evocative phrase, 'a living edition of the great poetry collections'.[7] Yet the diffusion of Bamba's poetry was not solely due to the practice of live performance. It also owed something to the organizational prowess of the Murid leaders and the work of ordinary Murid disciples, including some of the first generation of Senegalese who had their own printing presses. These individuals and their families provided a material link between the poetry that Bamba composed and the public recitations that played an increasingly visible role in Senegalese religious life.

Yet the process by which Bamba's poetry found its way in to print was hardly straightforward. Competing narratives emerged over who had the right to print his works, pitting official Murid leadership (consisting of Bamba's direct descendants and those whom he had appointed as shaykhs) against the independent initiatives of ordinary disciples. While such disagreements could be viewed as evidence of discord, the very competition to put cheap, printed material into wider circulation actually helped popularize Bamba's writings even

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4 See Hunwick 1996, 84–85.

5 Wright 1967, 351–352.

6 Gerresch 1974.

7 Pedersen 1984, 7.

further (and the Muridiyya by extension). Unlike cases such as the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire, in which new material forms such as 'manuscript pamphlets' hastened the proliferation of competing polemics, here we see how disagreement over a new material form could help consolidate a new religious vision.[8]

2 Origin stories

Amadu Bamba was still a young man living in his father's household when he started to write poetry in the 1860s and 1870s. His first poems were composed in the village of Mbakke Kajoor, where his father had settled after several tumultuous years that had seen the family flee their home region of Bawol and move to Saluum before finally settling in the region of Kajoor.[9] At first, Bamba's poetry was largely a by-product of his teaching. His earliest works were formulated explicitly as responses to questions from his students. Titles such as *Tazawwud al-ṣighār* (*Provisions for the Children*) and *Tazawwud al-shubān* (*Provisions for the Youth*) suggested an audience of younger disciples. Both works focused on details of ritual practice in varying degrees of detail. Most of the verses in *Tazawwud al-ṣighār*, for instance, consisted of instructions about how to prepare the body for worship. Fifteen steps were outlined that, if followed, would allow for the successful execution of prayer.[10] These didactic works were clearly intended to encourage younger disciples in their observance of correct ritual practice.

In addition to these more practical works, many of Bamba's early poems were versifications of canonical texts written by other Muslim scholars.[11] One of the first works that Bamba transformed into verse was *Bidāya al-hidāya* (*The Beginning of Guidance*) by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111 CE), a scholar whose

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8 For the Ottoman comparison, see Shafir 2016, especially Chap. 3, 'Pamphleteering in a manuscript culture: The circulation of cheap books and the polarization of Ottoman society'.

9 This serial displacement was a symptom of the wider instability that plagued Senegalese political life in the 1860s. It had two principal causes: 1) French interference in the internal politics of the Kingdom of Kajoor, and 2) the ongoing conflict between the French administration and the forces of Màbba Jaxu Ba in the region of Saluum. Bamba's home region of Bawol was located between Kajoor and Saluum. For a summary of these dynamics, see Babou 2007, 41–47.

10 See 'Tazawwud al-ṣighār', in Bamba 1989, verses 164–173.

11 Mbacké 1995, 112.

symbiosis of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) proved popular among West African audiences. In later writings, Bamba continued in the vein of this 'juridical Sufism', exhorting his disciples to neither neglect the demands of *fiqh* in this world nor the other levels of existence and meaning that form basic elements of Sufi thought.[12]

A key turning point in Bamba's life came in 1895 when, on suspicions of organizing armed jihad, he was detained by French colonial authorities and deported to Gabon, where he was held until 1902. This experience, a foundational episode in the early history of the Muridiyya, was also reflected in Bamba's poetry, producing a new kind of 'poem of exile'.[13] Bamba addressed his exile most directly in *Jazā' al-shukūr* ('Amends of the Most Grateful'), a poem he probably wrote during a second period of imprisonment in Mauritania (1903–1907).[14] In this work, Bamba gave an account of his encounter with French authorities in Saint-Louis, the voyage aboard a French ship on the Atlantic, his imprisonment on the island of Mayumba in Gabon and eventual return to Senegal.

For a poet whose writings had previously tended towards abstract theological concerns, *Jazā' al-shukūr* was a significant departure. It provided a newly concrete and worldly setting for understanding Bamba's unequaled piety, captured in Wolof phrases like *Boroom Tuubaa, amul morom* ('Amadu Bamba, master of the city of Tuubaa, is without peer'). It also offered Bamba opportunities to perform 'miraculous' acts such as the famous 'ocean prayer' (*julli géej gi*) recounted by the Murid poet Musa Ka.[15] In sum, Bamba and his community viewed his imprisonment in Gabon as an immensely productive period of spiritual development. It was there that he honed the practice of the 'Greater Jihad', or *jihād al-akbar / jihad al-nafs*, a kind of internal struggle against the self that was central to his overall conception of Islam (and that, once again, had antecedents in the work of al-Ghazali).

Bamba also claimed to have perfected his knowledge of the Arabic language while in Gabon. From this perspective, life after exile represents yet another

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12 See, e.g., the introduction to Bamba's 'Paths to Paradise' (*Masālik al-jinān*). For the concept of 'juridical Sufism', see Cornell 1998, 63–92.

13 Dumont 1975, 54.

14 Babou 2007, 126.

15 This was the prayer that Bamba performed while imprisoned aboard a French ship to Gabon. The crew prevented Bamba from completing his prayers onboard the ship, and so he placed his prayer mat on the water and completed his prayers directly on the surface of the ocean. This act is celebrated by Murids today as a sign of Bamba's commitment to prayer. See Babou 2007, 138.

phase of his career as a poet. After returning to Senegal from his imprisonment in Mauritania (1903–1907), Bamba focused his writing exclusively on *madḥa*, a type of praise poem which he used to honor the Prophet Muhammad. He even disavowed all of the poems he had composed before his exile in Gabon, stating that because they were written before his period of exile, 'they are not agreeable to God and consequently have not been blessed'.[16] He therefore advised his disciples to seek out only those poems composed after his return to Senegal. It is his *madḥa* poetry, incidentally, that has furnished the corpus of *xasida* Murids recite in public assembly.

Overall, Bamba's output as a poet can be roughly divided along the themes outlined here. His early poems were pedagogical tools written as responses to questions from students. He also excelled in the versification of canonical works written by other scholars. The dramatic sequence of events around his imprisonment in Gabon engendered another kind of narrative poem centered on themes of exile and redemption. His final phase, meanwhile, was clearly part of a devotional practice aimed at contemplating and praising the qualities of the Prophet Muhammad. Unlike his earlier pedagogical works, poems from this last phase were not intended as a means of imparting discursive knowledge. Instead, Bamba conceived of them as a form of service to the Prophet, or *khidma*, which, along with *ḥubb* (love) and *hadiyya* (pious gift–giving), formed the triad of duties at the core of Murid doctrine and practice.[17] From this perspective, Bamba's popular moniker *Khādim al-Rasūl* ('the servant of the Prophet') could be considered a kind of pen name.

The narrative of Bamba's exile has been recounted many times. Even his development as a poet, if perhaps a less dramatic theme than his imprisonment and deportation, has not gone unremarked.[18] Yet the dissemination of Bamba's poetry in the years after his death, although essential to its long-term influence, has yet to be studied in any detail.[19] In the years and decades following Bamba's death, the collection and publication of his poetry was undertaken by both the Murid leadership (as represented by the Caliph) and ordinary disciples alike. As with Bamba's career as a poet, the history of publishing his poetry has its own origin stories. Recounting that history is impossible without considering Murid

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16 Mbacké 1985, 21. Quoted in Babou 2007, 135.

17 Babou 2007, 85–95.

18 Dumont's 1975 book remains the most detailed published study of Bamba's poetry. See also Ndiaye 2009.

19 The issue is raised briefly in Babou 2007, 136 and 245 n. 105.

ties to other parts of the Muslim world and to the development of a print indus-
try within Senegal itself.

According to Mustafa Jatara, the director of the Muridiyya's official *Biblio-
thèque Cheikoul Khadim*, the first time his writings were put into print, Amadu
Bamba was still alive. The early history of such publishing efforts is replete with
stories of obscure figures, missing manuscripts and short-lived connections to
other parts of the Muslim world. Jatara relayed his account as a piece of family
history in which his own father, Sëriñ Jatara, played an important role. Having
been involved in the official efforts directed by Sëriñ Fallu, the Muridiyya's
second caliph, to collect and publish Bamba's poetry, Sëriñ Jatara had often
heard talk of disciples who before the advent of Senegalese-owned printing
presses traveled to the Arab world (*réewu naar yi*) to have their shaykh's poetry
printed. There were indeed instances of Tijani disciples from Senegal doing the
same, and there are records of Senegalese Tijani shaykhs having their writings
published in North Africa, even if the details of this process remain obscure.[20]

Jatara had an obscure origin story of his own to share.[21] It involved a man
named Muhammad Madani who came from the Hejaz. Madani had been touring
(*di wër*) through North Africa around the turn of the twentieth century when he
first heard accounts of a famous *walī*, or saint, whom the French had impris-
oned and exiled to Gabon. Soon after, Madani went to Saint-Louis, where he
had direct contact with members of the Murid community. He traveled as far
south as Dakar, but never made it to the Murid capital of Tuubaa, which was
only a village at the time. Madani never had an opportunity to meet Amadu
Bamba, but he was shown some of his writings. He obtained a copy of Bamba's
Mawāhib al-quddūs fī naẓm nathr shaykhinā al-Sanūsī fī tawḥīd, a versification
of a prose work by Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi. After leaving Senegal, he went
to Egypt, where he had the '*Mawahibu*', as it is known, printed. In Jatara's ac-
count, this was probably the first of Bamba's *xasida* to appear in print.

Two other early accounts of Bamba's poetry being printed come from the
colonial archive. According to the first, a work by Bamba titled 'le livre du trésor
des biens' (possibly *Mawāhib al-Nāfiʿ fī Madāʾih al-Shāfiʿ*) was printed in Beirut
by 'Mohamed Rashid and Mostafa El Halouani'.[22] The second account involved a

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20 See, e.g., Niasse 1910 (available for consultation at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique
Noire (Dakar), Fonds Amar Samb, E. cahier n. 3). For a brief discussion of this work on Sufi
spiritual training, see Wright 2015, 85–86. A collection of poetry written by the Senegalese
Tijani shaykh al-Hajj Malik Sy was also published in Tunis in 1915.
21 Interview with Mustafa Jatara, 9 September 2014.
22 'Politique Musulmane, Activité des Marabouts - 1906–1917', Archives Nationales du Sénégal
13 G67. Cited in Sene 1982, 255.

Moroccan merchant named Abdelkarim who traveled through Senegal in 1911 and came into contact with Murid shaykhs. Henri Cor, governor of the colony of Senegal, was aware of his activities, and mentioned in a letter to the Governor General that Abdelkarim obtained two of Bamba's works which he intended to have edited and printed in Cairo by the famed printers of Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, one of the major distributors of Arabic printed material in West and East Africa. Cor noted that the manuscripts included 'religious poems', but did not specify any titles.[23]

While early efforts to print the *xasida* of Amadu Bamba were sporadic, Murid disciples continued to disseminate his poetry in other forms. Before printers were available, many scholars in Bamba's entourage produced copies of his writings. There were professional copyists who sold manuscripts, and many handwritten copies of the Qur'an were distributed this way. In the 1930s, the first caliph of the Muridiyya and Bamba's eldest son, Sëriñ Mamadu Mustafa Mbàkke, established a workshop for professional copyists in Dakar. Named *Kër Sëriñ Bi*, the workshop produced three kinds of texts: 1) *bind al-quran* (copies of the Qur'an), 2) *bind al xasa'id* (copies of *xasida*), and 3) *bind ay ñaan* (prayers). Copies produced at *Kër Sëriñ Bi* were used for some of the first print versions of Bamba's *xasida*, but most of the workshop's output was directed towards a separate market for handwritten copies. As printers became more common in Dakar in the mid-twentieth century, the number of copies produced at *Kër Sëriñ Bi* decreased, but never disappeared entirely. The demand for handwritten *xasida* and *ñaan* persisted and the workshop is still open today.[24]

Nevertheless, printing the *xasida* of Amadu Bamba remained a priority for the Muridiyya. The order's second caliph, Sëriñ Fallu Mbàkke (r. 1945–1968), oversaw a major effort to organize the collection and dissemination of Bamba's poetry. The project was entrusted to Mustafa Jatara's father, Sëriñ Jatara, and Lamin Jóob, the imam of the main mosque of Diourbel (Njarëm), an important town in the region of Bawol.[25] According to Mustafa Jatara, Jóob was charged with identifying authentic versions of Bamba's poems (*moom moo wax ni xasida*, or 'he was the one to say "*this* is a *xasida*"'). There was already a concern

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23 Gouverneur Henri Cor à GGAOF, 14 October 1911, ANS 19 G5. Cited in Sene 1982, 254. It bears mentioning that such efforts were not limited to Murids. Several of al-Hajj Malik Sy's works were published in Tunisia in 1914–1915 with subventions from the Governor-General. See Marty 1917, 181. On the al-Babi al-Halabi printers, see Gori and Reese in this volume.

24 Interview with al-Hajj Adama Jaxate, 25 October 2014. Jaxate is the imam of the mosque at *Kër Sëriñ Bi* and directs the workshop of calligraphers.

25 It was particularly notable in the history of the Muridiyya as the town where Bamba was kept under house arrest after his final return to Senegal.

that if authoritative versions of the *xasida* were not collected, then variations would emerge among copyists and it would become increasingly difficult to determine which ones were authentic.

Once Jatara and Jóob had received their instructions from Sëriñ Fallu, they began to travel throughout the countryside in search of disciples who held copies of Bamba's *xasida*. Manuscript owners were asked to either contribute their collections to the project or, short of that, loan them to Jatara and Jóob so that they could be copied. In order to facilitate these meetings, Sëriñ Fallu gave the pair a letter which he signed that explained the project. Jatara and Jóob presented it to everyone whose manuscripts they requested to see. The next step in the process entailed bringing the manuscript copies back to Tuubaa, where Sëriñ Fallu made the final editorial decisions about which manuscript versions would be used from those that were collected. Sëriñ Buso, an imam in Tuubaa, made a fair copy of the authoritative version that was then corrected by Sëriñ Assane Buso in Guéde.[26] Once that was completed, Sëriñ Fallu gave formal instructions (the *ndigal*) to have the *xasida* printed.

According to Jatara, the era of centralized oversight ended with the passing of Sëriñ Fallu in 1968. Once cheap printers and then copy machines became more widely available in the seventies, it became impossible to control the production and distribution of Bamba's writings: 'if you look at books today, those who produce them now are not like those who produced them at first', Mustafa Jatara recalled in his office.[27] Early print jobs, in his telling, were all authorized by Sëriñ Fallu (*bi idhn al-khalīfa Muḥammad al-Fāḍil*). Yet the broader history of booksellers, bookbinders and Senegalese-owned printing presses suggests that the printing of Amadu Bamba's *xasida* was never the exclusive work of the Caliphate, but instead involved ordinary disciples from the very beginning. These disciples formed part of the first generation of Senegalese printers to own and operate their own presses.

3 Printing families

While Jatara and Jóob initiated the project approved by Sëriñ Fallu, other Murid disciples, and even non-Murids, began printing the *xasida* of Amadu Bamba.

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26 The process was reminiscent of classical methods for certifying copies. See Pedersen 1984, 46–47.

27 *Boo demee ci téere yi, li ñi ñuy moeler léegi, bokkul ak li nu daan moeler bu njèkk*. Interview with Mustafa Jatara, 9 September 2014.

Two paths were available for those interested in this pursuit in mid-twentieth century Senegal. The first entailed forging links with printers in North Africa and the Middle East who had the machinery needed to print material in Arabic; the second involved working within Senegal's own emerging print industry. These two strategies were not mutually exclusive, but over time more and more *xasida* were printed in Senegal rather than abroad.

This dynamic is illustrated in the career of Issa Niang, a Murid disciple who was part of the first generation of Senegalese printers to publish Bamba's *xasida*. Like many early booksellers, bookbinders and printers, Niang's entrance into the profession was gradual.[28] He lived in the village of Piiru Ndaari, located on the border of the historic regions of Bawol and Kajoor, and like most inhabitants of the countryside, his primary activity was farming. While frequenting the homes of Murid shaykhs, he came across books imported from Tunisia and noticed that, although they were printed, they still had the appearance of being handwritten (Wolof: *bind loxo*).[29] Motivated by a desire to spread Bamba's *xasida*, but also as a means of supplementing the income he earned from farming, Niang wrote to the Tunisian printer and editor whose address was listed in one of these books:

IMPRIMERIE LIBRAIRIE AL-MANAR	مطبع المنار ومكتبتها
TIJANI EL-M'HAMDI	التجاني المحمدي
Case Postale 121 Tunis	صندوق البوسطة ١٢١ تونس

Niang wrote to El-M'hamdi to ask whether the same kind of books could be printed for the *xasida* of Amadu Bamba. M'hamdi responded to Niang's letter, explaining the process by which a metal-plate (or 'cliché') could be cast from a papier-mâché in order to 'print your book in your own handwriting'.[30] This type of printing allowed for the production of a text that appeared handwritten while retaining the ability to produce multiple copies, a kind of 'manuscript in print'.[31]

Once Niang and M'hamdi settled on a price, Niang began ordering books from Tunis and selling them out of a shop in Piiru Ndaari, forming part of a

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28 The following is based on interviews with two of Issa Niang's sons: the imam Mbaye Niang of the central mosque of Plan Jaxaay, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Dakar, and Bassirou Niang, manager of the *Imprimerie Serigne Issa Niang* in the Dakar suburb of Pikine.

29 Interview with Mbaye Niang, 13 September 2014.

30 *Ṭabʿ kitābikum binafs khaṭṭ yadikum*. Tijani El-Mhamdi to Issa Niang, 19 October 1951, Private Papers, Mbaye Niang, Plan Jaxaay.

31 For an interesting parallel case involving 'handwritten' Japanese woodblock prints, see Chance and Davis 2016.

network of merchants who brought printed materials into the villages of rural Senegal. Customers came from Matam and Fuuta Tooro to buy books from him instead traveling all the way to the well-stocked bookstores of Dakar. Yet bookstores in Dakar also played a role in connecting Senegalese shaykhs and disciples to printers in North Africa. One that was particularly important in this regard was *La Librairie Kittani* run by Mukhtar al-Kittani at 44 rue Tolbiac. Al-Kittani had left Casablanca in 1947 and moved to Dakar, where he sold books imported from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. He was well acquainted with many of Senegal's most prominent shaykhs, including Sëriñ Fallu Mbàkke and Abdul Aziz Sy, the head of the branch of the Tijaniyya based out of Tiwaawaan. Al-Kittani served as a link between Senegalese shaykhs and the Dar al-Kitab printers in Casablanca, with whom he managed the early publication of some of Bamba's *xasida*.[32]

In addition to these North African connections maintained through sellers like Niang and al-Kattani, new Senegalese-owned printing presses also played a role in the diffusion of texts written by West African scholars. Niang himself eventually moved to Dakar, where he started his own printshop in 1952, the *Imprimerie Khoulaamoul Khadiim* (ar. *ghulām al-khādim*, or the 'servant of the servant', referring to Amadu Bamba as *khādim al-rasūl*).[33] The largest of these early Senegalese-owned printing presses, however, was undoubtedly the *Imprimerie Diop*. Founded by Abdoulaye Diop in the early 1950s, it became one of the main print outlets for Senegalese businesses, political parties, and shaykhs. It had antecedents in a workshop that Diop ran out of the courtyard of his Dakar host family in 1948 (though born in Dakar, Diop's family roots were in the Fuuta Tooro region of the Senegal River Valley).[34] The business grew with the support of the then-Governor General of French West Africa, Bernard Cornut-Gentille. Having learned of a young Senegalese man who had trained in typography and bookbinding at Dakar's *Mission Catholique*, Cornut-Gentille visited Diop in his fledgling printshop where he worked without electricity using manual printing presses. Impressed by the operation, Cornut-Gentille arranged for Diop to move

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32 Interview with Saad al-Kattani, 6 September 2014. See as well the 'Selected Works of Aḥmad Bamba' listed in Creevey 1979, 307.

33 Family circumstances had encouraged Niang's move to Dakar, but he was also following the advice of his partner in Tunis, who thought it would be easier for them to do business if Niang lived closer to a town with a post office. Interview with Mbaye Niang, 13 September 2014.

34 Interview with Pape Samba Diop, 28 October 2014.

to a new facility where he would be able to use electric-powered presses.[35] Over the 1950s and 1960s, *Imprimerie Diop* became a hub of activity for Senegalese politicians and writers.

The combination of connections to printers in North Africa and a nascent print industry in Senegal meant that by the 1950s it was becoming easier for disciples (and the public at large) to obtain print versions of Bamba's *xasida*. Fernand Dumont, a French technical adviser who wrote a book about Bamba's writings while working for the Senegalese Foreign Ministry in the 1960s and 1970s, was able to find printed *xasida* that dated from 1956–1957.[36] By the mid-1950s, such poems were being printed by several actors operating relatively independently of one another. Yet the *xasida* that Senegalese and North African printers put into circulation did not enter a completely free space. On the contrary, it was a space that both the Murid leadership and the French colonial administration sought to regulate. These were not equally powerful entities, to be sure, nor did they have the same motivations or employ the same methods, but they still both attempted to oversee the production and dissemination of Bamba's poetry. For Murid leaders, preventing the circulation of faulty versions of Bamba's *xasida* was a priority. For the French, such regulation was simply part of a more general policy of controlling the forms of media and information that entered French West Africa.

4 Regulating texts

The increasing proliferation of Bamba's poetry in print form eventually drew a response from the Murid leadership. In 1957, the Caliph Sëriñ Fallu Mbàkke (a son of Amadu Bamba) issued a decree seeking to regulate the printing and dissemination of Bamba's poetry:

> His Excellency the Caliph El-Hadj Falilou Mbacké, residing in Touba (Diourbel *cercle* - Senegal), asks all who wish to edit or print the religious works of the Great and Most Venerated Amadu Bamba (Arabic poems known as 'Khassahide') to request his authorization according to the following conditions:
>
> 1. Submit to him a manuscript copy or manuscript copies of the works to be printed.

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35 A sign hanging over the entrance to Imprimerie Diop read 'Bienvenue à Monsieur le Gouverneur de l'Afrique Occidentale, Monsieur Cornut-Gentille'. Interview with Pape Samba Diop, 28 October 2014.
36 Dumont 1975, 18.

2. Once initial approval is granted, have these manuscript copies corrected by reputable scholars in order to avoid all orthographic errors or other irregularities that might come from these copies.

3. After correction, these manuscript copies must be submitted to El-Hadj Falilou Mbacké for final approval as shown by his signature and the stamp affixed below, and in the absence of which no authorization is valid.

Touba, December 11, 1957
EL-HADJ FALILOU M'BACKE[37]

Appearing in both Arabic and French, the decree had one clear objective: to bring all printing of the *xasida* under the authority of the caliph. The timing of the announcement suggests that by the late 1950s, the Murid leadership was trying to regain control over a process that had largely developed out of their purview. Ordinary disciples had taken the initiative to publish Bamba's *xasida*, and the Caliph based in Tuubaa (Touba) was now trying to reassert some control. For a time, Sëriñ Fallu's decree seemed to have its desired effect. When conducting research on the writings of Amadu Bamba in the 1960s, Fernand Dumont found that most print copies available for purchase either bore the stamp of Sëriñ Fallu or his signature, as required by the decree.[38] However, as printing presses, mimeographs and, eventually, photocopy machines became more common, it became impossible for Murid leaders to scrutinize every single poem put into circulation.

In theory, the process laid out by Sëriñ Fallu's decree should have made it possible for the Murid leadership to at least produce 'authorized' versions of Bamba's *xasida*. But what is the precise corpus of texts referred to when speaking of the '*xasida* of Amadu Bamba'? The answer is not always obvious. Lucy Creevey's 'selected bibliography' of Bamba's poetry listed 21 titles.[39] Dumont recorded 41 printed works that were available on the market while he was conducting research in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[40] Amar Samb, who served as director of Dakar's *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* from 1971 to 1986, said that the Institute's library held 156 poems written by Bamba.[41] The manuscript collection of Shaykh Serigne Mor Mbaye Cissé in Diourbel holds roughly 400

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37 The copy I consulted came from the private papers of Mbaye Niang, Plan Jaxaay. I was not able to find a copy of the decree in any public archive, but it is still held by some printers in their private collections. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

38 Dumont 1975, 18.

39 Creevey 1979, 307.

40 Dumont 1975, 12–15.

41 Samb 1979, 240.

works attributed to Bamba.[42] It was a common saying among Murid disciples, meanwhile, that when placed on a scale all of Bamba's poetry amounted to 700 kilograms.[43] In other words, the number of *xasida* Bamba actually wrote is difficult to quantify with any precision.

Determining an exhaustive list of Bamba's poetry was probably not feasible at the time of Sëriñ Fallu's decree. While this would appear to have been a major obstacle to regulating the dissemination of Bamba's poetry, from another angle one could imagine why arriving at a complete and authoritative list of Bamba's works may not have been particularly urgent. To enumerate each one of Bamba's poems would render them finite, and the spiritual project of the Murid founder – the love and gratitude that he expressed for the Prophet Muhammad via his poetry – should in theory be inexhaustible. Even in his own writings, Bamba had alluded to works that he had written and then refused to circulate.[44]

The fact that both printers working under the authority of the Caliph and those who operated independently were profitable spoke to the overall demand for Bamba's poetry. Abdoulaye Diop claimed to have printed 35,000 copies of the Qur'an copied in Sëriñ Dioumbe Cissé's hand.[45] Collections of *xasida* would have been much shorter texts, so it is not inconceivable that such print runs would have been in the thousands. One scholar in the early 1960s gave an estimate of 20,000 copies for one of Bamba's works.[46] In such a context, the ability of central authorities in Tuubaa to enforce Sëriñ Fallu's decree probably relied more on the moral authority of the Caliph than on any practical steps that could be taken to enforce its regulations.

Murid leaders in Tuubaa were not the only, or even the most powerful actors seeking to regulate the dissemination of Bamba's poetry. In addition to caliphal authorization, printing materials in Senegal in the 1950s still required the approval of French administrators. Texts were to be presented in advance and receive official approval before being disseminated. Most of the requests fielded by French officials came from Levantine and Moroccan merchants who, before the advent of Senegalese-owned printing presses, were responsible for

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42 Kane 1997.

43 The figure of 700 kilograms in drawn from Samb, but seven tons is also commonly cited.

44 This applied specifically to poems he had written while in exile. See Mbacké 1985, 21. Quoted in Babou 2007, 135.

45 Prinz 1988.

46 Monteil 1962, 101. In 2014, Bassirou Niang of the *Imprimerie Serigne Issa Niang* sold 10,000 copies of Bamba's *Mawāhib al-Nāfiʿ fī Madāʾiḥ al-Shāfiʿ*. Interview with Bassirou Niang, 9 September 2014.

importing the bulk of Arabic-language materials into French West Africa.[47] Approval could come from the Director of Political Affairs, the Office of Muslim Affairs or customs officials. A list of publications appearing in Senegal was maintained and included nearly 50 titles in the mid-1950s. These included trade publications, union newsletters and newspapers run by political parties. Each entry included title, publication frequency, editorial information and address. Colonial officials were especially concerned about literature, music, and other forms of expression that could be construed as 'pan-Arabist'. Bamba's *xasida*, by contrast, were not viewed as a particularly threatening form of religious text.

5 Conclusion

The *xasida* of Amadu Bamba encompassed many different worlds in twentieth-century Senegal. Such writings were first and foremost expressions of Bamba's own piety. They demonstrated his knowledge of Islam and his mastery of the Arabic language. In this sense, they were acts of devotion. Yet they were not personal documents. Aside from his exilic poetry, Bamba's writings rarely referred to any specific events in his life or even to broader social conditions. Instead, they were normative statements that sought to instill in their readers (and listeners) the virtues of a proper Muslim life and, in a manner similar to *dhikr*, bring disciples closer to God. Though their content may have transcended any particular sociopolitical context, they still became the founding texts of one of the major Muslim movements of the twentieth century.

The effort to preserve and disseminate Bamba's poetry became a key component of that movement. Under Sëriñ Fallu, the publishing wing of the Muridiyya came into existence, mobilizing disciples to collect and edit Bamba's *xasida* and prompting several of them to create links with North Africans printers. Some eventually elected to enter Senegal's own nascent print industry. These efforts were sometimes overseen by the centralized authority of the Caliph, but just as often they were the result of disciples' own initiative. Deciding who had the authority to reproduce Bamba's *xasida* was an unsettled question,

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47 Alfred Le Chatelier reported finding a vibrant book trade among Moroccan merchants in the Senegalese city of Saint-Louis in the 1880s. In their shops one could purchase 'manuscripts from Fez, printed books from Bulaq [the famous Cairo printing press], Smyrna, [and] Beirut'. See Le Chatelier 1899, 261; Sene 1982, 251.

and one that resonates to this day.[48] Yet disagreement over the right to repro-
duce Bamba's *xasida* has only served to further popularize the Muridiyya, thus
demonstrating how contestation can actually serve to bolster a movement.
Meanwhile, the emergence of printed *xasida* did not put an end to the demand
for handwritten copies. On the contrary, while Dumont conducted his research
on Bamba's poetry in the 1960s and 1970s, he could still find 'modest copyists,
sitting on their mats, [who] write calligraphy of the works of their Master with
extraordinary patience and remarkable ability [...] near them small children,
boys and girls perhaps six or seven years old, already practice on their writing
boards. They will carry on the tradition, come what may'.[49] The workshop at *Kër
Sëriñ Bi* bears out this prediction. Alongside these developments, a market for
handwritten copies of Bamba's *xasida* remained active, influencing the aesthet-
ics of printed *xasida* and informing Murid attitudes towards manuscript and
print, which remain an indelible part of textual culture in Senegal today.

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48 In my conversations with printers, many expressed a desire to see the official Murid leader-
ship take a more robust stance in regulating the publication of Bamba's writings, arguing that
the market was saturated with 'counterfeits' – works that fail to list the printer's name and
contact information (a common practice). Sëriñ Fallu's successor as caliph, Sëriñ Abdul Ahad,
brought the first printing press to Tuubaa, where he established the *Bibliothèque Cheikhoul
Khadim* in 1977. However, the demand for Bamba's *xasida* exceeds the capacity of any one
printer.
49 Dumont 1975, 17.

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Andrea Brigaglia

'Printed Manuscripts': Tradition and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Nigerian Qur'anic Printing

Abstract: This chapter provides a chronology of the printed editions of the Qur'an published in Nigeria, in the form of offset lithography, from the 1950s onwards. Reconstructing the history of these publications alongside an anthropological description of Qur'anic reading practices in Nigeria, the chapter raises questions related both to the aesthetics and to the economy of Qur'anic calligraphy. In answering these questions, the chapter stresses how a set of cultural and historical factors shaped the Nigerian Islamic book market to enable an old calligraphic art to thrive in the age of print. The flamboyant aesthetics of the Qur'anic 'printed manuscripts' of twentieth-century Nigeria is, rather than a simple residual legacy of an 'ancient art', the fruit of the encounter of the latter with a modern economy.

1 Introduction

The present chapter provides a history of Qur'anic calligraphy in northern Nigeria from the early twentieth century to date. The focus is on the Qur'ans – for the large part penned by calligraphers based in Kano – reproduced in offset lithographic editions from the 1950s onwards. The formula 'printed manuscripts', borrowed from Adeeb Khalid's work on Tsarist Russia, alludes to the offset lithographic editions that allowed 'the age of manuscript to continue under the guise of print'.[1] Proposing a tentative chronology of these Nigerian editions, the chapter will try to answer a set of questions related both to the aesthetics and to the social history of Arabic calligraphy in northern Nigeria: what cultural, social and economic forces shaped the arts of twentieth-century Nigerian calligraphers? How did the introduction of the printing press impact the world of local calligraphers? What changes did it prompt in their economy, and what in the aesthetic of their arts? Which aspects, of the calligraphic styles displayed by

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1 Khalid 1994, 192.

twentieth-century's Nigerian Qur'ans, can be considered as 'traditional', and which as 'modern'?

Addressing these interrelated questions, the chapter will demonstrate how a set of circumstances that are peculiar to mid to late-twentieth century Nigeria, and in particular to Kano, created a context whereby the introduction of printing press technologies, far from rendering the job of the calligraphers irrelevant, contributed to a calligraphic boom that had few historical precedents in the region. Testaments to this boom are the many flamboyant offset lithographic editions of the Qur'an published during the last seventy years, which can be considered, without exaggeration, as among the finest items of Islamic arts in contemporary Africa.

2 The Nigerian Qur'anic manuscript tradition

A brief review of extant studies on the Qur'anic manuscript tradition of northern Nigeria will introduce the reader to the terminology that will be used in the rest of the chapter and provide some background on the historical origins of the manuscript tradition that will be discussed below. Due to the uniqueness of the variety of Arabic script (often labelled as the *sūdānī* or 'West African' script) displayed by Nigerian Qur'anic, as well as by most non-Qur'anic, manuscripts, the description of the script has understandably attracted a great deal of the attention of the scholars who have approached the manuscripts from the region. Two basic theories about the origin of this script have been advanced in the literature. Adrian H. Bivar, in his sketchy but pioneering articles on the topic,[2] argued that one of the most significant aspects of this variety of Arabic script was its antiquity: the script displayed by the Qur'ans of Borno of the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, he submitted, was a direct descendant of a now extinct North African script in use before the thirteenth century and therefore, it must have been transmitted to the Muslims of the Lake Chad region already in the eleventh or twelfth century.[3] Bivar's theory was followed by Salah M. Hassan in a subsequent study.[4] Later on, however, the antiquity of the origins of the West African script was questioned by Tim Stanley[5] and Sheila Blair,[6]

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2 Bivar 1960; Bivar 1968.
3 Bivar 1968, 15.
4 Hassan 1992. See especially the chapter 'Arabic Malamic Calligraphy: Genealogy and the Making of a Style', 116–147.
5 Stanley 1998.

who argued that, on the contrary, the *sūdānī* had to be considered as a relatively recent (post-sixteenth century) offshoot of the *maghribī*, a script that had become characteristic of North Africa only after the thirteenth-century 'cursive revolution' of Arabic scripts.

A second problem was the taxonomy of the script(s): does the label *sūdānī* / West African allow to effectively identify the geographic scope of the script(s) observed in the Bornuan and, more broadly, northern Nigerian Qur'ans? If yes, can we also identify sub-types of *sūdānī* that represent local variations? If not, what alternative labels can be suggested? And what about the relationship between the Bornuan/Nigerian typology of script and other West African ones? Should they all be subsumed under the overarching term *sūdānī*, or should different terms be used for different local variants?

The most ambitious attempt to identify the typologies of scripts observable in the Qur'anic manuscripts from the West African region, Nigeria included, has been made by Constant Hamès. In a path-breaking study based on the analysis of calligraphic Qur'ans originating from different Sahelian countries (from Mauritania in the West to Chad in the East), Hamès has suggested that it is possible to identify relatively clear regional sub-types of Arabic script.[7] A later taxonomy of the scripts displayed by the manuscripts (in this case, mainly non-Qur'anic) included in a French collection originating from Mali, has been proposed by Mauro Nobili,[8] who has followed Hamès' methodology while, at the same time, refining the typologies that had been proposed by the latter, at least as far as the scripts of the western Sahel are concerned.

For the Nigerian case, in a set of partly co-authored contributions,[9] Mauro Nobili and I have advanced the argument that the Arabic scripts of the Lake Chad region constitute a peculiar tradition that is relatively independent of the rest of the Sahel and that, in turn, displays two main stylistic variants: the first, more conservative, peculiar to Borno; the second, more innovative in the aesthetics but firmly rooted in the former in palaeographic terms, peculiar to Kano. The script family of the Lake Chad region displayed by the Nigerian Qur'ans should thus, in our opinion, be labelled as 'Central Sudanic', and its two main stylistic variants respectively as the *barnāwī* and *kanawī* styles. In the 2013 instalment of the above mentioned paper, we also proposed a positive re-evaluation, along with a partial re-assessment, of Bivar's theory about the

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6 Blair 2008.

7 Hamès 2009.

8 Nobili 2011.

9 Brigaglia 2011; Brigaglia and Nobili 2013.

historical origins of the Nigerian script, suggesting that the latter's core intuition about the antiquity of the origins of the *barnāwī* is in fact supported by strong palaeographic evidence.

Besides the script, other aspects of the Nigerian Qur'anic manuscript tradition have been the object of in-depth studies. Dmitry Bondarev's works on the non-Qur'anic textual elements found in the Bornuan Qur'ans[10] have provided original answers to a set of questions related to the origins of the local exegetical tradition and to its sources. Bondarev's conclusions – arrived at by tracing back aspects of the Bornuan Qur'anic culture to a time that well pre-dates the sixteenth century – indirectly reinforce the hypothesis that the Bornuan script, too, might be older than Stanley and Blair would concede.

The textual and non-textual decorative elements of the Qur'anic tradition of Yorubaland in southwestern Nigeria, which largely overlaps with its northern (Borno and Kano) counterpart, have also been the object of an original study by Ismaheel A. Jimoh.[11]

Parallel to the above developments, which are all related to the graphic aspects (script; non-Qur'anic textual elements; decorations) of the manuscripts, their material study has also received a decisive impetus during the last ten years, thanks to the publication of a number of detailed studies by Michaelle Biddle on inks,[12] paper,[13] and watermarks.[14] Brief holistic descriptions of both textual and non-textual elements of the Qur'anic calligraphic tradition of northern Nigeria have also been occasionally attempted.[15]

Most of the above studies address the northern Nigerian Qur'ans as anonymous representatives of a collective calligraphic tradition, rather than as fragments of a complex history defined by both stability and change. The initiative of individual calligraphers in response to the circumstances of a specific age (society, technology, market demand) are not, thus, given due recognition. This was largely inevitable: as the vast majority of Qur'anic manuscripts from the region are not dated nor signed by a scribe, the identification of individual hands and with them, of specific historical trajectories within the tradition in any given period, is difficult if not impossible. Thus, the effort to identify

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10 Bondarev 2006; Bondarev 2014.

11 Jimoh 2010.

12 Biddle 2011.

13 Biddle 2017.

14 Biddle 2018.

15 Brockett 1987; Mutai and Brigaglia 2017. See also Dmitry Bondarev's documentary 'Borno Calligraphy: Creating Hand-Written Qur'an in Northeastern Nigeria' (<https://www.oa.uni-hamburg.de/bildung/multimedia/kalligraphie-borno.html>; accessed on 20 August 2020).

elements of innovation and transformation and to raise questions related to the circumstances that prompted such changes has inevitably remained a secondary concern for researchers.

A significant exception is a recent article by Mustapha H. Kurfi,[16] which vividly describes the career of *Sharu* Mustapha Gabari, a son of the celebrated Kano calligrapher Sharif Bala Gabari (d. 2014)[17] and the founder of the Institute of Calligraphic and Geometric Designs, the first in Nigeria devoted to the formal teaching of Arabic calligraphy. In the light of Kurfi's analysis, Mustapha Gabari appears as an individual artist with a pronounced personal agency, and his career as being as much rooted in a living calligraphic tradition as responsive to technological innovation and motivated by a conscious effort towards aesthetic refinement.

Extending the scope of the enquiry to several calligraphers and to a longer historical timeline compared to the one covered by Kurfi, the core sections of this chapter will establish a partial chronology of twentieth-century Nigerian printed Qur'ans. My chronology is based on observations made on over thirty different lithographic editions penned by more than a dozen different calligraphers, that I have seen in the libraries of private owners or purchased over the years from the bookshops of the Kurmi market of Kano. The description below, however, will be restricted to a selection of editions written by ten different calligraphers.

In outlining such chronology, my underlying goal is to assess the impact of the development of the printing industry on a living calligraphic tradition. This tradition is intimately engrained in the religious networks constituted by the *gardawa* (senior Qur'anic students) and *alaramma*-s (those who have fully memorized the Qur'an). My study, therefore, requires a different methodology than the one used by Kurfi in his study of Mustapha Gabari. The latter, in fact, is an artist who has tried to detach the aesthetic of the Nigerian Arabic calligraphy from the Qur'an and to transform it into 'pure arts', a process Kurfi calls the 'desacralization' of calligraphy.[18] The printed editions of the Qur'an that will be the object of my historical overview, on the contrary, are representative of an aesthetic that is inextricably linked to the didactic and ritual functions that the product of the calligrapher's art is ultimately intended for. The calligraphic arts that this paper will describe, thus, are primarily shaped by the aesthetic conventions and the technical requirements of the *gardawa* and *alaramma*-s who

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16 Kurfi 2017.

17 Sharif Bala Gabari is discussed below, p. 310–312.

18 Kurfi 2017, 40.

engage in a life-long journey dedicated to the perfect memorization and the constant recitation of the Qur'an. Such conventions and requirements delineate the artistic horizon of the calligrapher by encouraging certain types of innovations and restraining others: the latter, thus, can only be understood in the light of the former. All the calligraphers, in fact, have emerged from the traditional networks of Qur'anic schools and have developed their skills as an extension of their training in Qur'anic memorization. Even more importantly, *gardawa* and *alaramma*-s are also the primary market the Qur'ans penned by the Nigerian calligraphers are aimed at. The success, or lack thereof, of any new edition of the Qur'an, is due not only to the abstract beauty of the hand of the scribe who copied it (which remains, of course, a factor), but also to the degree to which the new item appears to its potential buyers as more or less suitable for the functional needs of the day-to-day teaching, memorization and devotional reading of the Qur'an, practiced according to the conventions of *gardawa* and *alaramma*-s.

Keeping this in mind, the first two sections of the chapter will integrate an ethnographic description of the lives and the learning practices of the (mainly Borno-trained) *gardawa* and *alaramma*-s, with a historical-biographical account of the calligraphers of early twentieth-century Kano.[19]

3 The context: Qur'anic studies in Borno

According to most oral accounts, in the first two decades of the twentieth century there were only a few specialists of the Qur'an in Hausaland who had achieved regional reputation. In Sokoto, the local scholarly community held onto the symbolic prestige inherited from the charismatic legacy of the Ɗan Fodio jihad with its all-round engagement with the *uṣūl* (theoretical foundations

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19 In order to work on this chapter, I originally intended to supplement the data sparsely collected over the years with some structured interviews to calligraphers and printers. Having been prevented from travel to Nigeria by the Corona virus pandemic, I have had to rely on the assistance of Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz (both at Bayero University Kano), who generously agreed to conduct interviews on my behalf. Their assistance, without which I would have not been able to complete this chapter, is hereby thankfully acknowledged. I also wish to thank Abdulaleem Somers and Prof. Abdulkader Tayob (University of Cape Town) for generously scanning and sending the images of several of the lithographed editions of the Qur'an of my collection, preserved in my archive at the University of Cape Town, to which I was unable to have physical access.

of the classical Islamic disciplines) and with its practical concern for Islamic administrative law. In Kano, the religious scholars had been renowned for quite some time for their stern dedication to the transmission of a tight corpus of derivative Mālikī jurisprudence, largely thanks to the prestige of a family-run school based in the Madabo quarters, whose students were known as the *Madabawa*.[20] The scholars of Zaria, for their part, had a reputation for the study of Arabic grammar and literature, as well as (mainly Tijānī) Sufism: the most important Nigerian authors of Arabic Sufi poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were, unsurprisingly, based there.[21]

But in order to seriously specialize in the Qur'an, any ambitious student was required to leave Hausaland and travel to Borno, whose *tsangayu* (sing. *tsangaya*), often rural-based Qur'anic schools, had a centuries-old reputation in the field.[22] Training in a Bornuan *tsangaya,* for a *gardi* (senior Qur'anic student) aiming at achieving perfect memorization, was a daunting enterprise that required an exclusive commitment, forcing him to leave aside, or at least to reserve a marginal space for, the study of the non-Qur'anic curriculum of Islamic studies for some time.

In a *tsangaya,* an average student would usually wake up at 3 a.m. to sit with his peers around the light of a wood fire (*gargari*).[23] After writing down a portion – normally one *thumn* (the eighth part of one sixtieth, *ḥizb,* of the Qur'an) – on his wooden tablet, and having the writing checked by his teacher, he would start reading the text over and over until 7.30 a.m., with a short interruption for the canonical dawn prayer. After two hours of rest and a breakfast provided by the teacher or by the community in the school's neighbourhood, he would leave the *tsangaya* at 10 a.m.; carrying his tablet under his arm, he would walk a long way to an improvised hut in the bush and spend the rest of the day in *iskali,* a time of complete isolation. In *iskali,* he would continue to work on his memorization until right before sunset, when he would return to the *tsangaya.* After the sunset prayer, he would sit with his peers for about an hour of *zaman*

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20 Chamberlin 1975, 84–127, 193–200; Hassan 1988.

21 Bala 2011.

22 Lavers 1971.

23 The following reconstruction merges information collected on separate interviews by author with Goni Yaƙubu Abdullahi Mai Kumsa (2012), a Bornuan Qur'anic teacher based in Ɗorayi, Kano; with Abdullahi Yusuf Chinade (August 2020), a *gardi* from Bauchi State who has studied in various *tsangaya* schools in Yobe State; and with Sadisu Salisu Idris, who has been a Qur'anic student in Kano. As the interviews were conducted in Hausa, I have retained the Hausa names for all the activities related to the daily life of a *gardi*. Kanuri, Fulfulde and Arabic names are also used, of course, in the various *tsangaya* schools across the country.

tilawa, a collective assembly dedicated to the recitation of the Qur'an from memory in a quick fashion, without looking at the tablet. After the night prayer and a simple supper, he would sit again around the fire to read his lesson over and over again on his tablet, until at least 11 p.m.

Following this system, every day a student would be able to recite a daily lesson of one or two *thumn*-s (corresponding to 1/480 or 1/240 of the full Qur'an) about three hundred times, writing it first without vowels and verse-markers, then a second time with the addition of these signs. In addition to that, he would also devote part of his daily routine to *takara,* the individual reading of the Qur'an from a complete manuscript, finishing in this fashion about one full Qur'anic recitation every day. Occasionally, he would also participate in night *musaffa* gatherings, wherein a group of senior students would be invited, in exchange for a customary gift in money or kind, to sit at somebody's house or at a local mosque for a collective reading of the Qur'an. During the *musaffa,* a manuscript (always kept unbound as per the local custom) would be divided into the pages composing separate *ḥizb*-s, and distributed among the participants, who would all read in turn from their sections, thus completing multiple full recitations of the Qur'an overnight.

Along with his studies, a *gardi* would also cumulate some knowledge of the *faḍā'il* (virtues) or *khawāṣṣ* (special therapeutic or apotropaic uses) of the various verses and Suras of the Qur'an, transmitted in virtually infinite varieties of recipes by the local scholars by drawing on the existing literature on the topic[24] supplemented by personal insights. They would annotate these recipes in a personal *kundi* (manuscript notebook of unbound leaves), and once fully established as scholars in their own right, they would use them to dispense healing, protection, or the fulfilment of the ordinary needs and desires of a client (someone's love; an easy pregnancy; the smooth delivery of a baby; sexual power; protection from robbers; increased memorization skills; success in business, etc.) as formulas written on a wooden tablet, washed off and drunk (*rubutun sha*), or as talismans (*hatimi*) written on paper and carried on the body as amulets (*laya*).

First only occasionally, and then more intensely as their studies would progress further, senior *gardawa* would also devote some of their time to special study sessions with a scholar who had specialised in the virtually infinite details of *harji,* a term that designates the statistics related to how many times each Arabic word appears in the Qur'an in each of the three possible desinences

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24 Hamès 2001.

of Arabic grammar, or in combination with other words, syntactic constructions or non-textual markers (verse markers, pause markers, five-verse markers etc.).

Through years of such daunting routine, cadenced by the alternation of times of *gargari, iskali, tilawa, musaffa* gatherings, special lessons on *faḍā'il* and *harji,* the Bornuan *tsangaya* system had turned generations of *alaramma*-s (simple memorizers of the Qur'an) into *gwani*-s (or *goni*-s*;* full-fledged experts in Qur'anic memorization) who, in turn, had established their own schools and trained more people.

In order to cater for the requirements of the public of *gardawa,* all the Qur'anic manuscripts from northern Nigeria, virtually without exception, display a set of decorative elements functionally designed to facilitate the *gardawa*'s practices of memorization and ritual reading, always according to the following scheme:

–   *Aya* (verse marker). Three-circular intra-textual marker in red contour and yellow filling. It separates each verse of the Qur'an from the following one. Verses are not numbered.
–   *Kumsa* (five-verse marker). An intra-textual marker in the form of an irregular circle, flattened at the bottom, in black contour and red filling, with a yellow dot standing on a vertical hook. It separates each group of five verses from any following one.
–   *Kuri* (ten-verse marker). An intra-textual marker in the form of two concentric circles, in black contours filled with red and/or yellow dots. It separates each group of ten verses from any following one.
–   *Hizbi* (*ḥizb* marker). A big extra-textual marker made of concentric circles, in black contours and filled with geometric designs in red, yellow and green inks. It appears on the margins of the text to signal the beginning of every sixtieth part of the Qur'an. In each Qur'an, 60 *hizbi* markers are present, and each is different from the others.
–   *Sumuni* (eighth-of-*ḥizb* marker). A relatively simple extra-textual marker in the form of a pattern of thin lines in red ink that surround the letter of the Arabic alphabet *thā'*. It appears on the margins of the text to signal the beginning of an eighth part of a *ḥizb*.
–   *Rubu'i(n hizbi)* (fourth-of-*ḥizb* marker). A relatively simple extra-textual marker in the form of a pattern of thin lines in red ink that surround the letter of the Arabic alphabet *bā'*. It appears on the margins of the text to signal the beginning of a fourth part of a *ḥizb*.
–   *Nusufi* (half-of-*ḥizb* marker). A relatively simple extra-textual marker in the form of a pattern of thin lines in red ink that surround the letter of the

Arabic alphabet *nūn*. It appears on the margins of the text to signal the beginning of a half of a *ḥizb*.

– *Subu'i(n kur'ani)* (seventh-of-the-Qur'an marker). A big extra-textual marker in the form of a circle or, alternatively, two partly overlapping circles, filled with geometric designs in various colours. It is similar to the *hizbi* marker, but usually bigger in size and recognisable by the presence of the Arabic word *sub'*. It appears on the margins of the text to signal the beginning of a seventh part of the whole Qur'an. Six of such signs are found in each Nigerian Qur'an, each different from the others.

– *Rubu'i(n kur'ani)* (fourth-of-the-Qur'an marker). The biggest decorative extra-textual marker, covering half-page to one page of any Nigerian Qur'an. It appears at the beginning of every fourth part of the Qur'an, in the form of a colourful rectangular design (*zayyana*) created by interweaving patterns. Four of such decorations are found in each Nigerian Qur'an, each different from the others.

– *Sajda* (prostration marker). Similar in size and shape to the *subu'i,* this extra-textual marker signals the requirement of a ritual prostration when the reader reaches specific verses during the recitation of the Qur'an. According to the Māliki school followed in Nigeria, the required prostrations are eleven, so there will be eleven *sajda* markers in every Nigerian Qur'an.

Any given *gwani* would be qualified to write a calligraphic copy of the Qur'an with all the above markers at the right place; but not all of them would be gifted with a hand of equal regularity and beauty. Moreover, *gwani*-s would have their internal hierarchies of knowledge: some, after acquiring the title, would proceed to search for further specialization in the various canonical readings (*qirā'āt*) and interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'an, eventually acquiring the additional honorific title of *gangaran;* some of the *gangaran,* in turn, would combine the deep Qur'anic knowledge provided by years of intensive study in the *tsangaya* system with a full mastery of the Islamic disciplines (jurisprudence, theology, etc.) taught in separate, and usually urban-based, circles of learning. Only a few of the latter would exist at any given age, and they would be known by the further honorific title of *tilo*.

4 The forerunners: Kano calligraphers in the early twentieth century

In the 1920s, only about six *gwani*-s of repute were known to be teaching in Kano,[25] and all of them were either Bornuans or Borno-trained. This is the case, for instance, of Goni Hamidu (d. 1950), a Bornuan Shuwa Arab who had settled in Kano between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, who was considered as a *gangaran*. He is remembered, in particular, as the first to introduce the teaching of all Qur'anic canonical readings – in addition to the reading of Nāfiʿ in the transmission of Warsh that was traditionally considered as the norm in the region – in the Islamic curriculum of Kano city. Among his many students was a man called Rabiu (Muḥammad al-Rābiʿ b. Yūnus b. al-Ḥasan al-Sayāwī) Ɗantiṅki, who gradually emerged as the foremost calligrapher of Kano of the first half of the twentieth century.[26]

Born in 1894 in Tiṅki (a village near Saye, north of Kano), Rabiu had memorized the Qur'an in his early teens and started to teach in his father's school when he heard the news of the visit in Hausaland of a Malian scholar known as Malam Kunta.[27] He then asked his father's permission to attach himself to the latter. After following Malam Kunta for some time in his peregrinations, Rabiu eventually settled in Kano, where he continued to study under other scholars, including the aforementioned Goni Hamidu, the visiting Mauritanian scholar Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Walātī, and Abubakar Mijinyawa (d. 1946),[28] who was one of the major Kano-based Sufi scholars of his time.

Mijinyawa had emerged as the main reference in Sufi studies for the *Salgawa,* a dynamic network formed in Kano by the students of Muhammad Salga (d. 1938).[29] Strong of a multi-disciplinary training in jurisprudence, Arabic literature and Sufism, the Salgawa were harshly critical of their Madabo counterparts (*Madabawa*, mentioned earlier) for what they believed to be a narrow-minded, quasi-devotional focus on the memorization of the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl b. Isḥāq and of a few selected commentaries of it, and for their simultaneous neglect of other fields of Islamic knowledge. The shared affiliation to the Tijāniyya Sufi order of both the Madabawa and the Salgawa did not prevent the

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25 Aminu Ayyuba, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan, Kano, 12 Aug. 2020.
26 Rābiʿ 2010, 44–45.
27 Rābiʿ 2010, 41.
28 See Hunwick 1996, 269–271.
29 On the Salgawa, see Adam 2014.

Islamic scholarly community of Kano from being polarized by the polemics between the two rival networks.

Gradually the Salgawa were able to establish a stronger foothold in Kano and beyond. In particular, their all-round project of revival of Islamic knowledge found resonance in, and merged with, the revival of gnostic Sufism promoted by the Senegalese Tijānī leader Ibrāhīm Niasse (d. 1975), whose 'Tijānī flood' (*fayḍa*)[30] had reached Kano in the late 1930s through the mediation of Emir Abdullahi Bayero (rul. 1926–1953), and who successively visited Nigeria personally in the mid-1940s. The Kano Salgawa affiliated to Niasse's global *Fayḍa* movement, prompting other Tijānī circles based in other areas of Nigeria, within and outside Hausaland, to follow suit. The *Fayḍa* revival profoundly impacted the Islamic field of Nigeria, its primary manifestations being a boom of Islamic literature,[31] in particular poetry, and of oral session of Qur'anic exegesis[32] that had little precedence in the region. By attaching himself to the Salgawa and, via them, to the *Fayḍa,* a Qur'anic scholar of repute like Rabiu Ɗantiŋƙi[33] was providing the network with an additional surplus of symbolic capital. It also provided him, conversely, with local and international patronage that would be of great importance in his career, as well as in that of his offspring. Ɗantiŋƙi died in 1952, in Mali, while on his way back from a visit to Kaolack, Senegal, where he had paid a visit to Ibrāhīm Niasse.[34]

Besides authoring twenty-six books and poems on various subjects[35] (his *magnum opus* being a versification of over 1,000 verses on the differences between the various canonical readings of the Qur'an), throughout his career Rabiu Ɗantiŋƙi wrote by his hand a number of copies of the Qur'an that range, according to different estimates, between 50 and 100, for a variety of individual clients.[36] None of Ɗantiŋƙi's handwritten Qur'ans was published during his life, but several posthumous editions were later produced on the initiative of his sons. One of the latter, Isiyaƙa Rabiu (1925–2018), was himself a Borno-trained Qur'anic scholar; the initiator of one of the biggest holding companies in northern Nigeria; and, from the early 1990s until his death, the representative (*khalīfa*) of the Niasse family in Nigeria. Before his death, Isiyaƙa Rabiu

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30 Seesemann 2011.

31 Brigaglia 2014.

32 Brigaglia 2009.

33 Rabiu's *silsila* in the Qur'an went back to Imam Warsh via only thirteen names, the latest degrees in the *silsila* being all Bornuan scholars (Rābiʿ 2010, 59).

34 Rābiʿ 2010, 62.

35 Listed in Rābiʿ 2010, 48–54.

36 Balarabe Isiyaƙa Rabiu, interviewed by Dahir Lawan Muaz, Kano, 8 September 2020.

managed to gather about 30 copies of the Qur'an in the handwriting of his father, buying them back from various owners in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. These manuscripts are preserved today in the family's library.

Rabiu Ɗantinƙi must have begun receiving requests to write calligraphic copies of the Qur'an at a very young age. One published copy, in fact, bears 1339 AH (1920 CE) as the date of the original manuscript, while a recent re-print (third edition) of one of his earliest copies was published in 2014 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of its writing. The latter copy (Fig. 1), published when the calligrapher was only twenty, already displays some of the reasons that would make the handwriting of Ɗantinƙi so popular. The writing style is elegant and consistent, devoid of the irregularities that characterise most of the Qur'anic manuscripts from Kano of the same period (see, for an average example, Fig. 2), but the script maintains the characteristic thickness of the *kanawī*. The text has a luminosity that is rare to see in the copies from the same period, whose characteristic, earthy dimness (due to the natural ingredients of the inks as well as to the quality of the paper), is undoubtedly charming but makes them, on the whole, less readable than Ɗantinƙi's (see, again, Fig. 2).

Colours are used consistently with the established tradition: black for the consonantal text and the contours of the circular *ḥizb* markers observable on the right side of Fig. 1; red for the vowels, for the tri-circular contour of the verse marker, and for all non-Qur'anic textual elements (like titles of Suras and marginal notes); yellow for the letter *hamza* and for the filling of the verse markers; green for the *hamzat al-waṣl*. Red and yellow – in this case, for some reason, no green – are used for the internal decoration of the circular *ḥizb* markers. Besides being particularly bright in their tonality,[37] the inks of different colour rarely overlap with each other as can be often observed in other manuscripts, and this enhances the overall luminosity and clarity of the text. The *sajda* and *subu'i* markers are particularly beautiful (Fig. 3).

The layout (in this and in other Qur'anic manuscripts penned by Ɗantinƙi that I have observed through the years) has a margin that is much wider than usual, but that is only occasionally interspersed with annotations of the *harji* genre,[38] leaving a huge space for the user to add all the *harji* notes of his liking. The result is a heavy (in this case, almost 800 folios) and probably very

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37 Was the calligrapher using chemical additives to his inks to increase the brightness of the natural ingredients traditionally used by the local scribes? Or was the colours' brightness artificially enhanced at the time of printing (2014)? So far, I have not been able to answer these questions.

38 See above in this article, p. 297–298.

expensive manuscript; but one that, with time, could become an even more treasurable item to its owner, for he could use the broad margins to add all the *harji* notes that he would progressively gather during years of training and research.

5 The 'printed manuscripts' of Kano

The affirmation of the *Fayḍa Tijāniyya* network in Kano and the consequent boom in the production of Islamic literature, were closely intertwined with the economic growth of Kano during the late colonial and early postcolonial times.[39] The prosperity of colonial Kano was due to its position in the heart of the commercial routes that linked the north and the south of the country in the service of export farming, which was the core of the colonial economy of Nigeria. Commercial crops (cotton, groundnuts) produced by northern farmers were stocked by Kano-based traders before being transported to the harbour of Lagos and from here, exported abroad: the famous colonial pictures of Kano's 'groundnut pyramids' are iconic images of this era. During the late colonial and early postcolonial ages, however (more precisely, between the 1950s and the early 1980s), the Kano economy also experienced the development of a relatively important manufacturing and industrial sector:[40] weaving, spinning, food processing and confectionery, steel, plastic, concrete, chemicals and, for what concerns us directly, the printing industry.

The history of the Islamic printing industry in Kano has been reconstructed in detail by Sani Yakubu Adam.[41] In its first phase, the success of this industry was based on the use of lithographic techniques (plate lithography and offset lithography). The typesetting of Arabic books, in fact, was only possible in Oriental (*naskhī*) and Maghribī Arabic fonts. For the Central Sudanic script, which was the only one the local public was familiar with, printing was only possible through the lithographic reproduction of exemplars penned by local scribes.

The first attempts to print the Qur'an from handwritten samples copied in the local script were made in the early to mid-1950s. At that time, the Kano Government Press (previously Kano Native Authority Press) already possessed tools

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39 See Tahir 1977.
40 Bashir 1989.
41 See Sani Y. Adam's chapter included in this volume. For more details, see Adam's PhD dissertation (Adam 2022).

for offset printing;[42] however, for some reason the earliest prints were apparently made in Zaria, on behalf of Kano publishers and from manuscript samples written by Kano scribes, by NORLA (Northern Regional Literature Agency), which was active in the period 1953–1959. According to oral accounts, publishers Malam Kabo Sanka and Muhammad Ɗanjinjiri (both from Kano, and both closely associated to the Salgawa/*Fayḍa* network) published two such editions of the Qur'an in the local script.[43]

It is easy to imagine the success that such editions had in the local market. Modern education (*boko*) had still a very limited reach in northern Nigeria: virtually all Muslim children attended a Qur'anic school, and most Qur'anic schools probably purchased several copies of these, for the time pioneering, items. As mentioned by oral accounts, however, such early prints were only partial (usually only the final *ḥizb*-s containing the shortest Suras) and in grey scale. While they could satisfy the demand of the schools, their appeal to the more specialized consumer group of senior *gardawa, alaramma*-s and accomplished scholars was limited. Handwritten calligraphic volumes that featured the four traditional colours, therefore, continued to be, for several more years, the most common form in which the Qur'an would enter northern Nigerian homes.

It was only the appearance of the first integral, colour-print, offset editions, that radically transformed the market ushering in a new phase in the history of the Qur'anic calligraphy of Nigeria. The first such colour editions appeared in the mid-1950s. Copied by a scribe known as Malam Kyauta and printed by NORLA, it was published by Abdullahi Yassar (another one of the many book-traders associated with the Salgawa/*Fayḍa* network) with the financial sponsorship of Isiyaƙa, son of Rabiu Ɗantinƙi.

For reasons that I have not been able to ascertain, the market was not impacted by the Yassar edition as massively as it would be, shortly later, by a similar edition published by the entrepreneur Sanusi Ɗantata (d. 1997). Perhaps, the Yassar edition was printed in a limited number of copies and could not satisfy the demand of the market; or perhaps, due to the low quality of the paper used, the final outcome was less memorable than the Ɗantata edition.[44]

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42 Furniss 1984, 442.

43 Audu Tsakuwa, an elderly man who repairs and sells second-hand books in the Islamic books section ('*Yan littafi*) of the Kurmi market of Kano, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 15 August 2020.

44 When exactly did the first edition of the Ɗantata Qur'an see the light? As several editions published over the years (but in most cases, undated) still circulate in Kano, and as oral sources provided contradictory answers to this question, I have not been able to identify an

The Ɗantata family was based in the Koƙi ward of Kano city, which also hosted one of the biggest Tijāni communities of the city. Sanusi was a son of the famous tycoon of the kolanut trade Alhassan Ɗantata (d. 1955) and a grandfather of Aliko Ɗangote, who was destined to become the most successful businessman of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Africa.

The Qur'an published by Sanusi Ɗantata came to be known as *Mai Belt,* because the leather strip that was traditionally used to tie the cover that enclosed the unbound pages of any Nigerian Qur'anic manuscript had been substituted by a more modern-looking plastic band (a 'belt') with a metal clip. While displaying a script in the traditional style and penned by a scribe who had emerged out of the local circles of *gardawa* and *alaramma*-s, the *Mai Belt,* with its innovative clipped band, perfectly encapsulated early Islamic modernity in Nigeria, of which it can be considered an iconic image.

As all local Qur'anic manuscripts (including those written by Rabiu Ɗantinƙi in the previous decades), the *Mai Belt* does not feature the name of the calligrapher. The original manuscript, we learn from oral sources, was penned by Mahmud Ɗan Baballe.[45] Born from a Tijāni family of Kano, Ɗan Baballe had studied the Qur'an, needless to say, in Borno.[46] Back from his studies, he had settled in his native Koƙi ward, close to the Ɗantata house, and attached himself to a local Qur'anic scholar known as Gwani na-Dudu, while also engaging in long-distance kolanut trade with Ghana. As soon as his writing skills had started being appreciated in local Qur'anic circles, he was commissioned by Alhassan Ɗantata to write three Qur'anic manuscripts for his sons, one of whom was Sanusi. Several years later, witnessing the growing demand for colour-printed Qur'ans in the local hand after the publication of the Yassar colour edition, Sanusi took his manuscript to London and had thousands of lithographed copies made, to which he added a cover page that featured his name as the publisher, an index of Suras (written in a different hand than the text of the

exact date for the first edition. Most sources suggest that it was in the late 1950s, shortly before Independence, probably 1959. A son of the calligrapher who penned the manuscript, however (interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 30 August 2020), remembers the printing to have occurred much earlier, in the early 1950s, during the last years of Emir Abdullahi Bayero's rule.

45 In a previous publication (Brigaglia 2011, 62), I had wrongly indicated the name of the calligrapher who had penned the *Mai Belt* as Hassan Inuwa. As I have later verified, however, the latter name appears on the cover page of a later edition of the *Mai Belt* as the new publisher (with permission from Sanusi Ɗantata), and not as the scribe.

46 Sule na-Lala, son of Ɗan Baballe, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, 30 August 2020.

Qur'an, so probably added by another scribe in the absence of Ɗan Baballe), a simple carton cover, and the clipped plastic band. The *Mai Belt* displays a measured writing, slightly thinner than Ɗantinƙi's, while the colours are similarly bright (see Fig. 4). The margins are minimal, so the volume comes in less than 300 folios, containing the printing cost of a book that, because of the high-quality paper used, was quite expensive in the market, being sold at 2 pounds a copy. Marginal notes (of the *harji* or *faḍā'il* type) are absent. Besides the clipped belt and the Sura index, it also displays what was, for the time, another remarkable innovation, page numbering, printed in Arabic numerals on top of each page: these were certainly absent in the original manuscript and were added at the time of printing to increase the marketability of the final product.

The publication of the *Mai Belt* provoked a domino effect in the world of Kano calligraphers and in the local printing industry. First, the publishers, who were closely associated with the families of the religious scholars, felt threatened by the fact that a commercial enterprise belonging to an outsider like Ɗantata was stepping into 'their' business, and that it was doing so in such a successful way. At the time, the Kano publishers had already started to rely massively on offset lithographic printing to supply the market with copies of the writings of the local scholars, as well as of a wide range of classical works (*Akhḍarī, 'Ashmāwī, Risāla, Sanūsiyya,* etc.) studied in the local Islamic circles. Their concern, however, was that all the printing presses that were active in Kano (Oluseyi, Adebola, Jola-Ade) were owned by southern Yoruba entrepreneurs who were either non-Muslims themselves, or hired non-Muslim workers: ritually 'impure' hands would, thus, handle pages that contained sacred texts.[47] For this reason, most Muslim publishers had been reluctant to publish any edition of the Qur'an, which would have amplified the problem of the perceived impurity of the printing presses. With the success of the Yassar edition and even more so, of the Ɗantata edition, however, they were forced to step in, either by finding alternative printers in Egypt, or by acquiring the necessary tools and skills for offset lithographic printing. Second, when several publishers followed in the footsteps of Ɗantata and issued more lithographed editions of the Qur'an (each penned by a different hand, and each displaying some original feature that rendered it unique), the competition between calligraphers was enhanced. By making the old art of Nigerian calligraphy available to a wider public in the form of affordable commercial items, lithographic printing prompted the calligraphers to engage in an unprecedented search of technical and aesthetic refinement and innovation. The position of the calligraphers in the local book cycle, far from being rendered irrelevant, was thus

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47 See the contribution by Sani Y. Adam in this volume.

enhanced by the growth of the printing industry. Third, calligraphers, printers and publishers immediately realised that, with their business taking on a new dimension, a set of more formal rules that determined the rights and duties of the three categories had to be established. Although Ɗan Baballe, in fact, was generously patronized by Ɗantata (the calligrapher's son, an elderly man, still lives with his family in the house the businessman built for his father in Koƙi), the absence of any mention of the calligrapher on the cover page of the *Mai Belt* was a reason for concern. If publishers wanted to hold full copyright over the final product, they had to formally acknowledge the calligrapher and pay him a higher salary. As a result, most of the subsequent editions of the Qur'an began featuring the calligrapher's name on the cover page.

One of the calligraphers who emerged in this period was Sharif Bala Zaitawa (*c.* 1924–2011), who became the favourite scribe of publisher Abdullahi Yassar. During his life, Zaitawa penned about 60 handwritten Qur'ans, at least four of which were published by Abdullahi Yassar and one, by publisher Sani Adamu.[48] According to oral sources,[49] the main specificity of Zaitawa's hand was that it was chameleonic enough to imitate the hand of any of his peers. A simple observation of two of the editions in his handwriting lends credibility to this anecdote: the first (1960; Fig. 5) has some resemblance to Rabiu Ɗantinƙi's, while the second (undated; Fig. 6) is very reminiscent of the handwriting of Ɗan Baballe. Besides being printed in beautiful colours (with a teal green tonality that adds a touch of originality), the 1960 edition also displays another interesting innovation, page numbering in Latin numerals; the undated edition, which is probably later, has page numbering in both Arabic and Latin numerals.

During the same years, various sons of Rabiu Ɗantinƙi sponsored new lithographed editions, which were probably aimed at supplying the massive network of Qur'anic schools they inherited from their father. Bala Rabiu Ɗantinƙi, for instance, is mentioned as the publisher on the cover page of one of the many re-editions of the *Mai Belt*, while a Qur'an penned by calligrapher Abubakar Ɗan Bukka (Fig. 7), was published in 1962 with the sponsorship of Zubayr Rabiu Ɗantinƙi. No information on the printer is provided on the cover page of this edition, but the printing was probably made in Egypt.[50] I have not been able to

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48 Abba Bala Zaitawa, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 28 September 2020.
49 Abba Bala Zaitawa, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 28 September 2020.
50 Audu Tsakuwa, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 15 August 2020.

gather any information about Ɗan Bukka. Perhaps, he was a student of the publisher's father or perhaps, an associate or teacher of his, whose memory the Ɗantinƙi family wanted to celebrate.

The Ɗan Bukka Qur'an displays some outstanding decorative patterns like the *sub'* marker that can be observed on Fig. 7. The writing style is interestingly angular, displaying a clear example of the alternation of thick horizontal strokes and thin vertical strokes that was (or was becoming?) characteristic of many of the scribes of Kano if compared to their Bornuan counterparts. It also displays some *harji* marginal notes here and there. The colours (red and yellow only) appear only on the *hamza,* on the verse-marker, on the five-verse marker and on the decorative patterns, while they are absent from the vowels, the Sura titles and the marginal notes, all of which appear in black. Moreover, colours appear as rather irregular spots of ink: they were seemingly added mechanically, at the time of printing, either on an original that was devoid of colours, or upon a grey scale reproduction of the original manuscript. The print is made on the thick, dull paper that was normally used, until fairly recent times, by scribes for handwritten books: the result is a very heavy and probably expensive volume.

With the boom of lithographic printing in full bloom, and with an increasing concern about non-Muslim workers of the Kano presses handling Islamic texts, the Senegalese Ibrāhīm Niasse advised his Nigerian followers about the necessity of establishing a Muslim (and Tijāni) printing press. This eventually saw the light in 1964 as *Maɗaba'ar 'Yan Kasa* (Northern Maktabat Printing Press, NMPP),[51] owned in partnership by the scholars of the Salgawa network. Another privately owned Muslim press emerged one year later (1965); this too, however, was indirectly associated with the Salgawa network, showing the extent of the control the latter exercised over the Islamic book market. It was owned by Ayyuba Sani Magoga, a bookseller hailing from the Madabo quarters and related by family ties to the Madabawa, but whose religious affiliation had later shifted to the latter's 'rivals', the Salgawa.[52]

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[51] Furniss 1984, 444. See also Adam, infra, p. 345.

[52] Barhama Ayyuba Magoga, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 13 August 2020. Magoga's change of affiliation was signaled by his marriage to a daughter of Shaykh Tijjani Usman (d. 1970), one of the most prominent exponents of the Salgawa. It has to be noted that by the early 1960s, all the main publishers of Kano (Abdullahi Yassar, Sani Adamu, Zakari Salga, Muhammad Ɗanjinjiri), just like Magoga, were associated with the Salgawa scholars. While Magoga established his own press, however, the others continued to prefer relying on the services of local or international (usually Egyptian) presses instead of establishing independent prints.

Ayyuba Magoga's favourite scribe was a man called Salisu (Muḥammad al-Thālith) Inuwa Kore. Magoga published at least three editions of the Qur'an in the handwriting of the latter.[53] The two copies in Kore's handwriting that I have been able to observe, however, were released by other publishers: by Sani Adamu & Hassan Inuwa the first (Figs 8 and 9); by Sharif Bala Gabari the second (Fig. 10). Especially in the latter edition, the writing style of Salisu Kore is characterized by thick strokes, elongated horizontal lines, and an increased angularity of the script if compared to any of the examples shown so far. Was Salisu Kore under the influence of his publisher, Sharif Bala Gabari, who was also a calligrapher, and whose writing became legendary for maximizing angularity to achieve a 'Kufic' vintage look? Or was it vice versa? Both answers might be true at the same time: as a calligrapher, Gabari might have drawn some inspiration from the style of Salisu Kore; and as a publisher, he probably encouraged his calligrapher to maximize the angularity of the script to make it more appealing.

In both cases, the paper is of an ordinary, thin quality, the volumes are light in weight and the final product was probably inexpensive, making it accessible to the students of the Qur'anic schools. The presence of many *harji* annotations on the margins certainly enhanced the popularity of this edition for the public of *gardawa*. From the notes appearing on the page displayed as Fig. 9, for instance, a Nigerian *gardi* using this edition to rehearse his memorisation, would have learnt that the combination of letters *Alif-lām-mīm* appears in the Quran six times; that the expression *ūlā'ika humu'l-mufliḥūn* is a singular occurrence (*ḥarfī*); that a word starting by the letter *khā'* follows the five-verse marker only on five occurrences in the Qur'an; that the word *yukhdaʿūn*, in the passive form, occurs three times; and that the word *ghishāwa* in the indefinite nominative appears only on one occasion (*ḥarfī*) while its corresponding accusative appears once in another place in the Qur'an.

A curious detail is that both these editions feature an overwhelming presence of the colour green (traditionally used in much lesser doses than red and yellow) in the decorations. Salisu owed his surname, Kore, to the fact that he was born in a village by this name. However, the word *kore* also means 'green' in Hausa. At a time when calligraphers and publishers were competing to market 'their' edition of the Qur'an, it is possible that the idea of playing with the coincidence between the calligrapher's surname and the Hausa word for the colour 'green', might have been devised by the calligrapher (or perhaps, by his publishers) as a means to make his 'green Qur'ans' more recognizable and memorable.

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53 Barhama Ayyuba Magoga, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 13 August 2020.

6 Sharif Bala Gabari's classics

As I have mentioned above, by the early 1960s the custom of including a mention of the calligrapher's name on the cover page of any new edition of the Qur'an was well established. All the Kano calligraphers, however, were still waged workers, paid by the publisher a stipulated sum for the production of any new calligraphic copy. I was not able to establish the average wage of a Nigerian calligrapher in the 1960s; but considering the income that could be generated by any new published edition (editions that targeted the Qur'anic schools, like the ones penned by Zaitawa and Kore, could easily sell over 100,000 copies), many calligraphers felt that they were not being given their due. This persuaded one of them, Sharif Bala Gabari, that it was time for calligraphers to bypass the mediation of the established publishers and take full control of the cycle of Qur'an writing, printing, publishing and marketing.

Sharif Bala was born in 1930 from a family that claimed descent from the North African reformer Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī (d. 1505), who visited Kano towards the end of the fifteenth century and founded a lineage of Muslim scholars and *shurafāʾ* (descendants of the Prophetic household). Sharif Bala's writing abilities were originally nurtured by assisting his father, a Qur'anic teacher, in the writing of Qur'anic verses on wooden slates to be given as *rubutun sha* (ink potions to be drunk as healing) to the family's religious clientele.[54] After memorising the Qur'an in his early teens, he wrote his first full copy of the Qur'an at age fifteen or, according to other narratives, twenty. Thereafter, as customary, he started to lend his services to various Sufi scholars and religious poets of Kano, penning copies of their writings to be reproduced as offset lithographic publications. In the early days of his career, he worked as a scribe for many Tijāni scholars. But unlike most of the calligraphers and publishers mentioned thus far in this chapter, Bala was not a Tijāni. Rather, he was a student of Qādiri scholars Nasiru Kabara (d. 1996) and Yusuf Makwarari (d. 2000). The former was the initiator of a Sufi revival that, while not comparable to the *Fayḍa Tijāniyya* in terms of its international reach, was its Qādiri equivalent as far as the northern Nigerian arena was concerned.[55] And parallel to what Ibrāhīm Niasse had done when he had pushed the Salgawa to take

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54 Jibril 2018, 22.
55 The following reconstruction is based on information I collected during interviews with Bala Gabari made in August 2007, supplemented by further data provided by Jibril 2018, and by additional fieldwork conducted by Dahiru Lawan Muaz in August 2020.

control of the printing business, Nasiru Kabara encouraged his pupil, Gabari, to turn from a simple scribe into an independent publisher.[56]

Gabari's emancipation from the Kano publishers was a gradual process. Initially, thanks to the provision of capital provided by another student of Nasiru Kabara, he started to take his works for publication to Gaskiya Corporation (Zaria) and to Northern Maktabat Printing Press (Kano). He entrusted their distribution to a business associate, and controlled retail sales through two shops he established in the Islamic books section of the Kurmi market of Kano.[57] Later on, in 1971, he took a step further by traveling to Beirut, as other Kano-based publishers had started doing, and arranging for the printing of his first colour offset lithographic edition of the Qur'an (Fig. 11), in 50,000 copies, by the noted publisher Dar El Fikr. The final step in the process of Gabari's emancipation from the various actors of the book cycle in Kano, was the establishment by his son Munzali, in 1999, of the Mahir Sharif Bala Printing and Publishing Company.[58]

Before his death in 2016, Gabari had been able to pen about sixty different copies of the Qur'an, about a dozen of which have been published, in some cases in different editions. As I have argued elsewhere,[59] the popularity of the handwriting of Gabari superseded those of his peers due to the following set of aesthetic and functional features:

(a) An innovative style of writing, which maximised the angularity and regularity of the then fast-developing *kanawī* hand, bringing it closer to ancient monumental Kufic models. According to hagiographical accounts, this new writing style was divinely inspired to the calligrapher in a dream.[60]

(b) Maximizing the use of the marginal space by inserting numerous *harji* and *faḍā'il* notes that would appeal the public of *gardawa*. As an additional mark of innovation and modernity, the source of these notes is often referenced in his Qur'ans; for instance, most *faḍā'il* notes are acknowledged as being drawn from the book *Naʿt al-bidāyāt* by the Mauritanian Sufi Māʾ al-ʿAynayn (d. 1910). As each edition displays different marginal notes, some of the buyers would have had an interest in purchasing a copy of every new edition.

(c) The presence of an additional formula (*miʾatān āya*), which I have not observed on other Nigerian editions of the Qur'an, marking every two hundred

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56 Sources provide hagiographical accounts of how Bala Gabari's entry in the printing business was prompted by a prayer that Nasiru Kabara made for Gabari while holding a Qur'an penned by the latter (Abdullahi Uba Jibril, Kano, telephonic interview, 2 April 2021).

57 Jibril 2018, 26.

58 Jibril 2018, 55.

59 Brigaglia 2011, 61–83.

60 Jibril 2018, 23.

verses. This offered an additional advantage to students and memorisers interested in dividing the text according to a variety of possible portions.

(d) The presence of a final *duʿāʾ khatm al-Qurʾān* (prayer to be recited upon completion of a recitation), which would have come in as handy for both individual and collective recitation.

(e) Most importantly, all of Gabari's editions of the Qurʾan are written in such a way that every *ḥizb* starts on the first line of the front page of a new folio. The sixty Qurʾanic *ḥizb*-s are only approximately equal in length, so most *ḥizb* markers appeared, on the editions penned by earlier calligraphers, at various different points on a page (see for instance Figs 1 and 4). Calligraphers who wanted a new section to appear exactly on top of a new folio, were forced to leave a few blank lines in the verso of the final folio of the previous section. This was the case, for instance, in a popular lithographed Tunisian edition written by calligrapher al-Tijānī al-Muḥammadī, which is arranged in separate *juzʾ* (thirtieths). We know that Gabari was familiar with this edition, not only because it was common in Kano until the 1980s,[61] but also because at some point, he had sponsored a Kano scribe, Ḍan Maiwanki, to copy a Nigerian imitation of it. Published by Gabari, this circulated in Nigeria under the nickname *Shabīhu Tūnis* (the 'Tunisian look-alike').[62] The neater separation of each *juzʾ* from the following one, in al-Muḥammadī's original 'Tunisian Qurʾan' and in its Nigerian 'look-alike', had obvious advantages for the frequent collective recitations where the various portions would be shared among the attendees (Fig. 12), if compared to previous editions where a *ḥizb* or *juzʾ* division would fall in the middle of a page. The editions published by Gabari from the 1970s onwards, however, have the further advantage of being written in such a way that the final word of every given *ḥizb* also coincides with the bottom corner of the

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61 An invoice collected by Sani Yakubu Adam during his fieldwork shows that Kano bookseller Sani Adamu purchased 1,000 copies of this Qurʾan from Tunisia in 1982 (Tunis Invoices, Sani Y. Adam personal archive, Kano).

62 I am profoundly thankful to Prof Abdullahi El Okene (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria) for his generous gift of his personal copy of this edition. As an interesting additional anecdote that further illustrates the importance of ritual functions in the use of unbound Qurʾanic editions, this copy was personally bound by El Okene in seven volumes, divided according to the conventional daily rhythm of Qurʾanic recitation adopted by Ibrahim Niasse of Senegal. The latter, in fact, used to complete a full recitation in seven days, but followed a slightly different arrangement than the standard *subʿ* (seven parts) division, so as to achieve the effect of the initial Arabic letters of the seven daily portion of the Qurʾan, if joined together, to give a particularly auspicious meaning.

verso of a folio (Fig. 13). The absence of any blank section on the page that precedes a new section increased the appeal of Gabari's Qur'ans, boosting the credentials of the calligrapher as the embodiment of perfect memorization, who was able to adjust the size of his writing in imperceptible ways and complete any given *ḥizb* on the desired spot.

(f) Strictly linked to innovation (e) above, are Gabari's experiments with a series of thickly written editions of the Qur'an wherein every individual *ḥizb* is realised either in one folio (recto and verso), in two folios, or in three folios. One example (from the one *ḥizb* per two folios edition) can be observed in Fig. 14.

The many editions of the Qur'an penned by Bala Gabari are an iconic embodiment of the Nigerian Qur'anic culture of late twentieth century. Perfectly rooted in an Arabic script tradition that prided itself of its archaic traits, his writing style enhanced the 'Kufic' look of the script, rendering Gabari's Qur'ans distinctive and recognizable as required by the modern market with its competitive dynamic. As we have seen, each edition also featured new technical or stylistic innovations, always devised in the light of the functional requirements of the public of *gardawa* and *alaramma*-s.

7 After the classics

Through the last five decades, the arts and the business of Qur'anic lithography in Nigeria have been marked primarily by the innovative writing style and the clever marketing strategies of Sharif Bala Gabari. Yet, other calligraphers have been able to find their niche in a market that today – notwithstanding visible signs of decay in the use of the Central Sudanic script as a consequence of the reforms of Qur'anic schooling – remains sizeable. At least a dozen publishers in Kano continue to market offset lithographic editions of the Qur'an,[63] compared to only five in the 1960s and none before the 1950s.

One example are two sons of Ayyuba Magoga (d. 1983), Barhama and Aminu. As we have seen above, in the 1960s Ayyuba had been a pioneer of the Islamic press in Kano. His son Barhama, born in 1963, studied the Qur'an in Maiduguri (1971–1981), with Goni Adamu Ɗan Kyallori. Upon his return to Kano, he was introduced to the printing business by his father. Today, Barhama

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63 Aminu Ayyuba Magoga, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, Kano, 12 August 2020.

publishes offset editions of books penned by various scribes, but whenever he wants to launch a new edition of the Qur'an, he prefers to use his own handwriting, relying on the help of assistants for voweling the consonantal text so as to minimise time. In this way, he is able to complete a copy in as little as three weeks, as opposed to the three–six months it normally takes a Nigerian calligrapher to complete a full manuscript. So far, he has copied and published four different editions in his own handwriting. One of his innovations consists in writing in such a way that the end of every page coincides with the end of a Qur'anic verse. This is obviously inspired by the success of the Gabari's editions where end-of-page and end-of-*ḥizb* coincide. Currently,[64] Barhama is busy with a fifth copy, which will be the first to feature the numbering of the verses in Latin numerals. The rationale for this additional innovation is that with the spread of cell phones and social media, the Nigerian public has become more accustomed to Latin numerals than to Arabic ones. Barhama hopes that this will guarantee the success of the new edition: while his first Qur'an, in 2009, was published in 3,000 copies, and his fourth one, in the late 2010s, in 6,000 copies, the fifth edition is planned to be released in as many as 60,000 copies.

As for Barhama's junior brother Aminu (b. 1982), he penned his first complete Qur'an in 2000 and published a first edition *c.* 2014 (Fig. 15). This was followed by numerous other editions (1–3 per year), each issued in 5,000–10,000 copies. Unlike his brother, Aminu did not study in Borno, but was entirely educated in Kano. As in the past, being integrated in the networks of Qur'anic schools continues to be the key to a calligrapher's success. As Barhama and Aminu supply the massive Qur'anic schools run by fellow Tijāni scholars they can count on yearly orders of several thousand copies for every new edition they supply.

The most innovative calligrapher of Kano, perhaps, is currently Abbas Musa Rijiyar Lemo. Born in 1970, Abbas left home before reaching the age of 7 to enrol in a Qur'anic school in Funtua (Katsina), where he lived for ten years. Thereafter, he followed various Tijāni teachers in Maiduguri, Kano, Bajoga (Bauchi), Zaria, Maradi (Niger Republic). From 2003 to date, seven of his Qur'anic manuscripts have been published. Less regular and angular than Gabari's or Barhama Ayyuba's hands, Abbas's writing style alternates ultra-thick horizontal strokes and ultra-thin vertical strokes to achieve the desired effect, an exemplary illustration of *kanawī* style. His 2008 edition is 786 pages long, corresponding to the numerical value of the *basmala* (the introductory formula of all but one Qur'anic Suras) according to the Arabic traditional numerology that is particularly

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64 Barhama Ayyuba Magoga, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, 13 August 2020.

in vogue among Sufis. This was certainly not a coincidence, but an attempt by the calligrapher to achieve the blessings of the *basmala* to guarantee divine acceptance and public recognition for his work.

Abbas's most curious innovation in the tradition, however, is his choice to use different colours in the consonantal body of the text: red for the names of God, brown for the names of angels, and green for the names of the prophets, in addition to the customary black ink used for ordinary text (Fig. 16). The use of these colours can be found in some Middle eastern editions of the Qur'an that the calligrapher has certainly seen. His inspiration to adopt this change in the local calligraphic tradition, however, reportedly was the result of a dream.[65] To add to the stylistic innovation in Abbas's writing, in the few instances where the Qur'an mentions the name of Prophet Muhammad, the latter is distinguished from those of other prophets by bigger-sized writing and colourful decorations (Fig. 17). As eye-catching as these experiments are, it is not clear to what extent they have been received with favour by the Nigerian public: as Abbas admits, in fact, 'the *gardawa* do not accept easily any change that is brought in by a new calligrapher.'[66]

8 Conclusions

While the Kano calligraphers were actively engaged in the many experiments described in this chapter, their Bornuan counterparts, who consider themselves the veritable custodians of the arts of Qur'anic calligraphy in the region, largely remained attached to the old ways and in most cases resisted any change to the practice of calligraphy, including refraining from signing any manuscript with the name of the calligrapher and from publishing it. Literally thousands of Qur'anic manuscripts have continued to be produced in Borno, either as diplomas submitted to certify the ability of a scholar in the process of gaining the title of *goni*, or as richly decorated, luxury items written by skilled calligraphers for individual clients.[67] But no initiative to publish a lithographic edition of a Bornuan Qur'an has been taken so far, and Bornuan Qur'ans have continued to circulate anonymously in unicum copies.

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65 Abbas Musa Rijiyar Lemo, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, 18 September 2020.

66 Abbas Musa Rijiyar Lemo, interviewed by Sani Yakubu Adam and Dahiru Lawan Muaz, 18 September 2020.

67 For an example, see Mutai and Brigaglia 2017.

The conservative cultural attitude of the Bornuan Qur'anic calligraphers, which stands in sharp contrast to the innovation that characterizes the Kano arena, has been partly reversed by a recent initiative of the Yobe State Government to publish a digital edition of the Qur'an in a *barnāwī* font that was created ad hoc from the handwriting of a calligrapher of Borno (Fig. 18). The handwriting selected by the committee after a selection process among dozens of active Bornuan calligraphers, was that of Musa Ali Umar (Kagoni), a forty-year-old calligrapher who, at the time of the publication (2018), had already penned over forty copies of the Qur'an, always as unicum copies for individual customers. This highly innovative experiment has led, in turn, to new ramifications in Kano, where a digital *kanawī* font modelled on the handwriting of Sharīf Bala Gabari has been created and used for a brand-new monthly magazine in Arabic-script Hausa (*ʿajamī*), *Tabarau mai hangen nesa*, 'The spectacles that see far'.

From the *Mai Belt* in the 1950s, to the Bornuan digital Qur'an in 2018, the history of the Qur'anic printing industry in Nigeria shows the different ways in which the actors of a pre-modern book culture (scribes and book traders) have gradually taken control of a process of technological change that could have potentially disrupted their business, creating in the process a hybrid aesthetics and opening new market opportunities.

The making of the exceptionally prolific world of calligraphers, printers and publishers that have animated this market, has to be understood against the backdrop of the following set of intertwining cultural, social and technological factors. Firstly, the presence of a calligraphic tradition of deep roots and high symbolic prestige such as the Bornuan one, has continued to function as a relatively independent regional pole of Qur'anic culture up to present times. Secondly, the widespread use in Nigeria of a distinctive variant of Arabic script (the Central Sudanic) has limited the marketability of typeset books imported from the Middle East and created a niche where the skills of local scribes could continue to persist and even to thrive. Thirdly, the pervasiveness and resilience of a culture of Qur'anic memorization that, based as it was on a set of didactic and ritual conventions that provided a functional horizon for the art of calligraphy, created both opportunities and boundaries to the creativity of individual calligraphers. Finally, the commercial boom and the concurrent Islamic literary revival experienced by Kano in the late colonial period, provided the economic and social context for an expansive network of calligraphers and publishers to market their products.

Collectively, the above factors have contributed to create a seeming paradox whereby 'new' book printing technologies have resulted in a boom of 'ancient' scribal and calligraphic arts. The success of individual calligraphers, in the

above context, is based on their ability to balance innovation (in a highly competitive market that encourages each calligrapher to stand out from others) and tradition, in a market constrained by the tastes of a public whose perception of what makes an edition of the Qur'an *beautiful* and *useful*, is largely shaped by inherited cultural habits.

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Fig. 1: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Rabiu Ɗantinƙi, copied 1339H [1920-1921], publ. (third edition) Kano: al-Shaykh Isḥāq Rābiʿ, 1449H/2017. © Isiyaka Rabiu Dantinki.
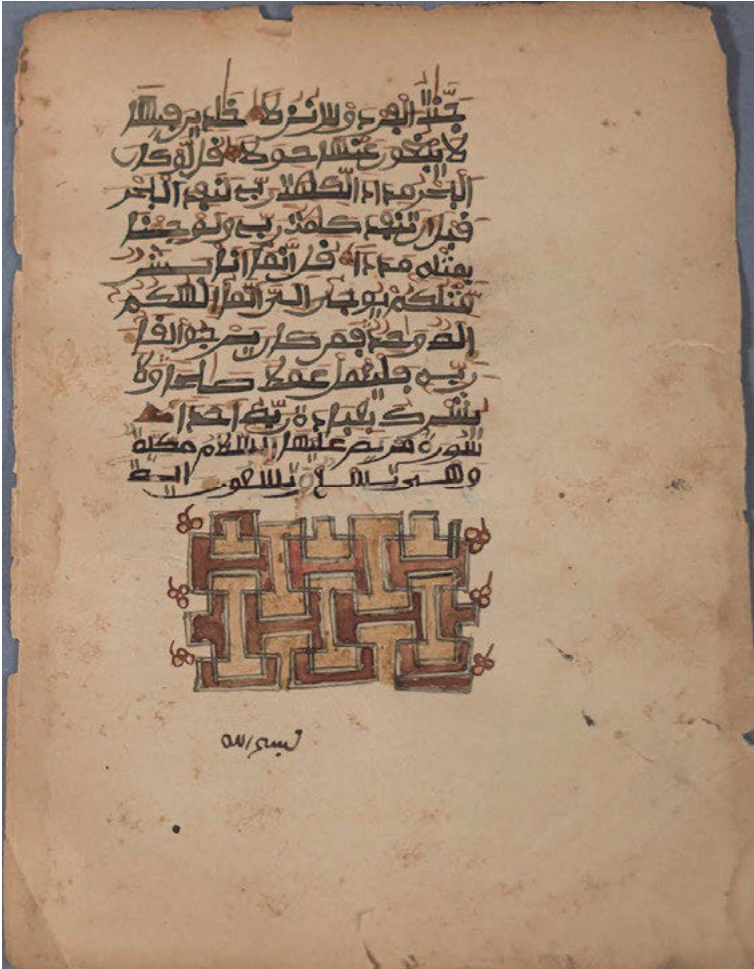
Fig. 2: A page of a handwritten Qur'an (copyist anonymous) from early 20th century Kano. Verona: Alberto Nicheli collection. © Michele Stanzione.

Fig. 3: *Subu'i* marker on a page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Rabiu Ɗantinƙi, copied 1339H [1920-1921], publ. (third edition) Kano: al-Shaykh Isḥāq Rābiʿ, 1449H/2017. © Isiyaka Rabiu Dantinki.
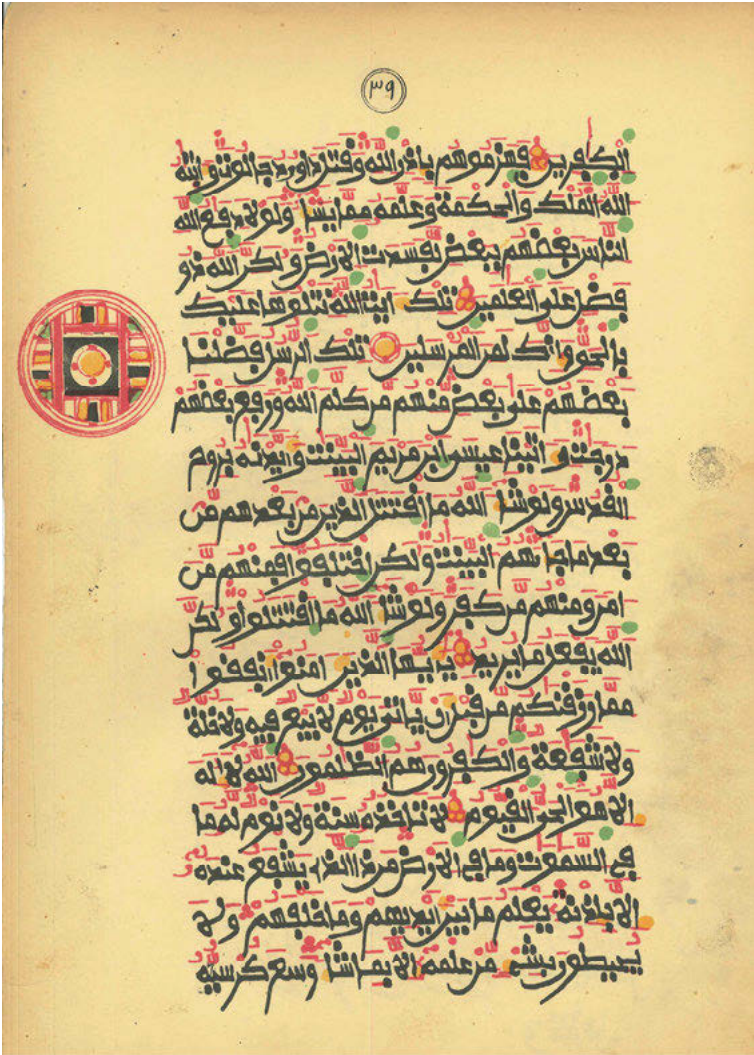
Fig. 4: The *Mai Belt* Qur'an, originally publ. Kano: Sanusi Ɗantata, 195[-], republ. Kano: Balā b. al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Rābiʿ, *s.a.* © Bala Rabiu Dantinki.

Fig. 5: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Sharif Bala Zaitawa, publ. Kano: Abdullahi Yassar, 1960. © Abdullahi Yassar.

Fig. 6: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Sharif Bala Zaitawa, publ. Kano: Abdullahi Yassar, *s.a.* [*c.* 1960s-1970s]. © Abdullahi Yassar.

Fig. 7: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Abubakar Ɗan Bukka, publ. Kano: Zubayr Muḥammad al-Rābiʿ Ɗantinƙi, 1962. © Zubayr Rabiu Dantinki.

Fig. 8: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Salisu Kore, publ. Kano: Sani Adamu & Hassan Inuwa, *s.a.* © Sani Adamu & Hassan Inuwa.

Fig. 9: A page of a Qur'an with *harji* notes on the margins, in the handwriting of Salisu Kore, publ. Kano: Sani Adamu & Hassan Inuwa, *s.a.* © Sani Adamu & Hassan Inuwa.

Fig. 10: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Salisu Kore, publ. Kano: Sharif Bala Gabari, *s.a.* © Sharif Bala Gabari.

Fig. 11: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Sharif Bala Gabari, publ. Beirut: Dar El Fikr, 1971. © Dar El Fikr.
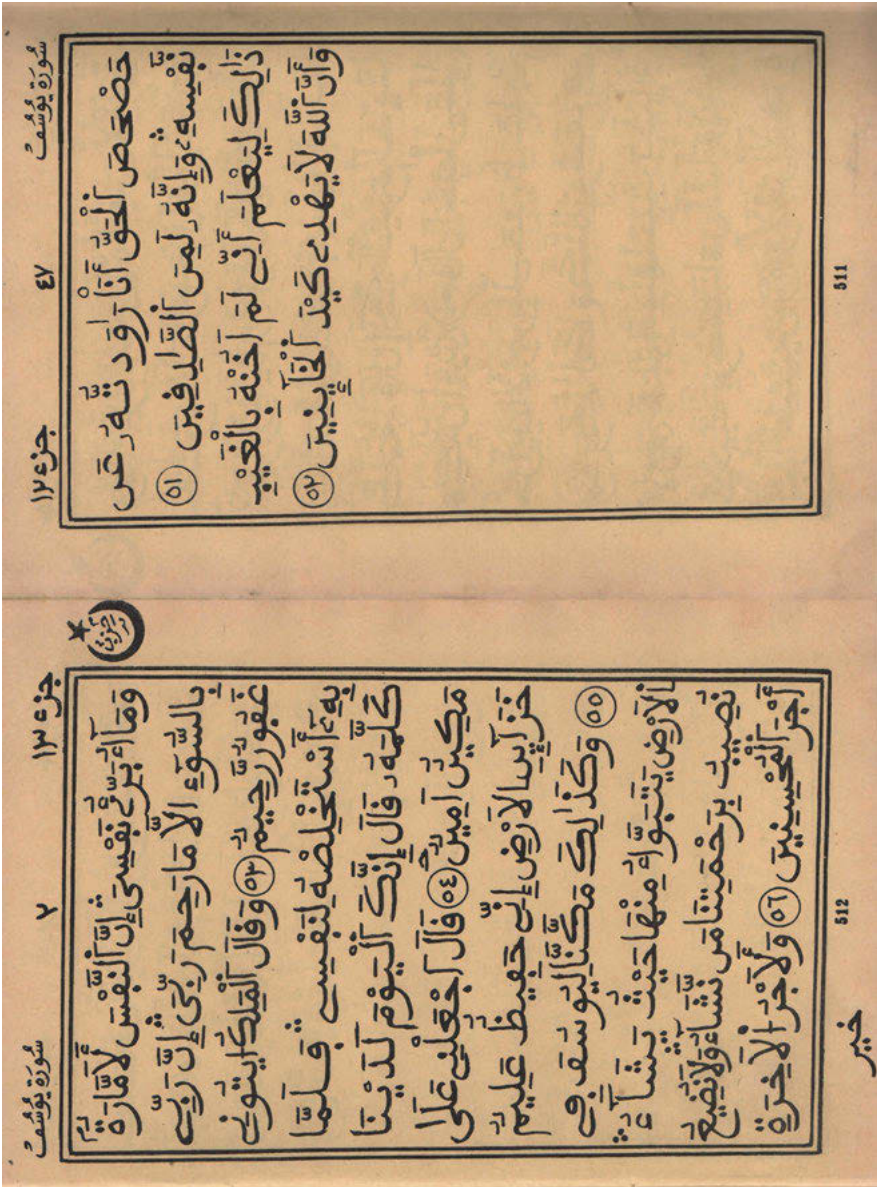
Fig. 12: End of *ḥizb* 12 and beginning of *ḥizb* 13 in the *Shabīhu Tūnis*, copied by Ɗan Maiwanki *c.* 970s-1980s, publ. Kano: Sharif Bala Gabari, *s.a.* © Sharif Bala Gabari.

Fig. 13: End of *ḥizb* 12 and beginning of *ḥizb* 13 in a Qur'an in the handwriting of Sharif Bala Gabari, copied 2006-2007, publ. Kano: Sharif Bala Gabari, 2008. © Sharif Bala Gabari.
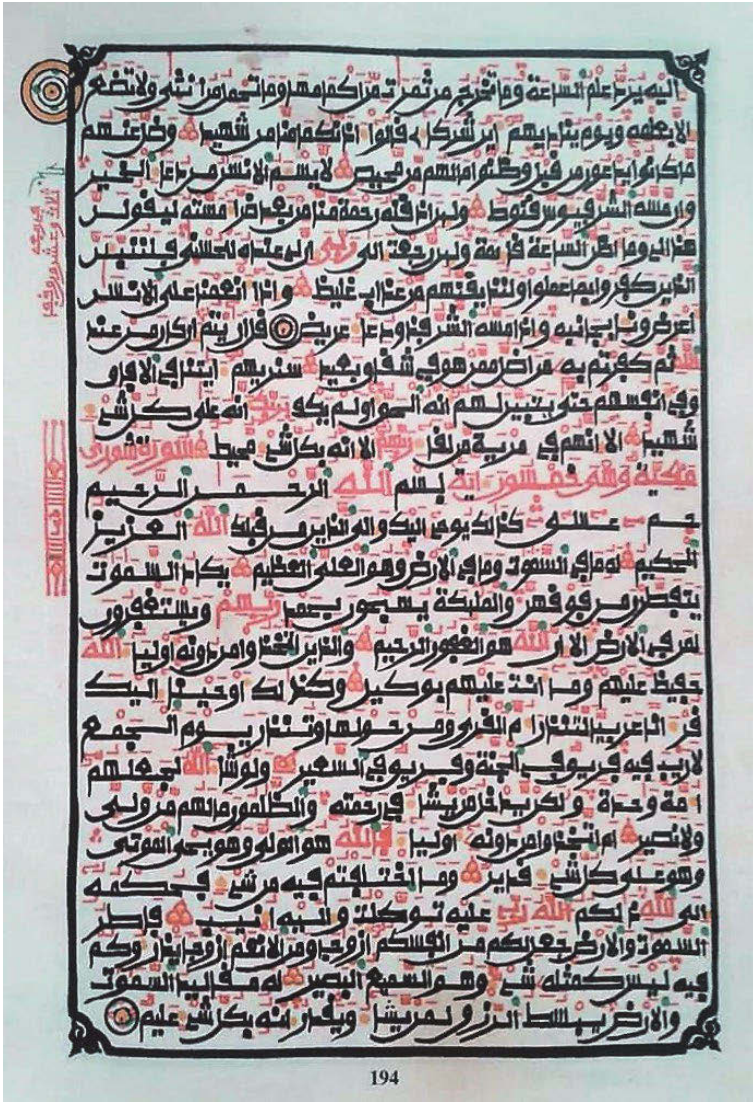
Fig. 14: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Sharif Bala Gabari, one *ḥizb* each two folios edition, copied 2011, publ. Kano: Sharif Bala Gabari, 2011. © Sharif Bala Gabari.

Fig. 15: A page of a Qur'an in the handwriting of Aminu Ayyuba Magoga, publ. Kano: Muḥammad al-Amīn Ayyūb, *c.* 2014. © Aminu Ayyuba Magoga.

Fig. 16: A page of a Qur'an with names of God in red ink, names of angels in brown, and names of prophets in green, in the handwriting of Abbas Musa Rijiyar Lemo; publ. Kano: Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Abdallāh Yassār, 2008. © Muhyiddin Abdallah Yassar.

Fig. 17: A page of a Qur'an with special design for the name of Prophet Muhammad, in the handwriting of Abbas Musa Rijiyar Lemo; publ. Kano: Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Abdallāh Yassār, 2008. © Muhyiddin Abdallah Yassar.

Fig. 18: *Al-Qurʾān al-karīm bi'l-khaṭṭ al-barnāwī*, Damaturu: Yobe State Arabic and Islamic Education Board, 2018. © Yobe State Government.

Sani Yakubu Adam

Technology and Local Tradition: The Making of the Printing Industry in Kano

Abstract: Kano holds a vital position in the history of the printing industry in northern Nigeria. Starting from the late 1950s the availability of offset lithography reshaped the book culture of northern Nigeria. This printing method facilitated the emergence of the 'printed manuscript', defined as a book written in a local calligraphic style and reproduced using offset lithographic machines. The chapter documents the history of this process from the founding of the Kano Native Authority Press (KNAP), a colonial printing firm founded in 1918, to the 1980s when the local production of books through offset lithography reached its height. Focusing on Yoruba technicians and Hausa entrepreneurs, this chapter pays particular attention to the place of offset lithography in preserving local calligraphic tradition in Kano.

1 Introduction

The bulk of the literature dealing with Muslim printing has focused mainly on the Arab Muslim world and to a certain extent on South Asia, while little attention is given to sub-Saharan Africa.[1] To be sure, scholarship exists on the printing of English books and the intersection between the industry and politics in that region.[2] However, there are hardly any studies devoted to Arabic printing. This chapter documents the history of the printing industry of the commercial city of Kano which is a conduit for Islamic and Arabic book distribution in sub-Saharan Africa.

Kano was the site of the first printing press — the Kano Native Authority Press (KNAP) — established by the British colonial administration in 1918 to provide services for the entire Northern Region of Nigeria. From its inception, the KNAP printed administrative forms for the region and engaged in limited Arabic printing. With the increase of a market for Arabic and Islamic books, the KNAP favored the emergence of private presses for such products. The first part of this article examines the history of the KNAP as a foundation for the Kano

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1 See Pederson 1984; Sabev 2013.

2 See, for example, Hydle 1972.

printing industry. The second part reconstructs the evolutionary trajectory of private presses. The Yoruba, from southwestern Nigeria, most of whom settled in Kano during the colonial period, were the trailblazers of private printing which emerged from the 1940s. When in the 1960s the Hausa began to establish presses, the Yoruba continued to dominate the industry but with increasing Hausa presence.

Next to typographic printing offset lithography, a modern method available in Nigeria only after the Second World War, was used to reproduce local manuscripts (referred to as 'printed manuscript', a term coined by Adeeb Khalid).[3] Andrea Brigaglia's chapter in this volume documents the use of offset lithography in printing the Qur'an. In his essay, he notes that the preference for lithographed products over typographic ones was driven primarily by the fact that the former allowed for the production of books using a local calligraphic style known as *Kanawī*.[4] The Kano printing industry only began to play a significant role in the production of 'printed manuscripts' from the 1980s, when Arabic book publishing was forced to rely on local presses due to import restrictions imposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

2 Historical context: Arabic printing in Kano 1920s–1940s

There is a long history of interaction between the people of Hausaland and the North African Arabs. The trans-Saharan trade facilitated a history of commercial and intellectual exchanges. One Arabic source on the history of Islam in Hausaland mentions that, as early as the fifteenth century, an Egyptian had introduced a *fiqh* text, *Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl*,[5] to Kano, which he taught to a circle of students. In the same period, the Moroccan scholar Muhammad al-Maghili resided in the city under the patronage of King Muhammad Rumfa (r. 1463–1499).[6] In the seventeenth century, an Islamic scholar of Hausaland from Katsina, Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Fulani al-Kashnawi, whose works and

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3 See Khalid 1994.
4 A term used by Andrea Brigaglia to designate a variety of calligraphic style within the Sudanic family that is dominant in Kano: Brigaglia 2011.
5 One of the principal Maliki texts studied in West Africa authored by Ibn Ishaq al-Jundi (d. 767 AH / 1365 CE). See Al-Hajj 1968, 13.
6 See Palmer 1967, 97–132.

scholarship were known in Egypt, died in Cairo while returning from a pilgrimage.[7]

Despite this history of intellectual interchange between the two African regions, the emergence of printing technology from the early nineteenth-century Egypt did not result in technology transfer. However, the growth of the industrial book trade in Egypt did have an impact on the book markets of Kano, although only from the mid-twentieth century.[8]

Several factors might account for this delayed development. Most of Nigeria's commercial relationships of the nineteenth century were with Libya, which played a less significant role in the Arabic print revolution of the period.[9] The book trade linking Kano with Egypt dates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, this was relatively minimal and large scale trade in printed books dates only to the 1950s, when the massive import of Islamic books began from the so-called Arab world. Between the 1950s and 1970s, most Arabic and Islamic books were imported from Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia to Kano, which served as a conduit for distribution to the rest of Nigeria and neighboring countries (Niger, Chad, Central African Republic and Cameroon).[10]

This connection may prompt the assumption that sub-Saharan Africa was a mere extension of the Arab market. In reality, however, a vibrant local printing industry eventually emerged in Kano, facilitating a massive production of Islamic books. This was especially the case from the 1980s when restrictions were imposed on imports by the Nigerian government and publishers began to rely increasingly on local presses. The industry, however, was also spurred by an important technological advance, the introduction of offset lithography.

Typographic printing in Nigeria began before the era of formal colonial rule dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Private printing in Kano was pioneered by

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7 Bivar and Hiskett 1962, 135.

8 Modern printing was first introduced in Egypt in 1798 when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt. However, the actual beginning of the Egyptian printing industry is traced back to 1815 when Muhammad Ali (r. 1805–1848) sent the Syrian-Christian Niqula al-Masabiki to Milan to learn the technique of printing and purchase machines. Al-Masabiki returned to Egypt after four years and Muhammad Ali set up a printing press at Bulaq, a northern suburb of Cairo. The press commenced operation in 1820 or early 1821 and the first printed books came out in 1822. Muhammad Ali established more presses in the following decade. By the end of his reign, the print shops had produced hundreds of books. See Ayalon 2016, 21–22. For an account of al-Masabiki's travel and learning of printing skills in Milan, see Green 2009, 215–216.

9 Ghadames merchants had a consul in Kano in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who represented their commercial interest.

10 Ibrahim Khalil Sani Adamu, interview with the author, 23 January 2020.

the Yoruba, whose origins lay in southwestern Nigeria. But it was the towns of Yorubaland that were the earliest centers of printing in Nigeria. The first press in Nigeria was established in Calabar in the present oil-rich Niger-Delta region. This was a letterpress machine installed by the Presbyterian Mission under Hope Waddell with the help of a British printer, Samuel Edgerley, in 1846.[11] However, the nineteenth-century press with the most far-reaching effects on the spread of the technology in Nigeria was the one established by Reverend Henry Townsend of the Church Mission Society in the Yoruba town of Abeokuta in 1854. He began publishing a Yoruba language newspaper known as *Iwe Irohin* in 1859. Its estimated audience ranged between 400 and 3000.[12] Soon the example of Townsend was followed by other missions and most of the one-room printing works that became a feature of the nineteenth-century missionary stations owed their origin to the role of Townsend.[13] In addition to creating a Yoruba reading public, these small mission presses helped create generations of trained pressmen among the Yoruba.

In northern Nigeria, the earliest printing press was operated by the KNAP, founded in 1918 to serve the entire Northern Region throughout the colonial period (1903–1960). Full operation, however, did not begin until around 1921. The press was placed under Mr Henry Morphy, Survey Instructor of the Kano Survey School.[14] The primary purpose of KNAP was to print poll tax receipts, prison forms, payment vouchers and other documents of the colonial government. Its initial location was near Dan Agundi Gate in the old city of Kano where Mr Morphy oversaw two manual letterpresses with the support of three African staff headed by one Haruna Madaki Isma'il. The KNAP could handle the production of texts in two scripts (Arabic and Latin based), each with two distinct orthographic systems, Arabic and Hausa-Ajami orthographies of the Arabic script and Hausa and English orthographies of the Roman-base script.[15]

Colonial reports from Kano in the 1920s were full of praise for the KNAP, especially its role in meeting the demands of the other provinces of Northern Nigeria. For example, according to the Kano Province Annual Report of 1924:

> The growth and the development of the printing department, which was only started three
> years ago, is an achievement of which those who have been responsible may feel justly

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11 See Olaniyi 1998, 50.

12 See Best 1996, 12–13.

13 Ajayi 1965, 158.

14 Kano Province (1919), 'Kano Province Annual Report, No 57 for half year ending June 30 1919' Annual Reports Collection (SNP/318.P), Kano State History and Culture Bureau (KSHCB), 12.

15 Abdullahi 1980, 1–3.

proud and we are now able to undertake for all the principal Emirates in the Northern Provinces. Since the erection of the power plant, the rate of output has considerably increased, and although the entire native staff members numbers only 15 (of whom 3 are being trained for Katsina) over 2,000,000 impressions have been produced in the last twelve months. Very careful consideration has been given to many of the printed Arabic forms now in use – particularly counterfoil tax and other receipt books – with a view to arriving at standardized patterns which will be equally suitable to all Emirates.[16]

Moreover, the 1927 annual report documented the increasing revenue of the press from the other provinces of Northern Nigeria over the years, as illustrated in the following table: [17]

Table 1: Revenue generated by KNAP from other Provinces.

S/N	Year	Revenue from other Provinces
1	1922	£ 30
2	1923	£ 146
3	1924	£ 318
4	1925	£ 589
5	1926	£ 860
6	1927	£ 958

The expertise of the press allowed it to venture into a limited printing of Arabic books, but only a few seem to have been produced between 1921 and 1940. Unfortunately, there is no extant record indicating the works produced by the company. When the author visited the press in July 2020, the staff in charge of the research unit of the press mentioned that their historical records were destroyed by fire in 2007.[18] So, the evidence for book production is slim and attested only by a report related to the book *Sabīl al-Muḥtadī* by Mahmud Hassan (d. 1941). A specialist in Arabic grammar, Mahmud Hassan was one of the most prominent Tijaniyya scholars of colonial Kano. He was a son-in-law of Malam

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16 Kano Province (1924). 'Kano Province Annual Report, 1924' Annual Reports Collection (SNP/635), KSHCB. 74.

17 Kano Province (1927). 'Kano Province Annual Report, 1927' Annual Reports Collection (SNP/209), KSHCB. 40.

18 The name of the press was changed to (Kano State) Government Printing Press in 1967. It still bears that name.

Muhammad Salga, the Imam of Koki Zawiya, which was the primary center for the followers of Tijaniyya in colonial Kano.

The book was printed in 1929 after Hassan, who was the author of the book, submitted an application in January for the production of one-hundred copies. Presumably, the author was introduced to the press by his former student, Malam Muhammadu, who was the accountant of the Survey Department. A translation of the text was made for Mr Morphy. After reading it, he sent a copy to the Emir of Kano to ask for his opinion, and the Emir supported the publication.[19] However, Morphy also sought the opinions of three other officeholders in the Kano Native Administration, the Vizier (*Waziri*), the Administrator of the Capital City (*Madaki*) and the Commander of the Cavalry (*Galadima*), who met him at the Survey Department before approving the printing on 13 January 1929.[20]

It took the workmen five months to complete the printing on 24 June 1929. Even then, before the 100 copies were dispatched to the author, the KNAP sent five copies to the Emir again soliciting his opinion on whether the book's content was innocuous.[21] It is not clear how many pages the first printed copy of the text had, but the lithographed edition I examined had only fifteen. This latter was copied in 1958 by Abubakar Atiku, one of the author's students.[22]

As the primary goal of the company was to produce colonial documents, it frowned on engaging private clients. Indeed, that is why Hassan's application for a re-print was declined. According to the Orme's report: 'Later request was made through Malam Ibrahim for further copies, but following Mr Morphy's principle, that private printing was to be discouraged, I did not allow it to be done'.[23]

Moreover, the colonial government was not committed to the development of Arabic books. In the pre-colonial period, Ajami was used exclusively for

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19 In Kano the office of the Emir was a pillar in the colonial administration's policy of 'indirect rule', which relied on existing traditional administrative structures under European supervision. See Reynolds 2001, 601.

20 Orme 1929.

21 Orme 1929. It seems to be a general attitude of the British towards Islamic scholars of colonial northern Nigeria. According to M.S. Umar, 'British fears of Islamic uprisings were recurrent throughout colonial period' as 'intelligence gathering on the ulama and Islamic movements including Sufi orders was a priority of British colonial authorities'. Umar also argues that the British suspicion of Islamic scholars made them use surveillance on Islam. See Umar 2006, 38–40.

22 Mahmud Hassan, *Sabīl al-Muḥtadī* (manuscript).

23 Orme 1929.

writing in Hausa. The colonial state's main interest, however, was replacement of this system with Hausa in Latin characters. Throughout the colonial period, British authorities sponsored numerous ventures for the publication and distribution of vernacular literature written in Roman script, to the detriment of Arabic. For instance, in 1933, it sponsored a fiction writing competition that eventually resulted in the publication of five Hausa novels. The winning books, however, would be published only in Roman script. Profit was not the main objective of the vernacular literature project. The main goal was 'to induce a taste of reading' among the graduates of the colonial school system but also to solidify the primacy of Roman script among Western educated Hausa.[24]

Apart from KNAP, the colonial government of northern Nigeria established Gaskiya Corporation, located in Zaria, in 1945. The main preoccupation of Gaskiya was the publication of vernacular newspapers and books, including a Hausa paper, *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo* ('Truth is worth more than a penny'). As a result, the colonial government established the Northern Literature Agency in 1953 to focus exclusively on book publishing. By the late colonial period, the Agency also began to venture into Arabic printing. This effort was facilitated by the introduction of a new technology: offset lithography.

3 Private presses: The pioneering role of the Yoruba

The printing industry in Kano, was monopolized by the state until the 1940s when the establishment of private presses was permitted. Paradoxically, the Yoruba, who were a migrant community in Kano, pioneered these despite the existence of Hausa printers trained by the KNAP. This paradox can be explained by the fact that most of the Hausa people who received training in printing decided to pursue careers in the colonial civil service. The northern regional government pursued a policy of reserving employment opportunities for northerners. Southerners, such as the Yoruba, were hired only on contract appointments. Therefore, with little prospect of getting a government job, migrant

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24 East 1936, 351. The colonial government could not recover the cost of production of the five novels. In 1938, the unsold copies of the five novels were distributed for free to the various native administrations of northern Nigeria. See Rupert Moultrie East, *Literature Bureau Circular to Senior Education Officer*, Kano Province, September 5, 1938, NAK/1343/Central Book Store, Kano Native Administration.

Yoruba printers had to set up businesses to make ends meet. The predominance of the Yoruba in the printing industry has prompted the assumption that KNAP did not play any significant role in the proliferation of private presses. This is misleading since many Yoruba printers relied on the press for some of their equipment. The KNAP obtained a monotype casting machine in 1937. The newly established private presses obtained their types from the company until they acquired their own casting machines.

Moreover, KNAP implicitly encouraged private presses. Several print shops purchased used machines from KNAP when setting up their workshops. Secondly, because of the multitude of work it handled, KNAP rejected many commissions, especially applications from opposition political parties legalized in the run up to independence. One of these parties, The Northern People's Congress (NPC), formed in the 1950s, controlled the Native Administration of the Northern Region. The NPC used its position to benefit from the services of KNAP and prevent opposition political parties, such as Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) from accessing the printer's services. The demands from individuals and political parties such as NEPU, coupled with the limited private services provided by KNAP, resulted in the proliferation of private presses.

To be sure, most Yoruba printers did not receive their training via KNAP. The Yoruba pioneering printers, in most cases, trained their fellow Yoruba workmen. Nevertheless, a few Yoruba were former employees of KNAP. Among these was Sunday Olusegun, who joined Oluseyi Printing Press as a printer and later became a manager and shareholder of the company. Abdulkareem Ajani, a co-founder of SAMKARI Press, had also worked for KNAP.

The first private press to be established in Kano was the Ifeolu Printing Works in 1943. The proprietor, I. W. Oshilaja Washington was a Yoruba from Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State, north-western Nigeria. The Yoruba presses that were to play a vital role in the printing of Arabic works were the Oluseyi and Adebola Printing Presses (later Bola Print), founded in 1947 and 1951, respectively (see Fig. 1 for the first hand press used at Oluseyi Printing Press in 1947). Other Yoruba printing firms such as Omoade Printing Press (established in 1968), Jolade (founded in 1971) AFOSCO Press Limited (founded in 1974), SAMKARI and Sons Limited (founded in 1975), and RASCO Press (founded in 1975) joined these two in the following years.

4 The Hausa printers

Since the 1940s, when the first presses were established, the industry was dominated by the Yoruba. Although the Hausa people began to venture into the business in the 1960s, Yoruba dominance continued. A group of Hausa scholars from the Tijaniyya order founded the 'Press of the Indigenes' (*Maḍaba'ar 'Yan Kasa*) in 1964, which subsequently became Northern Maktabat Printing Press (NMPP). Oral sources attribute its foundation to a concern by the founder regarding the Yoruba (i.e. non-Muslims) handling sacred texts.

The NMPP was founded by Faruq Abdullahi Salga (d. 1985), a grandson of Malam Muhammadu Salga, with the support of other Tijaniyya clerics. The transfer of printing skills from the Yoruba to the Hausa people occurred through a Yoruba printer, Sa'adu Jola Ade, who previously worked for Bola Print as the head of their Arabic Printing Unit.

Ayuba Sani Magoga established the second Hausa-owned press. He had a small-capacity machine that printed sponsored works, such as the Qur'ān in *Kanawī* style and *Ishiriniyyat*, a famous devotional poem by Abd al-Rahman al-Fazazi (d. 1230 CE). Magoga employed a former operator of the NMPP, Lawan Dogo, to work as a pressman. Despite the establishment of the Hausa owned presses, the Yoruba continued to dominate the industry. One of the most successful Arabic booksellers, Abdullahi Yassar (d. 1991), primarily patronized the Yoruba-owned RASCO Press until his death.

5 The expansion of the 1980s

Although Hausa entrepreneurs began setting up presses in the 1960s, the Yoruba continued to dominate the industry. This is partly because Hausa presses were very few compared to those owned by the Yoruba, but also because, in most cases, even in the Hausa-owned printing outfits (mostly owned by entrepreneurs who had no background in printing), Yoruba filled most of the technical positions as lithographers, printers, compositors, proof-readers, and binders. The boom in Arabic printing was made possible through the initiatives of Hausa publishers who patronized these printers, and facilitated by the expansion of the local printing industry across Nigeria in the 1980s. In the early 1980s, restrictions were imposed on imports of all kinds and book dealers from Egypt and Lebanon found it difficult to get paid for the books they supplied. This resulted in the stagnation of the transnational book trade. Thus, many

importers of Islamic books began to look inward for book production. The following table indicates the upsurge in the printing presses in the early 1980s that correlates with this moment:

Table 2: Printing and publishing companies in Nigeria with more than ten employees.

S/N	Year	Number of Printing Firms	Number of Employees
1	1972	77	9,874
2	1974	76	9,147
3	1976	97	12,455
4	1978	68	8,079
5	1980	182	20,320
6	1982	168	25,270
7	1983	167	20,729

The number of firms increased from 68,000 in 1978 to 182,000 in 1980. Although the number decreased in the next two years, the figures still represented a tremendous increase over the figures of the 1970s. The same pattern can be observed from the figures for workers that continued increasing from 1980 onwards.

One of the main features of the printing expansion of the 1980s was the emergence of specializations. According to Olaniyi, 'the increasing capital cost of printing machinery and materials in the 1980s encouraged specialization'. There was a huge increase in the price of printing machines. For example, the price of a Rota printing machine, which was 12,000 Naira in 1975, rose to 400,000 Naira by 1983. Apparently part of the reasons for the price increase of printing machinery was escalating demand as well as import restrictions, which created scarcity of these machines and other printing equipment. Inflation also prevented aspiring printers with modest capital from setting up fully-equipped print shops. Therefore many of them opted to establish specialised workshops that would require them to purchase a few machines for specific printing-related services, such as lithography or binding.

Two categories of agents, with their critical specializations, became central to the Arabic book production of the 1980s: the paper merchants and the lithographers. In this regard, the Yoruba also played critical roles in the emergence of these two professions in Kano. The paper sellers managed their business as a distinct occupation independent of printing workshops. Conversely, lithographers were initially part of the presses that engaged in Arabic printing. By the

1980s, many of them had established independent workshops that exclusively offered lithographic services. Others remained with their presses.

The emergence of the Kano printing industry also entailed the proliferation of paper dealers. In the colonial period, printing paper was imported from England. This tradition continued in the post-colonial era. The primary supplier of the printing machinery in northern Nigeria by 1974 was R. T. Briscoe, who, together with Wiggins Teape, also nearly monopolized the supply of paper. According to oral sources, by the late 1970s, two Hausa merchants, Nasiru Ahli and Isyaku Umar Tofa, also began to import paper from England into Nigeria. They sold their stocks wholesale to Yoruba dealers based in Kano, who, in turn, sold the product to printers. These dealers also obtained their paper via Lagos, which remains the main conduit for its distribution throughout Nigeria. From the late 1980s the Igbo began to venture into the paper trade. By the 1990s, they were the trade's dominant players.

Lithography also began to emerge as a distinct specialization in the 1980s. A typical lithographic workshop in the 1980s was equipped with a darkroom, which contained both vertical and horizontal cameras used for recording images of texts and pictures. Other pieces of equipment were a ruling table and a plate maker. Well-established presses such as Oluseyi, Bola Print and Jolade had their own lithographic workshops. But, from the 1980s, due to the high demand for printing and lithographic services related to Arabic books, some lithographers began to set up independent workshops that specialized in lithography. As small-scale presses were founded in the 1980s that lacked lithographic facilities, most relied on the new lithographic workshops. As with typographic printing, the pioneers in this regard were unsurprisingly the Yoruba. Some of these independent workshops were Fuja, Kallitho and Visible. The following section examines the lithographic technique and its role in preserving the manuscript tradition of northern Nigeria.

6 The offset lithographic method of printing

As was said above, between the 1960s and 1970s, the presses of Kano began to venture into Arabic printing, thanks to the introduction of offset lithographic machines starting in the 1950s. State-owned presses were the first to acquire lithographic machines. Gaskiya Corporation, as the leading printer of Northern Regional Literature Agency (NORLA), purchased offset machines in the mid-1950s while KNAP acquired two Rotaprint Machines in 1958. The Oluseyi Press, one of the earliest private enterprises, acquired offset equipment in 1960. The

offset technology played a significant role in the transformation of Arabic printing.

Lithography is a planographic process where both the printing and the non-printing surfaces lie on the same level in contrast to the letterpress technique in which the printing surface differs from non-printing areas in height. It was a third printing method – after the relief and intaglio processes – invented by Alois Senefelder (1771–1834) in the early nineteenth century. The technique is based on the principle that water repels oil. In this method, the printing area is defined by an oil-based chemical, and the whole surface is dampened with a water-based chemical before inking so that the ink, which is also oil-based, adheres exclusively to the oily areas of the printing surface. This early process was gradually displaced by photomechanical operations. In this case, photographically generated plates are used for printing in a method known as offset lithography.

Since its introduction in the 1950s, offset lithographic printing has replaced other Arabic printing techniques, at least in some spheres. Three reasons have been advanced for the predominance of lithography in some Muslim societies: technical versatility (it can handle a great variety of images), artistic nature and cost effectiveness. In addition, this technique 'lends itself remarkably well to the reproduction of writing', and enables the reader accustomed to the manuscript works to read the lithographs in a handwritten form with all its calligraphy and decorations. This seems to be the primary reason for its preponderance in the Islamic book market of Nigeria. Furthermore, it enables both computer-supported typewritten texts, on the one hand, and handwritten works in local calligraphic styles, on the other, to be printed lithographically. It is also cost-effective, especially when a large number of books are to be produced. A large percentage of the costs incurred occur at the pre-press stage, which involves copying, scanning, plate making and a host of other expenses, but in subsequent print runs, the same plates could be used resulting in significant savings.

Despite the advantages of this technique, the local presses in northern Nigeria seemed to print few Arabic books until the 1970s. For example, according to the NORLA catalogue, up to 1959, the Agency published only four Arabic books, shown in the table below. Moreover, up to 1974, only eight private presses had offset machines in Kano.

Table 3: Arabic/Islamic Books Published by NORLA (NORLA 1959, 12–14).

S/N	Name of author	Title
1	Muhammad Bello	*Infāq al-maysūr*
2	Abdullahi Fodio	*Ḍiyāʿ al-hukkām*
3	Abdullahi Fodio	*Īdāʿ al-nusūkh man akhadhtu ʿanhu min al-shuyūkh*
3	Muhammad Umaru	*Waraqat al-Islām*
4	Nasiru Kabara	*al-Nafaḥāt al-Naṣiriyya*

One of the factors responsible for the lack of local publications was the fact that Kano still relied heavily on Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s as the primary source of Arabic books, including short texts. In the 1970s, Beirut became the leading source of imports. Most Arabic books were imported via these countries if not produced within them. Secondly, the machines used in this period mostly had only a limited capacity. Up to the end of the 1950s, the KNAP was using a Rota Print Machine. It was only in the 1960s that a KORD 64 was acquired. The KORD 64 machine eventually became the preferable offset machine for Kano printers because of its durability and higher capacity for printing compared to the Rota.

7 Old conventions, new mechanical technique: The 'printed manuscripts'

By the beginning of the 1980s, all the favourable factors for a boom in Arabic printing were present. As noted previously, import restrictions forced authors, publishers, and booksellers of Islamic and Arabic books to look inward to print their works. Moreover, the local presses, like their foreign counterparts, had offset lithographic facilities, but the Nigerian printers used this technology to begin producing books that emulated the region's handwritten tradition.

Lithography provided the opportunity for the booksellers, local authors and their patrons to sponsor publication and distribute works that were previously only available in manuscript form. The Hausa booksellers-turned-publishers used the new technology mostly to publish classic works that constituted the Islamic curriculum of West Africa. These were works that circulated for centuries in manuscript form. The most popular among these publishers (who were at the same time booksellers) were Abdullahi Yasari (1919–1991), Sani Adamu

(1924–1996), Ayuba Sani Magoga (d. 1983), Zakariya Musa Salga (d. 1997), Malam Baban Kabu (d. 1998), Saminu Sa'adu ʿYan Tandu (d. 2006), Muhammad Danjinjiri (d. 1993), and Sharif Bala Gabari (d. 2016).

Except for Gabari, who was a calligrapher and copyist of the Qur'an, the rest of these individuals became engaged in both the publishing and retail sale of books. All of them, including Gabari, had bookshops in the Kurmi market in Kano. These booksellers emerged from a class of Islamic scholars connected to the 'Reformed Tijaniyya', to borrow the term used by Paden (1973). They dominated the Kano Islamic book market for three decades, from the 1960s to the early 1990s when young entrepreneurs took over.

The lithographs these entrepreneurs printed could be described as 'printed manuscripts' or what John Hunwick called the 'Market Edition'. According to Hunwick, this book-style forms 'a half-way house between the manuscript tradition and the printing'. They were produced and distributed throughout Nigeria and neighboring countries in thousands of copies. Offset lithography was used in keeping the manuscript culture alive. These books retained certain manuscript features such as colophons, catchwords, interlinear glosses and so on. Works that circulated in manuscript form for decades or even centuries were printed once offset lithography became available. From the colophon of *Risālat taḥṣīl al-waṭr* (Fig 3), the date of composition is stated as 1301 ᴀʜ / 1932 ᴄᴇ. This indicates that the text had been in manuscript form since 1932 until printed by the NMPP in the late 1950s.

Offset lithography permitted not only the replication of older works in their traditional handwritten format, but preserved other features of the manuscript tradition as well. For instance, since many manuscripts were short, containing only a few pages, the availability of the printing technology made it possible to revive the practice of compiling and printing a collection of works by the same author in a single volume. The lithograph edition of *Risālat taḥṣīl al-waṭr* by Abū Bakr Atīq is a collection of two different works (*Risālat taḥṣīl al-waṭr* and *Izāḥat al-shajan*) by the same author in a single volume (Fig. 2). Other features of the manuscript tradition can be observed in *Risālat taḥṣīl al-waṭr*. No page numbers were used, for example. Instead, catchwords ran throughout the book at the bottom of each page, linking one to the next. Similarly on the last page, a colophon was written in the shape of an inverted trapezoid, typical of traditional manuscripts (Fig. 3).

In addition to being a period of growth, the 1980s also witnessed a change in the nature of the relationship between the Hausa Islamic booksellers and authors, on the one hand, and their printers, on the other hand. Some sellers of Islamic and Arabic books began to handle all the stages of 'printed manuscript'

production by themselves. Previously, the Hausa author or trader would take a manuscript or a sample of the book they wanted to print to a printer who would provide a quote after carefully considering the expenses incurred on plates, paper, ink, work hours, etcetera. The client would then make an initial advanced payment of a certain percentage of the total sum. After the work was completed, they would pay the balance.

With growing demand, printers were ultimately overwhelmed, resulting in their failure to keep their promises of completing commissioned works at the agreed upon time. Two sellers in the Kurmi market, located within the Kano walled city, arguably the biggest Islamic book market in Nigeria and even West Africa since the 1970s, began to handle stages of the 'printed manuscript' production by themselves. It was probably not coincidental that these traders were Ibrahim Halilu and Habibu Ayuba Magoga, whose father, Ayuba was an early pioneer of Hausa printing.

The two merchants, starting from the 1980s, began to personally oversee the printing of works rather than jobbing them out to local print shops. The young publishers would have a work copied by a scribe, then take the manuscript to a lithographer who would transfer its image through a negative film onto a press plate. The next stage was to buy the required reams of paper which they would take to the printer alongside the plates. After the printing was completed, the printer would be paid for his services and the two booksellers were responsible for trimming and binding. But, most importantly, the press plates would be returned to them which could be used for the subsequent print runs. So, although printing did not take place 'in house' the Magoga brothers were able to exert control over production.

8 Conclusion

Adeeb Khalid, while examining the printing and publishing trade in Tsarist Central Asia, argues that lithography enabled the manuscript tradition to continue in the Print Age. Khalid explores the place of 'printed manuscript' in the context of Tsarist Central Asia. The history of printing in the twentieth-century northern Nigeria, where offset lithography also precipitated a boom in the production of the 'printed manuscript', followed a similar pattern. In addition, the case of Kano demonstrated how an industry pioneered by British colonial administration was in the late colonial period expanded by the Yoruba migrant community. However, the Hausa printers who began to venture into printing from the 1960s complemented the Yoruba role in the industry. In fact, it took the

initiatives of the Hausa publishers while relying primarily on Yoruba printers, to engage the local printing industry in massive production of 'printed manuscripts'.

The case of Kano has indicated how printing technology was deployed from the late 1950s to produce the 'printed manuscripts'. Despite the proliferation of computer-based typewritten works that use modern book conventions, 'printed manuscripts' are still produced and distributed in the region. These dynamics underscore the complicated relationship between the manuscripts and print in Muslim societies of sub-Saharan Africa and prompt several questions. Why are 'printed manuscripts' still dominant in some areas of sub-Saharan Africa despite the availability of alternative forms of books? Is this connected to the existence of the traditional Islamic school system which relies on 'printed manuscripts'? Is the preference associated with peoples' love for their inherited manuscript tradition? These are questions that require further investigation.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FGN 1976	*Digest of Statistics*, vol. 25, Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics
FGN 1975–1978	*Industrial Survey of Nigeria* 1975–1978, Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics
FGN 1980–1983	*Industrial Survey of Nigeria* 1980–1983, Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics
KNAP	Kano Native Authority Press
KSHCB	Kano State History and Culture Bureau
NEPU	Northern Element Progressive Union
NMPP	Northern Maktabat Printing Press
NORLA	Northern Regional Literature Agency
NORLA 1959	*Tsarin Littatafan NORLA* (NORLA Hausa Catalogue), Zaria: NORLA
NPC	Northern People's Congress

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Fig. 1: The first hand press used at Oluseyi Printing Press in 1947 (Olaniyi 1998, 76; reproduced with the author's kind permission).
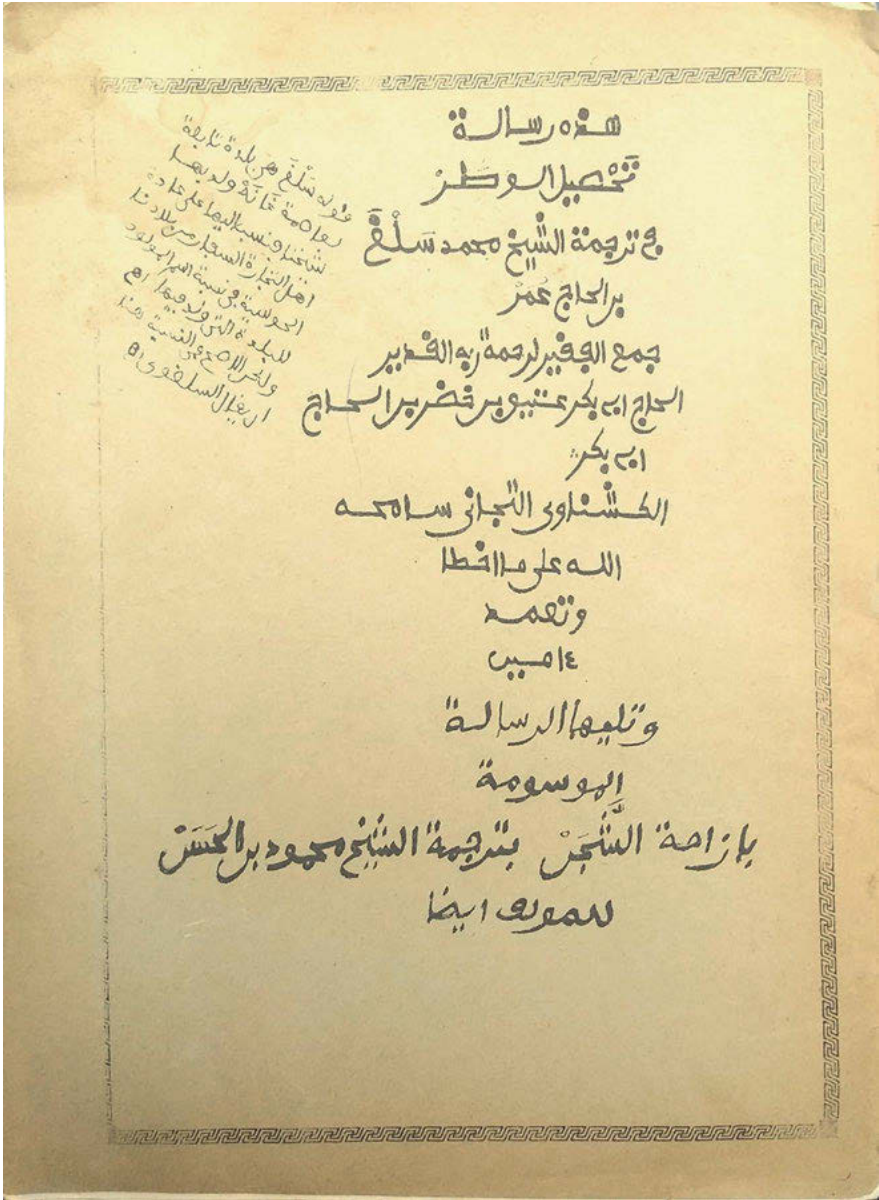
Fig. 2: Cover page of *Risālat taḥṣīl al-waṭr* by Abū Bakr Atīq printed by Northern Maktabat Printing Press (author's photograph).

الحمد لله رب العالمين وصلى الله على سيد نا محمد
وعلى آله وسلم تم الكتاب يوم الخميس
الهجرة عام اسلام نبي بة
على الله على محمد وعلى
آله وسلم ورضي الله
عمر شيخنا احمد
التجاني واهل
طريقته
امين
امين
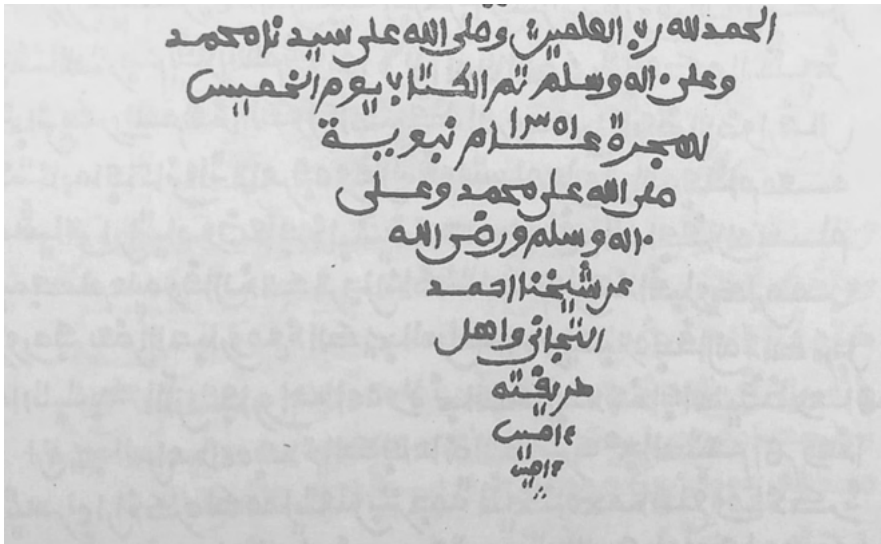
Fig. 3: Colophon of *Risālat taḥṣīl al-waṭr* (author's photograph).

Indexes

This book has three indexes: the first of personal names, the second of titles of texts, and third a general index. Within each index, the headings are arranged in word-by-word order, with the definite article al- ignored when it is at the beginning of a heading. The title 'shaykh', unless when it is an essential element of names, has been placed in parenthesis at the end of the name. An effort has been made to uniformise names and foreign terms in the indexes, and so they may appear slightly differently in the book, using variant transliteration. The primary aim was to assist the reader in finding names and terms of interest, rather than creating a concordance. This is also why terms that appear too frequently (e.g. 'printing'), and would therefore be impractical as index headings, are omitted.

Imre Galambos

Index of Personal Names

Index of Titles

General Index

Contributors

Sani Yakubu Adam completed a PhD in 2021 from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and is a Lecturer in History at Bayero University Kano, Nigeria. His thesis focuses on the formation and expansion of the book market of Kano, the major entrepot of northern Nigeria. His areas of interest include the history of the book and the history of Islam in northern Nigeria.

Andrea Brigaglia is an Associate Professor in the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies, University of Naples L'Orientale, Italy. He was previously a Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa. His research focuses on the historical anthropology of Islam in northern Nigeria. His publications, always with a focus on Nigeria, cover themes such as oral Qur'anic exegesis; Qur'anic education and calligraphy; Arabic and Hausa Sufi poetry; and the discursive dimension of both Boko Haram and anti-Boko Haram Islamic mobilisation.

Jeremy Dell is a Lecturer in African History at the University of Edinburgh. He is primarily interested in the intersecting histories of Sufism, Islamic law, and the global history of the book. His current book project, *Saving Tradition: Archiving Islam in the Western Sahel*, explores the history of collecting and preserving Arabic manuscripts in the West African countries of Senegal and Mali. He holds a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.

Alessandro Gori is an Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. His specialist subject area is the Islamic manuscript tradition in the Horn of Africa, a subject on which he has published extensively.

Titus Nemeth is a type designer, typographer, and historian. His practice spans commercial and cultural work, with a focus on Arabic and multilingual design. His research interests revolve around Arabic typographic history, and the history of the book, print technology, and design. His publications reflect his activity in two spheres and seek to bridge historical research and contemporary design practice. He has taught typographic design at schools in several countries.

Mahmoud Jaber holds an MA in Liberal Studies form Georgetown University, and has over ten years of experience as an Arabic-English translator. He is currently working on a fictional video series in Arabic that utilizes an imaginary future to examine questions of speculative and critical theory. His interests include narratology, Islamic ritual, political economy, theories of technology, science fiction, and Arab-futurism.

J.R. Osborn is a scholar and experimentalist of communication. He is currently an Associate Professor of Communication, Culture, and Technology and Co-Director of the Technology Design Studio/Iteration Lab at Georgetown University. His interests include comparative media studies, print history, design, semiotics, visual communication, and museum studies, with a regional focus of the Middle East and Africa.

Scott Reese holds a Professorship of Islamic History at Northern Arizona University but is currently a Senior Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the Universität Hamburg. He has published widely on the history of Islam in the Indian Ocean and his current project explores the relationship between manuscripts and print in the evolving Islamic written tradition.

Kathryn A. Schwartz is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her current research focuses on the history of the book in nineteenth-century Cairo.

Natalia K. Suit holds a PhD in Anthropology and a Graduate Certificate in Middle East Studies from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as well as MA's from the American University in Cairo and Warsaw University. Her interests include theories of materiality, religious practices, print history, globalization, and modern Islam.

Ulrike Stark is a Professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on modern Hindi literature, South Asian book history, and the cultural and intellectual history of North India in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She has published widely on South Asian print culture and is the co-creator and principal investigator of a digital humanities project titled 'Chapakhana: Mapping the Spread of Print in South Asia'.

Holger Warnk works at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. His research focuses on Protestant missionaries in West Malaysia 1800–1941 and on nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century printing in Insular Southeast Asia.