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# RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF ULEMA AND SCRIBAL ACTORS IN THE OTTOMAN TRANSITION FROM MANUSCRIPT TO THE PRINTED MEDIUM

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## Abstract

Scholarship on the Ottoman printing enterprise has long neglected the part played by the traditional actors of the written word, including the ulema and calligraphers, in the rise of the press. Though traditionally viewed as opponents of the new print technology, these actors continued to fulfill vital roles in everything from editorial work to the technological aspects of printing, generating new opportunities for themselves in a rapidly changing cultural environment. This paper focuses on their role in the Imperial Press to reveal how the know-how of these actors was critical for the transition to the new Ottoman cultural medium of print. It further suggests that as these actors adapted and

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carried their skills to that medium, they themselves were influenced by the new technology of the press, and the novel ways of relating to the written word that came with it, in a profound way, with significant implications for the nature of scholarship and the shape of the scholarly career track during the period.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Modernization, Printing Press, Ulema, Editorial Staff, Calligraphers.

## INTRODUCTION

The story of printing is more than the history of the printing press, for the agents and distinctive culture of the press did not arise in a vacuum; they overlapped with the actors of the manuscript world, who maintained their significant role in the literary culture of the nineteenth century and adapted to the specific needs of new print technology in a way that created many continuities between the two media. The failure to acknowledge their identities, roles, and functions has resulted in a sharp dichotomy in the historiography of the Ottoman printing press between the so-called reformists inspired by the pre-revolutionary French rationalist spirit and the “religiously oriented anti-Western movement.”<sup>1</sup>

European travelers in Ottoman lands associated the latter group, particularly the ulema, with “bigoted opposition,”<sup>2</sup> and a similar view has been adopted by many modern researchers, who argue that religious scholars vehemently opposed the circulation of printed books because of the challenge it posed to their “entrenched monopolies of intellectual authority.”<sup>3</sup> Printing, on this view, attacked “the very heart of Islamic systems for the transmission of knowledge,” namely, person-to-person transmission between master and pupil.<sup>4</sup> Other actors with a vested interest in traditional scribal culture, including scribes and calligraphers, are viewed as

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1 Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), 52.

2 See, for instance, James Elsworth de Kay, *Sketches of Turkey in 1831 and 1832* (New York: J. J. Harper, 1833), 146; Abdolonyme Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey: An Account of the Religious, Political, Social and Commercial Condition of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, trans. Lady Easthope (London: John Murray, 1856), 237.

3 Geoffrey Roper, “The History of the Book in the Muslim World,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, ed. Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1:332–33.

4 Francis Robinson, “Islam and the Impact of Print in South Asia,” in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, ed. Nigel Crook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65.

having opposed printing for the same reason, fearing that it would turn their world upside down.<sup>5</sup>

This dichotomy in traditional scholarship takes for granted a particular notion of printing as a point of rupture, a sharp break between the traditional means of textual production and the new. In European history, this presupposition has long been maintained by a vein of scholarship stressing the “revolutionary” character of the printing press and the unprecedented changes it introduced.<sup>6</sup> Yet over the past few decades, an alternative view has become more pronounced in the scholarship, one eschewing the lens of rupture in favor of that of long-term transformation. Major evidence has been found for the continuity of the manuscript tradition despite the transition to the new medium of print.<sup>7</sup> This continuity is especially pronounced in the early period of European printing—until 1501, also known as the “incunabula period”—during which neither the physical attributes of printed editions nor the process by which they were prepared differed significantly from the scribal tradition.<sup>8</sup>

Recent scholarship in Islamic and Ottoman studies, too, has begun to emphasize the dialogue between print culture and the vibrant manuscript world, thereby challenging the notion that traditional scribal agents were necessarily threatened by or opposed to the rise of print. In the Ottoman context, a pioneering study in this regard was penned by Hatice Aynur and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, who showed that early printed texts shared many of the same physical attributes as manuscripts.<sup>9</sup> More recently, the late

5 See, for example, A. D. Jeltyakov, *Türkiye'nin Sosyo-Politik ve Kültürel Hayatında Basın (1729–1908 Yılları)* (Ankara: Basın Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü, 1979), 21; Şerif Mardin, “Some Notes on an Early Phase in the Modernization of Communications in Turkey,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3, no. 3 (April 1961): 257–58.

6 Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

7 Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

8 Anthony Grafton, “The Importance of Being Printed: Review of ‘The Printing Press as an Agent of Change,’ by Elisabeth L. Eisenstein,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1980): 265–86.

9 Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu and Hatice Aynur, “Yazmadan Basmaya Geçiş: Osmanlı Basma Kitap Geleneğinin Doğuşu (1729–1848),” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 22 (2003): 219–50.

Kathryn Schwartz demonstrated that this continuity extended well beyond the printed texts themselves through the case of the press of Mehmed Ali Paşa in Cairo, which drew its staff, material, and cultural cachet almost entirely from the manuscript world.<sup>10</sup> As others have shown, new actors who sought to gain a readership in the region had to tap into the networks of local manuscript culture to attract readership;<sup>11</sup> and classical manuscripts, and editors and publishers familiar enough with them to bring them to print, continued to be in great demand well into the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup>

There is thus a growing acknowledgment that the Islamic written tradition incorporated new technologies “in dialogue with and alongside established handwritten and calligraphic traditions,” and that it did so largely unproblematically, as Scott Reese puts it in the introduction to his recent edited volume on the subject.<sup>13</sup> As the contributions to Reese’s volume make clear, this was a process that played out across the Muslim world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, across Africa, the Arab world, colonial India, and Southeast Asia. Yet curiously absent from that volume, and from other recent scholarship generally, is any account of what was happening in the Ottoman center during the period.<sup>14</sup>

In an effort to rectify this gap, this article examines the relationship between the worlds of manuscript and print in the context of the Ottoman Imperial Press in the first half of the nineteenth century. It demonstrates that early printing practices in Istanbul, much like those in other parts of the Muslim world, relied on agents and methods of the manuscript world that both predated and helped

10 Kathryn A. Schwartz, “Meaningful Mediums: A Material and Intellectual History of Manuscript and Print Production in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Cairo” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015).

11 Hala Auji, *Printing Arab Modernity: Book Culture and the American Press in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

12 Ahmed El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 78.

13 Scott Reese, ed., *Manuscript and Print in the Islamic Tradition* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 14.

14 While two chapters in the volume do address the Ottoman Empire, both limit themselves to a discussion of the Mütferrika press in the eighteenth century. See Titus Nemeth, “Overlooked: The Role of Craft in the Adoption of Typography in the Muslim Middle East,” and J. R. Osborn, “The Ottoman System of Scripts and the Mütferrika Press,” in Reese, *Manuscript and Print*, 21–60, 61–88.

usher in the new print culture. Challenging the view that these agents were opposed to the printing press, it focuses on two groups, ulema and calligraphers, and shows that they were indispensable to the transition to the printed medium—the ulema through their intellectual know-how, and calligraphers through their aesthetic expertise. Through a synthesis of archival sources, manuscripts, chronicles, early printed books, newspapers, and European travelogues, this article demonstrates that rather than a stark clash between these traditional groups and a new and foreign technology, a reciprocal relationship developed whereby each adapted to and served the needs of the other. This is not to say that tensions did not occasionally surface. They did. But as I will show, such tensions were, if anything, a result of local actors' desire to play a greater role in the press and in the Ottoman cultural world more generally, a role curtailed by the active employment of foreign agents, rather than a result of any opposition to the press itself.

But my ultimate aim here is not merely to show that a process unfolding across the contemporary Muslim world was also taking place in the Ottoman capital, though documenting that it indeed was is nevertheless important.<sup>15</sup> Having shown that the new technology and new institutions of the press did not necessarily eliminate the old professions or completely alienate their agents, and that instead many actors with expertise based in manuscript culture carried their skills to the new environment and found venues of employment where they could utilize them, I turn to the even more interesting question of what happened when they got there. That is, if the relationship between the actors of manuscript culture and the new press was one marked by synergy rather than antagonism, what did that synergy produce? This is a large question that I cannot hope to do full justice to here, but in the case of the ulema, the result seems to have been the beginnings of a complex renegotiation of the contours of the scholarly career

<sup>15</sup>By documenting the role played by ulema and other actors in the Ottoman center in the establishment and institutionalization of the press, I bring the scholarship on this subject into accord with the broad consensus among Ottoman historians on the centrality of the ulema in other new career fields emerging in the nineteenth century. For recent studies in this vein, see Abdulhamit Kırmızı, "Şer'an Olmadığı Halde Kanunen ve Nizamen: Osmanlı Uleması ve Tanzimat," in *Sahn-ı Semân'dan Dârülfünûn'a: Osmanlı'da İlim ve Fikir Dünyası, Âlimler, Müesseseler ve Fikrî Eserler XIX. Yüzyıl* (Istanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2021), 31–71; Erhan Bektaş, *Religious Reform in the Late Ottoman Empire: Institutional Change and the Professionalization of the Ulema* (I. B. Tauris, 2022).

path, and indeed perhaps of the concept of scholarship itself. In other words, in adopting the new technology of the press and adapting it to their own ends, the agents of Ottoman manuscript culture not only furthered existing tradition but also reshaped it and the world of scholarship to which it was bound in novel and sometimes unexpected ways, many of which remain a vital, if still not fully integrated, part of scholarly life today.

Ultimately, my aim in this article is twofold: first, to show how the two groups of actors most frequently linked to opposition to the press—namely, ulema and calligraphers—carved a space for themselves in the new printed medium and thereby served to facilitate a smooth transition from the world of manuscript to that of print; second, to illuminate how members of the ulema used the rising prestige of the press and their growing prominence within it to push for advancement within and expansion of their traditional career pathways. To this end, the article begins with an overview of the early context of ulema involvement in printing and the institutionalization of the press in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To highlight the ways ulema members utilized their traditional scholarly skills in preparing texts for print and mobilized their scholarly connections to promote engagement with the printing enterprise, I then offer a case study of Mehmed Esad Efendi (d. 1848), a high-ranking ulema appointed in 1831 as the first director of the newly centralized printing establishment. In the following section, I shift my focus to calligraphers, reflecting on their vital role in shaping the technical and material aspects of printing and making the printed book aesthetically appealing for a traditional manuscript audience. In the final section, I return to the ulema and the ways they sought to use their involvement with the press to secure promotion and advancement within the scholarly career track, thereby both recasting the press as part of the traditional world of scholarly endeavor and expanding the world of scholarship into a new domain of printing, editing, and scholarly publishing.

## THE ULEMA AND THE EARLY INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE OTTOMAN PRESS

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Many of the agents involved in shaping manuscript culture in the Islamic and Ottoman traditions were members of the scholarly



class, the ulema.<sup>16</sup> As part of their profession, scholars were familiar with different manuscript editions, and it was often they who copied, collated, and translated them.<sup>17</sup> As noted by Reinhard Schulze, even after the arrival of the press, and especially between 1803 and 1850, Islamic scholars retained their monopoly over book production and dissemination; and, as authorities controlling the libraries, they also decided which manuscripts to release for printing, especially favoring those they could use in teaching.<sup>18</sup> This was true both for the Ottoman ulema and for those in many other parts of the Islamic world as well. In his study of printing in nineteenth-century Morocco, for instance, Abdulrazak Fawz describes how the ulema there were similarly integrated into the printing enterprise as scribes, editors, authors, and publishers.<sup>19</sup>

Challenging the claims of traditional scholarship, which has argued for the waning relevance of the ulema in the age of reform,<sup>20</sup> recent studies have reformulated their role as active agents in the adoption of new technologies and the articulation and execution of new state initiatives.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, from the establishment of the

<sup>16</sup>For links between scholars and scribes in the early Islamic period, see Johannes Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, trans. Geoffrey French (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 37–53. For the role of jurists in shaping Ottoman manuscript/textual practices, see Guy Burak, “Reliable Books: Islamic Law, Canonization, and Manuscripts in the Ottoman Empire (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries),” in *Canonical Texts and Scholarly Practices: A Global Comparative Approach*, ed. Anthony Grafton and Glenn Most (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 14–33.

<sup>17</sup>Muhsin Mahdi, “From the Manuscript Age to the Age of Printed Books,” in *The History of the Book in the Middle East*, ed. Geoffrey Roper (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 130.

<sup>18</sup>Reinhard Schulze, “The Birth of Tradition and Modernity in 18th and 19th Century Islamic Culture: The Case of Printing,” *Culture and History* 16 (1997): 48.

<sup>19</sup>Abdulrazak Fawzi, “The Kingdom of the Book: The History of Printing as an Agency of Change in Morocco between 1865 and 1912” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1990).

<sup>20</sup>For a review of this literature on the ulema’s supposed decline, see Erhan Bektaş, *Religious Reform*, 1–16.

<sup>21</sup>For literature on the ulema’s various roles as active agents of reform, see Erhan Bektaş, *Religious Reform*, 17–23; Jun Akiba, “From Kadi to Naib: Reorganization of the Ottoman Sharia Judiciary in the Tanzimat Period,” in *Frontiers of the Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, ed. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Halil İbrahim Erbay, “Teaching and Learning in the Madrasas of Istanbul During the Late Ottoman Period” (PhD diss., University of London, SOAS, 2009);

first Ottoman press by İbrahim Müteferrika (d. 1747) in 1727, many members of the ulema were officially integrated into mechanisms of textual production and oversight. An important *fetva* of Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi (d. 1743), for example, aside from defining the exact genres of books that could legally be printed (excluding those on Islamic law, exegesis, hadith, and theology), assigned three members of the ulema the task of checking the accuracy of printed books and preventing mistakes—namely, Mevlana İshak, the *kadı* of Istanbul; Mevlana Sahib, the *kadı* of Salonica; and Mevlana Asad, the *kadı* of Galata—and another, Şeyh Mevlana Musa of the Kasım Paşa Mevlevihane, to oversee the proofreading.<sup>22</sup>

İbrahim Müteferrika, the archetypal printer in the Ottoman Empire for decades to come, stood at the junction of manuscript culture and the new printed medium.<sup>23</sup> He decided which books to print; and, at a time when none of the tasks specific to printing were yet defined, he served as their corrector, collator, and translator as well as their printer, publisher, and seller. Also a prolific author, he brought together the best of the manuscript tradition and helped transfer it to the new medium of the printed book, thereby laying the foundation for a new tradition: the early amalgamation known as the “incunabula,” the hallmark of the Ottoman print tradition for the following century.<sup>24</sup>

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Arzu Güldöşüren, “II. Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı” (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2013); Mahmut Dilbaz, *Dindar Modern İtaatkar: Sultan II. Abdülhamid’in Eğitim Politikalarında İslam Meselesi* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2021); Filiz Dıgıroğlu, *Osmanlı’da Dini Matbuat: Sultan Abdülhamit ve II. Meşrutiyet Devrinde Kurumlar Aktörler Denetim ve Sansür Politikaları* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2022).

22 For an English translation of the *fetva*, see Christopher Murphy, “Ottoman Imperial Documents Relating to the History of Books and Printing,” in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 285.

23 For an analysis of the early Ottoman transition from manuscript to print culture with a focus on İbrahim Müteferrika, see Orlin Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika ya da İlk Osmanlı Matbaa Serüveni* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2013). For a detailed overview of his publications and intellectual circle, see Vefa Erginbaş, “Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context: İbrahim Müteferrika and His Intellectual Landscape,” in *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East*, ed. Geoffrey Roper (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 53–100.

24 For a visual treatment of Müteferrika’s books as “printed manuscripts,” see Yasemin Gencer, “İbrahim Müteferrika and the Age of the Printed

Despite the gaps in the operations of the printing enterprise following Müteferrika's death in 1747, the agents who resurrected it at different points later in the century were mainly from the high echelons of ulema. These included the chief judges (*kadiasker*) of Rumelia and Anatolia, Kadı İbrahim Efendi and Ahmed Efendi, at various intervals from 1747 until 1755; and Mehmed Raşid Efendi (d. 1798), a member of the ulema, and Ahmed Vasıf Efendi (d. 1806), a scribe deeply familiar with the religious sciences, at various intervals from 1783 until 1794.<sup>25</sup> Further underlining the indispensability of the ulema for the press, Sultan Abdülhamid I (r. 1774–89) issued an imperial decree in 1789 emphasizing that the development of printing as an art depended on the skill and expertise of people knowledgeable in the various sciences (*les diverses sciences*) and articulate in prose and verse, for only they were capable of correcting books with special care in their most perfect form.<sup>26</sup>

From the beginning, printing was closely tied to the needs of educators. When the new Imperial Press was established in 1797 under the name Tab'hâne-i Hümâyûn, the driving force behind it was the urgent need for textbooks.<sup>27</sup> The press's first home was the new Imperial School of Military Engineering (Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümâyûn), and the school's head, the *müderri*s (madrasa professor) Abdurrahman Efendi, was also the press's first director.<sup>28</sup> The press itself, as the Italian traveler Giambattista Toderini

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Manuscript," in *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: Ten Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections*, ed. Christiane Gruber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 154–93.

25 Kemal Beydilli, "Raşid Efendi Matbaası," in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Istanbul: TDV, 2019), 415–16; Kemal Beydilli, *İki İbrahim: Müteferrika ve Halefi* (Istanbul, Kronik Yayınları, 2019). Also see Ethan Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasıf Efendi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 15.

26 The decree of Sultan Abdülhamid I is cited by the Italian traveler Toderini mentioned in the next paragraph. Giambattista Toderini, *De la littérature des Turcs*, vol. 1, trans. Antoine Cournand (Paris: Chez Poinçot Libraire, 1789), 229–30.

27 Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık Tarihinde Mühendishane Matbaası (1776–1826)* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1995), 99.

28 Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Directorate of State Archives, Ottoman Archive, Istanbul (hereafter BOA), C. MF. 126/6276, 7 Şevval 1215 (21 February 1801).

(d. 1799) noted during a visit, was staffed by “educated people” (*efendis, gens infruits*) busy correcting books.<sup>29</sup>

An overview of the editorial process in the early years of Ottoman printing reveals that the editorial workload, at least ideally, was shouldered by two main actors: the corrector (*musahhih*) and the collator (*mukabelecî*). Ottoman officials considered the corrector’s task to be the more delicate and demanding of the two.<sup>30</sup> It involved the revision of the language of the handwritten manuscript before sending it to the typesetter. In this, the job closely resembled that of the scribe in the manuscript tradition. Though their primary responsibility was to produce “an accurate reproduction of the original work,”<sup>31</sup> this seemingly straightforward task often involved a great deal of painstaking labor and no small amount of personal intervention, especially in cases where multiple versions of a particular text existed and the corrector or scribe had to track these down and decide which variants to omit and which to include.<sup>32</sup> In any event, once the corrector’s job was complete, the collator would check this revised draft against the original manuscript, typically by reading it out loud and simultaneously making corrections. Once these stages were complete, the manuscript would be sent to the typesetter and then printed, after which the printed pages would be read for a final time by the collator to the corrector to detect any errors in typesetting.<sup>33</sup>

As noted above, in the early days of the Imperial Press, it was primarily textbooks deemed useful for students that were selected

<sup>29</sup>Toderini, *De la littérature des Turcs*, 232–33. One of these important “educated” people was Gelenbevi İsmail Efendi (d. 1791), a member of the ulema, who also taught at the school. See Şerafettin Gölcük and Metin Yurdağür, “Gelenbevi,” in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13 (Istanbul: TDV, 1996), 552–55.

<sup>30</sup>BOA, İ. DUİT. 136/39, 19 Zilhicce 1254 (5 March 1839).

<sup>31</sup>Muhsin Mahdi, “From the Manuscript Age,” 136–37.

<sup>32</sup>For an example of what this process looked like in practice, see BOA, HAT 678/33034, 1249 (1833–34), concerning the preparation for print of Debbagzâde Numan Efendi’s *Tuhfetü’s-sukûk* (Istanbul: Dârü’t-Tıbâ’atî’l-Âmire, Evâhir-i Rebûlevvel 1259).

<sup>33</sup>These steps are drawn from Muhsin Mahdi, “From the Manuscript Age,” 136–37, and from El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic*, 82. El Shamsy cites them from the manual of a twentieth-century Yemeni corrector but says they are also applicable to the Egyptian context of the mid-nineteenth century.

for print.<sup>34</sup> Many of the ulema, as agents of education, saw the advantages that printing offered as a means of facilitating greater access to knowledge for a greater number of students. And to realize the potential of the new medium, they turned to other members of their class for help in selecting which particular texts to print. Mehmed Raşid Efendi, for instance, noted in his introduction to the 1785 edition of *Kâfiye mu'ribi*, a textbook he says he selected for print to meet the need for a mass-produced grammar book, that he arrived at his decision to print that specific volume, a staple of the madrasa curriculum, only after consulting several “educated people” (*ashâb-ı ma'ârif*).<sup>35</sup>

After several gaps in the operations of the printing enterprise, the groundwork for a permanent solution was laid during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–39), who initiated a centralizing reform program following the abolition of the Janissary corps in 1826. It was under Mahmud II that the first official Ottoman gazette was established, the *Takvîm-i Vekâyi'*, in 1831,<sup>36</sup> along with a directorate charged with overseeing its publication. Mehmed Esad Efendi was appointed as the first director (*nâzır*). In a few months' time, the administration of the Imperial Press, Tab'hâne-i Âmire, was also annexed to the directorate under Esad Efendi's supervision.<sup>37</sup> Hence, after 1831, all official printing business in the Ottoman Empire was to be regulated by the directorate. While the Ottoman bureaucracy continued to refer to the printing house of the gazette (Takvîmhâne-i Âmire) and the Imperial Press as distinct entities until 1863, in this article I merge both units under the general title of the Imperial Press, as there was a great deal of crossover between the two in terms of staff, equipment, and finances between 1831

34For a detailed list of these books, see Kemal Beydilli, *Mühendishane ve Üsküdar Matbaalarında Basılan Kitapların Listesi ve Bir Katalog* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997).

35Zeynîzâde Hüseyin Efendi, *Kâfiye mu'ribi* (Istanbul: Abdurrahman Muhib Efendi ma'rifetiyle, 1234).

36For a recent study on the official discourse of the first official Ottoman gazette, see Özgür Türesay, “The Political Language of *Takvîm-i Vekâyî*: The Discourse and Temporality of Ottoman ‘Reform’ (1831–1834),” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 31 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejts.6874>.

37This annexation was reported in *Takvîm-i Vekâyî*, no. 26 (17 Zilkade 1247 [18 April 1831]), 2.

and 1863. Whenever the sources suggest a meaningful distinction, however, I refer to them individually.

These three decades, from 1831 to 1863, constituted an experimental period for Ottoman printing. Staffing decisions were made and tasks were determined through ad hoc decisions rather than according to a specific set of standards. One can partially infer this from the quick turnover of administrators during the period: eleven different directors were appointed in a span of twenty-six years, some on multiple occasions (one was appointed twice, and another three times).<sup>38</sup> Even so, the press's first director, Esad Efendi, would play a formative role in the early coalescence of the culture at the press and in the world of Ottoman print more broadly.

### BETWEEN MANUSCRIPT AND PRINT: MEHMED ESAD EFENDI AND ROLE OF THE ULEMA AT THE EARLY IMPERIAL PRESS

Esad Efendi's encounter with the printed medium as both a producer and consumer of texts offers a first-hand window onto the early years of the Ottoman press, the transition to the printed medium, and the world of actors involved in both. His professional trajectory also embodies the changing nature of the Ottoman scholarly-bureaucratic career track in the mid-nineteenth century and its increasing overlap with the world of print.<sup>39</sup> As a traditional Ottoman scholar, Esad Efendi remained deeply embedded in manuscript culture both before and after his tenure as director of the Imperial Press between 1831 and 1837.<sup>40</sup> The extensive documentary record he left behind—including archival documents

<sup>38</sup>For a list of directors, see Güldane Çolak, "Osmanlı Matbaacılığında Takvimhane-i Amire'nin Yeri ve Önemi" (master's thesis, Istanbul University, 2011), 17.

<sup>39</sup>"Scholar-bureaucrat" is a term coined by Abdurrahman Atçıl with reference to the group of scholars in Ottoman government service beginning in the late fifteenth century. See Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>40</sup>For a short biography of Esad Efendi, see Nazlı Vatansever, "Sahhaflarşeyhizade Vakanüvis Esad Efendi'nin (1789–1848) Kendi Kaleminden Oto/biyografik Metin Parçaları," *Toplumsal Tarih Akademi* 1 (2022): 8–21.

and scrapbooks (*mecmu'as*) in which he jotted down samples of his correspondence with Sultan Mahmud II and other important contemporary statesmen—provides clues about his adaptation to the new medium, his incorporation into the enterprise of other agents from a similar background, and, finally, his objection to the inclusion of new, foreign actors. It also testifies to just how vital manuscript practices were in the early shaping of the Ottoman printed book.

Esad Efendi's relationship with books was a natural extension of his background. His father, Ahmed Efendi, a *müderres* and a *kadı*, also served as the sheikh of the booksellers' guild in Istanbul, and Esad Efendi was thus known as the "son of the booksellers' sheikh" (*sahaflar şeyhizadesi*). He was an eminent bibliophile who established his own library of about four thousand books in the district of Yerebatan,<sup>41</sup> a prolific author and translator who penned many historical, literary, and religious texts,<sup>42</sup> and an esteemed scholar who rose quickly through the madrasa ranks.<sup>43</sup>

Esad Efendi's appointment as director of the Imperial Press no doubt owed something to this background.<sup>44</sup> He was also close to Mahmud II, accompanied him on his travels, and celebrated his reform agenda,<sup>45</sup> including, for instance, by writing a book justifying the sultan's abolition of the Janissaries in 1826, published

41 BOA, C. MF. 67/3338, 21 Rebûlevvel 1264 (7 February 1848). For more information about his library, see Tuba Çavdar, "Esad Efendi Kütüphanesi," in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 11 (Istanbul: TDV, 1995), 347.

42 For a list of Esad Efendi's publications, see Ziya Yilmazer, "Sahaflar Şeyhizade Esad Efendi," in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 11 (Istanbul: TDV, 1995), 341–45. For more details about his personal book collection, see Nazlı Vatansever, "Books as Career Shapers: The Reading Activities of Sahaflarşeyhizade Esad Efendi (1789–1848) at the Rise of His Career," in *Authors as Readers in the Mamluk Period and Beyond*, ed. Elise Franssen (Venice: Ca Foscari, 2022), 277–302.

43 Yilmazer, "Sahaflar Şeyhizade Esad," 341–45.

44 It was typical for madrasa teachers to seek a career in the civil bureaucracy in the nineteenth century, including positions in the era's new schools and courts. See Erbay, "Teaching and Learning in the Madrasas," 64, 176–87.

45 Esad Efendi wrote *Sefernâme-i Hayr* based on Sultan Mahmud II's trip to Çanakkale and Edirne in 1831 and *Âyâtü'l-hayr* based on his travels to the Danube in 1837. The latter text was published in the official gazette. Gültekin Yıldız has called Esad Efendi the "propaganda manager" of Mahmud II, alluding to his close ties to the sultan. See *Neferin Adı Yok: Zorunlu Askerliğe Geçiş Sürecinde Osmanlı Devleti'nde Siyaset, Ordu ve Toplum (1826–1839)* (Istanbul: Kitapevi Yayınları, 2009), 63.



as *Üss-i Zafer*.<sup>46</sup> The court-historiographer Lutfi Efendi credits this work for his appointment to the directorate.<sup>47</sup> Other documents point to Esad Efendi's experience as the official chronicler, a duty he first took up in 1825, as a reason why he was considered for the position,<sup>48</sup> thus suggesting that Ottoman officialdom viewed the official chronicle and the official gazette as being closely connected, a connection also noted in the introductory issue of *Takvîm-i Vekâyi*.<sup>49</sup>

Because the printed medium was new, the only model Esad Efendi had to guide him in his work as director of the Imperial Press was his own traditional scholarly practices.<sup>50</sup> The production of printed books, after all, also began with a manuscript copy. The terms he used in his scrapbooks with reference to his work at the press reflect how he carried the traditional practices to the printed medium, both in his work at the gazette and in the process of preparing books for print. At the gazette, Esad Efendi prepared and presented the draft for each issue to the sultan and then revised it as necessary, with the process of editing (*tashîh*) and annotating (*tahşîye*) the gazette occupying him "day and night."<sup>51</sup> At the same

46Şeyhizade Mehmed Esad, *Üss-i Zafer* (Istanbul: Darü't-Tibâ'ati'l-Âmire, Evâhir-i Şevval 1243). This work also seems to have earned Esad Efendi a promotion in his rank as *müderris*, awarded shortly after the book's publication. Esad Efendi also translated another propaganda text in defense of Mahmud II's reforms in 1829. See Mahmut Dilbaz, *Askerî Modernleşmenin Dini Müdafası: Esad Efendi'nin Şerhli Es-Sa'yü'l-Mahmud Tercümesi* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2014).

47Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lutfi Efendi Tarihi*, vol. 1, ed. Münir Aktepe (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), 151.

48BOA, HAT 1237/48157, 1247 (1831/32), 2.

49For more insight about the connection between the posts of the official chronicler and the newspaper editor, see Hakan Karateke, "The Ottoman Official Gazette *Taqvîm-i Veqayî*, 1831: An Ottoman Annal in Its Own Right," *Turkish Language, Literature, and History: Travelers' Tales, Sultans, and Scholars since the Eighth Century*, ed. Bill Hickmann and Gary Leiser (London: Routledge, 2015), 191–207. Oddly, the history Esad Efendi wrote as official chronicler was one of the few works of his never printed in the nineteenth century.

50For an overview of the textual practices of manuscript culture, see Sami Arslan, *Osmanlı'da Bilginin Dolaşımı: Bilgiyi İstinsahla Çoğaltmak; İznik Medresesi-Süleymaniye Medreseleri Dönemi* (Istanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2020).

51Various imperial decrees acknowledge this submission of drafts to the sultan. For an example, see BOA, HAT 668/32609, 1247 (1831).



time, he also diligently prepared texts such as *Üss-i Zafer* as well as religious books and divans for print as part of his duties at the press.<sup>52</sup> For these, too, Esad Efendi usually began by presenting the sultan with a draft (*tesvid*), which the sultan would then examine, marking up (*mahv u isbat*) his instructions for revision, trimming (*tenkîh*), further explanation (*tafsîl*), and summary (*icmal*). After making the appropriate changes, Esad Efendi would prepare a clean copy (*tebyîz*) and submit it for final authorization from the sultan. The work was then ready for print, either as a book or in the official gazette.<sup>53</sup>

Sometimes these duties could extend even further, as when Mahmud II asked Esad Efendi to prepare a translation and revision of Muhammed b. Ahmed el-İbşîhi's (d. 1450) *el-Müstetraf*, an encyclopedic compilation in Arabic.<sup>54</sup> As the notes in Esad Efendi's scrapbook reveal, this was an arduous task that involved collating four different versions of the text,<sup>55</sup> one that he says took a toll on his health and ultimately led him to resign as director of the Imperial Press in 1837.<sup>56</sup> Even so, that same year he was again charged to complete his translation of *el-Müstetraf*, but winter conditions and his illness prevented him from visiting the Imperial Press to check each printed page.<sup>57</sup> This is perhaps why the first printed volume of the book is reported to have contained several errors, necessitating the replacement of multiple pages and the addition of an errata sheet (*hata ve savab cedveli*).<sup>58</sup>

52Süleymaniye Manuscript Library (SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 26b.

53Esad Efendi's account of Mahmud II's travels to the Danube region, *Âyâtü'l-hayr*, for example, was published in *Takvîm-i Vekâyi'*. (SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 161b–162a, 21 Şevval 1262 (12 October 1846).

54The book was first translated by Ekmekçizade Ahmed Efendi in the seventeenth century, then revised by Esad Efendi. *Mahmûdü'l-eser fî tercemeti'l-Müstetrafî'l-müste'ser*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Darü't-Tibâ'ati'l-Âmire, 1261–63). For Esad Efendi's comments concerning the text, see (SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 26a–b.

55(SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 156a.

56(SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 26b. Lutfi Efendi claims that Esad Efendi was actually dismissed from the job because of a conflict with Nafiz Paşa (d. 1852), the finance minister, for not submitting the monthly bookkeeping of the Imperial Press in a timely fashion. See Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lutfi Efendi Tarihi*, vols. 4–5 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 920.

57(SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 236b.

58BOA, İ. DH. 95/4782, 25 Zilhicce 1260 (5 January 1845).

Esad Efendi's later career further demonstrates the ongoing continuity between manuscript and print culture. Upon his appointment as member of the Council of Public Education (Meclis-i Maârif-i Umûmiyye) in 1846 and as director of public schools (*mekâtib-i umûmiyye nâzırı*) in 1847, he gained direct influence over the books assigned in schools at various levels and thus over the books selected for print at the Imperial Press. He also used his position and prestige to advance the careers of other members of the scholarly class, especially men of literary skill, sometimes within the ranks of the Imperial Press itself.<sup>59</sup> This often took the form of publishing endorsements for their work, such as one he wrote for the *Emsile-i Cedid* of İbrahim Paşa, the *mirliva* of the Mekteb-i İdadiye, which was printed as its preface in 1846;<sup>60</sup> and one for Mehmed Şevket's (d. 1867) *Eser-i Şevket*,<sup>61</sup> which was printed in 1847 following the assessment of the Council of Public Education on its value and usefulness.<sup>62</sup> Earlier examples include an endorsement he wrote for the poet Ayıntablı Aynî Efendi (d. 1837), who later served as a corrector at the Imperial Press;<sup>63</sup> and for Cezayirli Hamdan Efendi (d. 1842),<sup>64</sup> a *müderres*, who served as the corrector for the Arabic version of the official gazette.<sup>65</sup> Esad Efendi's scrapbooks also reveal his close connection to staff at the

59For a discussion of scholarly endorsements, see Guy Burak, "Sansür, kanonizasyon ve Osmanlı imzâ-takrîz pratikleri üzerine düşünceler," in *Eski metinlere yeni bağlamlar: Osmanlı edebiyatı çalışmalarında yeni yönelimler*, ed. Hatice Aynur, Müjgan Çakır, Hanife Koncu, Selim S. Kuru, and Ali Emre Özyıldırım (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2015), 96–117; Nagihan Gür, "Klasik Türk Edebiyatında Takriz" (PhD diss., Balıkesir University, 2014).

60BOA, İ. MSM. 13/281, 12 Muharrem 1263 (31 December 1846).

61 Mehmed Şevket, *Eser-i Şevket* (İstanbul, Evâhir-i Muharrem 1268).

62BOA, İ. MVL. 152/4334, 27 Şevval 1265 (15 September 1849).

63İsmail Ünver, "Ayıntablı Aynî," *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 4 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1991), 270–71. Aynî Efendi's *Sâkinâme* was printed as part of his *Divân-ı Belâgat-unvân-ı Aynî* (İstanbul, 1258).

64Hamdan b. Osman Cezairî, *Tercüme-i İthafü'l üdeba* (İstanbul: Darü't-Tıbbâ'atı'l-Âmire, 1254). (SL) Yazma Bağışlar-201, 232a. See Zekeriya Kurşun, "Osmanlı Cezayiri'nin Son Müdâfii Hamdan b. Osman Hoca (1773–1842)," in *Tarihimizden Portreler: Osmanlı Kimliği (Dr. Cevdet Küçük Armağanı)*, eds. Haydar Çoruh and Zekeriya Kurşun (İstanbul: Ortadoğu ve Afrika Araştırmacıları Derneği, 2013), 25–56.

65Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lutfi Efendi Tarihi*, vols. 4–5 (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 904.

Imperial Press, such as Cemaleddin Efendi, who will be discussed below.

In advancing the careers of scholars like this, Esad Efendi was also advancing a vision of the “real significance” of the press as an extension of the ulema’s domain, “the abode of knowledge” (*dar’ül ulum*).<sup>66</sup> Yet despite his influence and the prominence of other ulema members at the Imperial Press, their vision did not go unchallenged. Sultan Mahmud II criticized the ornateness of Esad Efendi’s language and asked him to tone it down in the pieces he wrote for the gazette and the books he published.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, the rising importance of European languages threatened to sideline those trained in Arabic and Persian in favor of a new class of people from outside the traditional scholarly ranks, including foreigners. Indeed, Esad Efendi’s use of flowery language was at least partly directed at this group, out of spite for Ottoman subjects and foreigners speaking other languages.<sup>68</sup>

For Esad Efendi, the presence and role of one foreigner in particular was especially grating: Alexandre Blaque (“Blak Bey,” d. 1836), a French-Belgian lawyer who had, since 1821, published several French newspapers in Izmir in support of Ottoman diplomatic causes and liberal economic policies.<sup>69</sup> In the eyes of the Sublime Porte and Sultan Mahmud II, therefore, he was in a unique position to serve as chief editor of the French version of the official gazette, *Le Moniteur Ottoman*.<sup>70</sup> First published in 1831, *Le Moniteur* quickly acquired prestige among European gazettes as a reliable source on the Ottoman Empire, largely due to Blaque’s

66BOA, C. MF. 8/392, 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1253 (11 August 1837).

67Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Vak’a-nüvis Ahmed Lutfi Efendi Tarihi*, vols. 4–5, 909.

68SL-Yazma Bağışlar-201, 50b. Contempt for the knowledge of European languages was also shared by the court historiographer Asım Efendi (d. 1819), who derided attempts to learn French and those who “bragged” about this endeavor as sad, saying that one could trust neither non-Muslims nor Europeans. Asım Efendi even likened the Ottoman turn to France as a model for its reform to “turning to poison” in hope of a cure. See Mütercim Ahmed Asım Efendi, *Asım Efendi Tarihi*, vol. 1, ed. Ziya Yilmazer (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015), cxli, 412, 721–22.

69Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı Basınının Doğuşu ve Blak Bey Ailesi* (İstanbul: Müteferrika Yayınları, 1998), 66.

70For a detailed analysis of the political discourse of *Le Moniteur Ottoman*, see Özgür Türesay, “Osmanlı Devleti’nin Fransızca Resmi Gazetesi: *Le Moniteur Ottoman* (1831–1836),” *Kebikeç* 53 (2022): 157–214.

own expertise.<sup>71</sup> According to Blaque's contract, he was to keep the profits earned from subscriptions to the French-language paper in addition to a reasonable annual salary and a house for his family.<sup>72</sup> However, aside from facing pressure from other European diplomats stationed in Istanbul, Blaque was also held in contempt by some Ottoman officials, who viewed him as unreliable and potentially suspect.<sup>73</sup> Esad Efendi, for his part, seemed more troubled by the privileges that were granted to Blaque and the French gazette. Hence, in a report submitted to the sultan, he suggested that Blaque was embezzling funds from the *Le Moniteur Ottoman*, or at least playing fast and loose with his bookkeeping, and was using the press to print things other than the gazette. Additionally, Esad Efendi resented the fact that the French version of the gazette was so different from the Turkish one, that money was being taken from the sales of the Turkish gazette to meet Blaque's expenses, and that the sultan had presented Blaque's family with gifts while Esad Efendi was abroad on a visit to Iran.<sup>74</sup>

Following Blaque's death in 1836, Hassuna al-Daghis (d. 1836) served as the French editor for a short interval until his death. Originally from Tripoli, al-Daghis turned into an important actor for Ottoman diplomacy following the French occupation of Algeria in 1830.<sup>75</sup> Esad Efendi does not seem to have been impressed by him either. He asserted that there was no need for foreigners (*ecnebi*) in the empire at any level, not least at the press, as in his mind they were undeserving and prevented others who were more qualified and capable from working there.<sup>76</sup> Instead, Esad Efendi

71 Koloğlu, *Osmanlı Basınının Doğuşu*, 70.

72 Koloğlu, *Osmanlı Basınının Doğuşu*, 66.

73 Koloğlu, *Osmanlı Basınının Doğuşu*, 68.

74 BOA, HAT 1343/52475, 29 Zilhicce 1251 (16 April 1836). Esad Efendi's contempt for Blaque has also been noted by Güldane Çolak. See Çolak, "Osmanlı Matbaacılığında Takvimhane," 23–24.

75 Some sources refer to Hassuna al-Daghis also as "D'Ghies" and "Dagayyis." For more information, see Abdullah Erdem Taş, "Hassune Dagayyis yahut Hüseyin Mazhar Efendi: Trablus-Paris-Londra-Istanbul Hattında bir Osmanlı Münevveri," in *XVIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, vol. 7 (2022), 1–24. For a take on al-Daghis as an agent of Ottoman modernization, see Ian Coller, "Ottomans on the Move? Hassuna D'Ghies and the New 'New Ottomanism' of the 1830s," in *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*, ed. Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 97–116.

76 BOA, HAT 287/17270, 29 Zilhicce 1247 (30 May 1832). Orhon Koloğlu has

successfully lobbied to serve as the overseer of staff for *Le Moniteur* himself, on the basis of his own experience with the Imperial Press's internal and external affairs.<sup>77</sup>

By 1839, however, the French editions had apparently been neglected, as reported by the court historiographer Ahmed Lutfi Efendi (d. 1907), who attributed this to a lack of staff knowledgeable in French. This was a problem because of the general consensus on the need to report news in French to communicate with a European audience. The Egyptian crisis, in particular, necessitated effective propaganda to win European public favor. It is no surprise, therefore, that when a new director of the Imperial Press was appointed in the midst of this crisis, he was not chosen directly from the ranks of the ulema. Instead, Esad Safvet Efendi (d. 1883), a deputy translator at the Sublime Porte who was knowledgeable in French, was appointed, in 1839.<sup>78</sup> The majority of Safvet Efendi's successors would also be familiar with French. As Esad Efendi feared, largely because of the importance of the gazette, managing the Imperial Press would acquire a political character by mid-century which necessitated the incorporation of a new set of actors into the editorial tradition.

Nevertheless, the sources reveal that for several decades from 1839 onward, the expanding workload at the Imperial Press created a need for additional editorial staff, staff who continued to be drawn heavily from the ranks of the ulema. The date 1839 is significant, for while the printing enterprise was until that point

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also noted the presence of two camps within the staff of *Takvîm-i Vekâyi'*, the European (*alafranga*) and the Turkish (*alla turca*), and emphasizes the eventual dominance of the latter. See Orhan Koloğlu, *Takvîm-i Vekâyî: Türk Basınında 150 Yıl, 1831–1981* (Ankara: Çağdaş Gazeteciler Derneği Yayınları, 1981), 29.

77BOA, C. MF. 68/3395, 17 Şevval 1252 (25 January 1837). *Takvîm-i Vekâyî'*, 153, 28 Cemâziyelâhir 1253 (30 August 1837), 3. In 1837, six people were employed at the French gazette, including an "author" (*Fransızca takvîm müellifi*), translator, corrector, typesetter, and press worker, all of whom would have been overseen by Esad Efendi. See Koloğlu, *Takvîm-i Vekâyî: Türk*, 78; Nesimi Yazıcı, *Takvîm-i Vekâyî: Belgeler* (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1983), 58.

78Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lutfi Efendi Tarihi*, vols. 6–8, 1025. Though Esad Safvet Efendi himself originated from madrasa ranks, his later career unfolded outside the *ilmiyye* hierarchy, advancing up the ladder of the civil bureaucracy to a position in the grand vizierate. For a short biography, see Erbay, "Teaching and Learning in the Madrasas," 191.

under state monopoly, in response to increasing demand, a decree was issued in 1840 authorizing the Imperial Press to print books in the name of private customers.<sup>79</sup> This led to a flood of new work, which in turn led to the purchase of more presses and the hiring of new personnel.<sup>80</sup> The editorial team was expanded through the appointment of Hamza Efendi and İbrahim Rüştü Efendi, both members of the ulema, to help with drafting book publications (*tebyiz*) and revising the gazette editions, respectively in Arabic and Persian.<sup>81</sup>

Other examples testify to the ongoing pressure to hire more correctors over the following decades and the continued role of ulema members in meeting this demand. In 1853, it was the printers at the Imperial Press who suggested the recruitment of Tosyalı Hafız Hüseyin Efendi, an imam at Bayezıd Mosque and a *müderri*, to attend to the increasing number of books being printed at the Imperial Press.<sup>82</sup> That same year, Hacı Tahir Efendi (d. 1880), a *müderri* and a *hoca* at Süleymaniye mosque who had previously corrected books at the Takvîmhâne-i Âmire on an occasional basis, was appointed as a corrector of the Arabic version of the official gazette.<sup>83</sup> In another example of the ongoing prominence of the ulema in the life of the Ottoman press, when the directorate of the Imperial Press was dissolved in 1863, it was Tahir Efendi who was appointed as the new head (*matbû'at müdürü*) of the body that replaced it.<sup>84</sup>

79 Ayşe Başaran, "The Ottoman Printing Enterprise: Legalization, Networks and Actors: 1831–1863" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2019), 64–66.

80 In 1839, for example, new presses were bought from London, which in turn necessitated the hiring of extra staff. BOA, MAD. 8257, p. 8. 29 Zilhicce 1254 (15 March 1839).

81 BOA, MAD. 5257, p. 27. 29 Zilhicce 1254 (15 March 1839).

82 BOA, A. MKT. NZD. 91/56; 16 Zilhicce 1269 (20 September 1853).

83 BOA, İ. MVL. 275/10675, 15 Ramazan 1269 (22 June 1853). Tahir Efendi would replace Lutfi Efendi as a collator at Takvîmhâne-i Âmire in 1857. See BOA, İ. DH. 374/24750, 8 Şaban 1273 (3 April 1857).

84 BOA, A. MKT. MHM 308/97, 8 Rebîülevvel 1281 (11 August 1864). Tahir Efendi's career is particularly noteworthy, for after the short-lived press directorate was itself dissolved the following year, in 1864, he was appointed deputy astrologer, and chief astrologer a year later, in 1865. See Salim Aydüz, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Müneccimbaşılık Müessesesi," *Belleten* 70, no. 257 (April 2006): 177. The astrologers, often of *müderri* origins, were also recruited from the *ilmiyye* ranks, thus suggesting an interesting connection between career routes among the *ilmiyye*, the printing press,

Thus, even after Esad Efendi stepped down as director of the Imperial Press in 1837, ulema members continued to enjoy an active and prominent place within the institution throughout its life. Esad Efendi was the archetype of a scholar-bureaucrat in the time of Mahmud II and an expert agent of the traditional manuscript culture, and during his tenure at the press, he and other members of the ulema quickly adapted to the requirements of the new technology and embraced it as a tool to facilitate the work the scholarly class had been doing for centuries. Any hostility on their part was directed not against the press itself but against the encroaching presence of new actors in the Ottoman Empire, and more specifically in the publishing world—non-Ottoman actors including Alexandre Blaque and other “foreign” and “unknown” actors—whom Esad Efendi saw as threats to the professional standing of himself and the traditional scholarly class more generally.

### CALLIGRAPHERS AND ULEMA AS PART OF PRINT MATERIALITY

Printing in Arabic script in the Ottoman Empire started with typographic printing in 1727, and this remained the sole method until the introduction of lithography in 1831 and its subsequent expansion with the rise of private printers in the 1850s.<sup>85</sup> Both technologies incorporated the skills of a wide range of actors from manuscript culture. While the previous section, through its focus on Esad Efendi, highlighted the role of ulema in the early years of the Ottoman press, other representatives of manuscript culture played at least as great a role, particularly calligraphers, who found their way into the technical aspects of printing from the very start.

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and the court astrologers. For more on this, see Güldöşüren, “II. Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı,” 261. Also see the discussion in the final section of this article on the career of Osman Kamil Efendi, another corrector at the Imperial Press, who would go on to succeed Tahir Efendi as chief astrologer.

<sup>85</sup>Lithography was invented by the Bavarian comic actor and playwright Alois Senefelder in the late 1790s. The technology was the collective outcome of various scientific advances of the era, including in the new chemical and geological sciences. For an overview of lithographic presses in the Ottoman Empire, see Yahya Erdem, *Türk Taş Baskıcılığı: Başlangıç Yılları ve İlk Kitaplar* (Ankara: Özel Yayın, 2022).



Calligraphy was a form of high art in Islamic culture. Calligraphers, acting more as artist than scribe, prepared elegant copies of the Qur'an and other highly valued religious texts,<sup>86</sup> but also texts of a non-sacred character.<sup>87</sup> Their guild was a prominent and a powerful one, and according to traditional scholarship, it was their fear that the advent of the press would cost them their jobs which constituted the main obstacle to the printing press in the eighteenth century.<sup>88</sup> As suggested by these accounts, it was to appease the calligraphers that the printing of religious books was excluded from the *fetva* granted to Mütferrika. Regardless of the veracity of such accounts, this fear proved to be largely unfounded: manuscript books continued to be copied and traded in the Ottoman Empire well into the twentieth century;<sup>89</sup> furthermore, the skills of the calligraphers were still needed in the printed medium, as the physical attributes of a book meant a great deal to readers of the nineteenth century.

It was these aesthetic considerations that ensured a continuing role for calligraphers in the world of print. Some have even argued that the hold calligraphic conventions had over typography never actually disappeared.<sup>90</sup> Achieving anything comparable to the

86 Ian Proudfoot, "Mass Producing Houris's Moles, or Aesthetics and Choice of Technology in Early Muslim Book Printing," in *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society*, ed. Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 179.

87 One example is *Devhatü'l-Küttab* by Suyolcuzade Mehmed Necib (d. 1758). Damla Akatay, "Discourses on Writing in the Early Modern Ottoman Biographical Dictionaries of Calligraphers" (master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2015), 95.

88 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 40. Franz Babinger narrates a rumor circulating among the contemporary European travelers in the Ottoman Empire that six thousand unhappy copyists got together to destroy the printing press. Franz Babinger, "18. Yüzyılda İstanbul'da Kitabiyat," in *Mütferrika ve Osmanlı Matbaası*, ed. Nedret Kuran-Burçoğlu and Machiel Kiel (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2004), 32. For a review of Europeans observers of calligraphers' protests, see Orlin Sabev, *İbrahim Mütferrika*, 334–37.

89 Necib Asım, *Kitab* (Istanbul: Büyüyen Ay, 2012).

90 Özlem Özkal and Onur Yazıcıgil, "Ottoman Typography towards Modernisation: Private Presses, Mass Media and a New Perception of Typographic Production," paper presented at the Face Forward International Typography Conference, Dublin, Ireland, January 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/43242191/Ottoman\\_Typography\\_towards\\_Modernisation\\_Private\\_Presses\\_Mass\\_Media\\_and\\_a\\_New\\_Perception\\_of\\_Typographic\\_Production](https://www.academia.edu/43242191/Ottoman_Typography_towards_Modernisation_Private_Presses_Mass_Media_and_a_New_Perception_of_Typographic_Production), accessed 5 March 2023.



physical beauty of the handwritten manuscript was a major difficulty for early typographic printers, and it took a “long revolution” and “a combination of craft skills, script expertise and calligraphic manuscript models” to develop an aesthetically pleasing Arabic typeface.<sup>91</sup> The first Arabic books printed by Europeans in the sixteenth century, for instance, proved unmarketable because the type-makers lacked an understanding of the script structure.<sup>92</sup> Without the visual continuity provided by a typeface that could reproduce something close to the written script, the transition to the printed medium would not have been possible.

Important steps were first taken by Müteferrika, who nodded to the calligraphic tradition by adopting the *nesih* script favored by the ulema for his types.<sup>93</sup> Next, the punch-cutter Boğos Araboğlu (d. 1835) had the calligrapher Seyyid Osman Efendi (d. 1805) prepare a model for cutting the *nesih* and *nestalik* types for the press at the Imperial School of Engineering in 1791;<sup>94</sup> these were acclaimed by state officials as being “equal to the quality of fine-writing.”<sup>95</sup> Finally, Ohannes Mühendisyan (d. 1891) produced a new *nesih* typeface modeled on the style of master calligrapher Kadiasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi (d. 1876).<sup>96</sup> Though still deemed imperfect, Ohannes’s relative success in reproducing natural script structure has been attributed to a “more authentic” rendering that was closer to manuscript practice.<sup>97</sup>

A balanced combination of technical execution and knowledge of the script was vital to the printing enterprise. The calligrapher was thus a key figure each time types were made. Even as late as 1912,

91 Emanuela Conidi, “Arabic Types in Europe and the Middle East, 1514–1924: Challenges in the Adaptation of the Arabic Script from Written to Printed Form” (PhD diss., University of Reading, 2018), 601.

92 Conidi, “Arabic Types in Europe,” 165.

93 Özkal and Yazıcıgil, “Ottoman Typography towards Modernisation,” 2.

94 M. Uğur Derman, “Yazı San’atının Eski Matbaacılığımıza Akisleri,” in *Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği Basım ve Yayıncılığımızın 250. Yılı Bilimsel Toplantısı (10–11 Aralık 1979)* (Ankara: Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği, 1980), 98.

95 Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık*, 321, as cited in Özkal and Yazıcıgil, “Ottoman Typography towards Modernisation,” 3.

96 Conidi, “Arabic Types in Europe,” 584. Mustafa İzzet Efendi was also the imam of Sultan Abdülmecid. See Zeynep Altuntaş, “Sultan Abdülmecid Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı” (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2013), 195.

97 Conidi, “Arabic Types in Europe,” 601.

for example, while assessing the quality of the *nesih* types cast by Haçık Kevorkyan (d. 1932), the famous Ottoman printer Ebuzziya Tevfik (d. 1913) directed his criticism at not only the punch-cutter, but also the calligrapher.<sup>98</sup> Sometimes the prominence of the calligrapher was such that it even overshadowed the roles of the other actors involved. In the 1840s, for example, Yesarizade Mustafa İzzet Efendi (d. 1849), a member of the ulema and a *ta'lik* calligrapher,<sup>99</sup> was credited for developing a new set of *ta'lik* types that improved upon those originally cast by Araboğlu,<sup>100</sup> even though Ohannes was the one who had cut them.<sup>101</sup>

Aside from calligraphers, typographic printing also incorporated members of ulema in a technical capacity, as typesetters. Part of their duties, in addition to presswork, was to check the accuracy of copies,<sup>102</sup> in much the same way as the corrector and the collator, as discussed above. Typesetting thus required a level of literacy and familiarity with the language,<sup>103</sup> and the press would therefore often keep multiple typesetters on hand for different languages. In 1801, for example, the staff of the Imperial Press included a typesetter specifically for European languages alongside the

98 Ebuzziya Tevfik, “36 Punto Huruf ve Haçık Kigorkyan Efendi,” *Mecmua-i Ebuzziya* 128 (Muharrem 1330): 371, as cited in Onur Fatih Yazıcıgil, “Osmanlı Matbuatının Sekiz Punto Nesih Yazı Karakteri ve Türk Hurufat Yapımcısı Mehmed Emin Efendi,” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 31 (2022): 574.

99 Yesarizade was the calligraphy teacher of Kadiasker Mustafa İzzet Efendi, mentioned in the previous paragraph. For a brief biography, see M. Uğur Derman, “Yesârîzâde Mustafa İzzet,” *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 31 (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2020), 307–9.

100 Kasapbaşızâde İbrahim, *Risâle-i İtikâdiyye* (Dârü'l-hilâfeti'l-aliyye: Tab'hâne-i Âmire, 1258). Yesarizade also wrote a treatise on the benefits and necessity of printing with *ta'lik* types in 1842. See BOA, İ. DH. 69/3443, 29 Şevval 1258 (3 December 1842). He was appointed to the directorate of Takvîm-i Vekâyi'hâne-i Âmire for ten months between 1842 and 1843.

101 M. Uğur Derman, “Yazı San'atının Eski,” 106. The Armenian print historian Teotig (d. 1928) condemned Yesarizade as a “vile” and “outrageous” man for taking sole credit. For this, see Teotig (Teotoros Lapçincian), *Baskı ve Harf: Ermeni Matbaacılık Tarihi*, trans. Sirvart Malhasyan and Arlet İncidüzen (Istanbul: Bir Zamanlar Yayıncılık, 2012, 101; Özkal and Yazıcıgil, “Ottoman Typography towards Modernisation,” 4.

102 Nile Green, “Journeymen, Middlemen: Travel, Transculture, and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009): 209–10.

103 Green, “Journeymen, Middlemen: Travel,” 209–10.

regular typesetter (*mürettib*),<sup>104</sup> but most appear to have been drawn from people with backgrounds as mosque preachers, imams, and ulema.<sup>105</sup>

If the advent of typography created new roles for calligraphers and scholars, the introduction of the lithograph expanded their visibility considerably further and allowed an even greater number to make a living. As mentioned above, lithography was first incorporated into the Ottoman printing enterprise in 1831 on the initiative of Serasker Mehmed Hüsrev Paşa (d. 1855), who recognized its utility for printing graphics-heavy textbooks for use at the Military School. Hüsrev Paşa employed Henri Cayol (d. 1865),<sup>106</sup> a French lawyer from Marseilles,<sup>107</sup> who not only introduced the press and the lithograph but also trained many professionals at the printing press of the Chief Military Office (Bâb-ı Seraskerî).<sup>108</sup>

Lithography was responsible for expanding and popularizing the printing sphere in many centers of Muslim printing, including Lucknow, Cairo, and Tehran.<sup>109</sup> The primary reason for its popularity lay in the similarities in the techniques of textual reproduction between the manuscript and lithography. Unlike typography, the new lithographic press did not have types. Instead, it relied on the “intermediation” of a scribe, who copied the text onto a lithographic stone. As such, the style and ligatures of the Arabic script could be copied in a way that more closely resembled a hand-written text. Further elements of scribal culture, such as page layouts, glosses, and illustrations, could also be easily

104 BOA, C. MF. 64/3156, Gurre Rebîülevvel 1216 (12 July 1801).

105 Server İskit, *Hususi İlk Türkçe Gazetemiz Tercüman-ı Ahval ve Agah Efendi* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1937), 25.

106 For a recent take on Henri Cayol, see Yahya Erdem, *Türk Taş Baskıcılığı: Başlangıç Yılları ve İlk Kitaplar* (Ankara: Özel Yayın, 2022), 43–65.

107 For a general categorization of the role of foreign experts in Ottoman modernization, see Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık*, 85–88. For a wider analysis of foreign lithographers in Istanbul with a focus on Cayol and Antonio Zellich, see Vjeran Kursar, *Croatian Levantines in Ottoman Istanbul* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2021), 157–84.

108 The connection between military reform and the printing press was not new in the global context. For an overview of the Iranian context, see Nile Green, “Stones from Bavaria: Iranian Lithography in Its Global Contexts,” *Iranian Studies* 43, no. 3 (June 2010): 305–31.

109 Nile Green, “Stones from Bavaria,” 313; Ulrich Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 307.

replicated with lithography,<sup>110</sup> in short, it allowed “the age of script to continue under the guise of print.”<sup>111</sup> As a result, both scribes and calligraphers would be incorporated into the printing enterprise to copy texts onto the special paper used for the lithographic press.

Identifying the calligraphers involved in printing is possible through a survey of the colophons of printed books. Many identified themselves either as *ketebe* or as *hattat* in the colophons and put the note “written by” (*hurreru*) before their name.<sup>112</sup> These notes testify to the integration of calligraphers from all levels in the flourishing print culture. The best known of these were Mustafa Rakım Efendi<sup>113</sup> and Abdullah Hulusi Mürüftevi (d. 1890).<sup>114</sup>

Employed on a contract basis for specific book projects, calligraphers navigated between different lithographic consortiums of printers around Istanbul, including the Imperial Press.<sup>115</sup> One example clearly demonstrates this circulation: over a period of seven years, three different calligraphers, each responsible for one

110 Tobias Heinzelmann, “Lithographic Prints,” *Manuscript Cultures*, 9 (2016): 265–67. Also see Proudfoot, “Mass Producing Hourı’s Moles,” 161–84.

111 Adeeb Khalid made this remark in the context of Central Asia, but it applies equally well here. See his “Printing, Publishing, and Reform in Tsarist Central Asia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (May 1994): 192.

112 “Ketebe” was the standard self-identification of the calligrapher in his works. See M. Uğur Derman, “Hattat,” *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 16 (Istanbul: TDV, 1997), 493–99.

113 Mustafa Rakım Efendi prepared *Mürşidü’n-nisâ* and *Mürşidü’l-mütehhilîn* as a single volume in 1860. His other works include an 1865 edition of *Evrâd-ı Mevlevîyye* at the lithographic press of Bosnavi El-Hac Muharrem Efendi; an 1863 edition of *Tuhfetü’l-İhvân*; an 1858 edition of a translation of the *Delailü’l-hayrat*; and an 1857 edition of the *Mızraklı İlmihâl*. Also see İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal, *Son Hattatlar* (Istanbul: Maarif Yayınevi, 1955), 291.

114 Abdullah Hulusi Mürüftevi (d. 1885), a famous *ta’lik* calligrapher, was a student of Kazasker Mustafa İzzet and a *müderris*. In the year 1850 alone, he prepared the *Pend-i Attâr Şerhi*, *Esmari’ü’t Tevârih*, and *Dîvân-ı Sezâi-yi Gülşenî*. And in 1854, he prepared the *Dîvân-ı Kethüdâzâde-i Ârif*. Other calligraphers I have identified in the colophons include Resul Hocaşade Mehmed Hilmi, Bursevi Halil Şükrü, Hafız Hüseyin Hilmi el-Malatyevi, Mehmed Vasfi, Mehmed Tahir, Mehmed Ali, Yusuf Ziyaeddin, Ahmed Arif el-Hüseyini, and Mustafa Şükrü Eyyubi. Mehmet Erken has also discussed the role of calligraphers in lithography. See Mehmet Erken, “Geç Osmanlı Döneminde Matbaa ve Kitap Yayıncılığı (1857–1888)” (PhD diss., Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, 2023), 191–92.

115 Başaran, “The Ottoman Printing Enterprise,” 341.

volume, prepared the *Tercüme-i Mektubât-ı İmâm-ı Rabbânî* at the lithographic press of Karahisârî Ali Rıza Efendi.<sup>116</sup> Calligraphers also partook in the illicit printing of religious books: Kanbur Ahmed İlhamî, for instance, testified to having prepared *Amme* and *Tebâreke* at the press of Valide Mektebi;<sup>117</sup> and Eyüplü Mustafa Efendi also confessed to illicitly printing copies of Qur'anic verses in partnership with Muslim and Armenian printers.<sup>118</sup>

The role of calligraphers as teachers in the Ottoman state's new schools, including the Military School, the School for Learning (Mekteb-i Ma'ârif-i Adliyye), and the *rüşdiyye* secondary schools, and their role in preparing textbooks for lithographic printing both further connected them to the official printing enterprise.<sup>119</sup> For example, the calligrapher Emin Efendi, who had taught calligraphy at the Military School for eight years, was appointed to prepare (*tahrir*) the illustrations for military and scientific manuals at the Chief Military Office in 1841.<sup>120</sup> Another calligrapher, Ahmed Rakım Efendi (d. 1865), was granted a salaried position to prepare (*yazmak*) textbooks on subjects such as ethics for lithographic printing in 1847, with the promise of a future position as calligraphy teacher at the soon-to-be opened *rüşdiyyes*.<sup>121</sup>

Overall, one can see that many nineteenth-century calligraphers warmly embraced the printed medium. They were recruited to copy books, especially in the popular religious genre, but also found positions at other businesses related to the printing press; Abdülfettah Efendi (d. 1896), for example, prepared the calligraphy on printed paper money in 1271/1855,<sup>122</sup> and Vahdetî Efendi did the same for banknotes.<sup>123</sup>

116 Müstakimzâde Süleyman Efendi, *Tercüme-i Mektubât-ı İmâm-ı Rabbânî*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Karahisârî Ali Efendi Taş Destgâhı, Safer 1270–77).

117 Başaran, "The Ottoman Printing Enterprise," 338.

118 Başaran, "The Ottoman Printing Enterprise," 341.

119 Calligraphy was integrated into teaching as *hüsn-i hat* and taught using the traditional method of *meşk*, in which the student emulated the writing of the teacher. Ubcini cites calligraphy as a subject taught at the School for Learning in 1851. See Abdolonyme Ubcini, *Letters on Turkey*, 204; İhsan Terzi, "Mehmed Esad'ın Mir'at-ı Mühendishane-i Berr-i Hümayun ve Mir'at-ı Mekteb-i Harbiye adlı eserlerine göre 19. Yüzyıl Türk resmi" (PhD diss., Gazi University, 1988).

120 BOA, İ. DH. 55/2708, 19 Cemâziyelâhîr 1257 (8 August 1841).

121 BOA, İ. DH. 140/7171, 9 Rebîülevvel 1263 (25 February 1847); M. Uğur Derman, "Ahmed Rakım Efendi," *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: TDV, 1989), 117.

122 İbnülemin, *Son Hattatlar*, 25.

123 İbnülemin, *Son Hattatlar*, 439.

Aside from aesthetics, the economic advantages of the lithographic press also contributed to its popularity.<sup>124</sup> Ian Proudfoot argues that lithography decreased the cost of reproducing texts to “about one-tenth of the price of manuscript copying.”<sup>125</sup> The press itself was also cheap, requiring comparatively little capital. Furthermore, with fewer moving parts involved, the technology was relatively easy to learn. Once they had grasped its basic techniques, typesetters and printers could print their own books in their homes or in similar informal venues with minimal equipment. As such, lithography acted as a bottom-up technology that significantly expanded and diversified the pool of agents of print. As a result, many found opening a lithographic print shop an attractive and profitable prospect. When the Printing Law of 1857 legalized the opening of private presses, agents from the religious ranks eagerly filed petitions to open their own lithographic presses;<sup>126</sup> these included Hilmi and his partner, Abbas Efendi, from the Çorlulu Ali Paşa Madrasa in 1858,<sup>127</sup> and Abdülvehhâb Efendi, a tomb keeper, in 1856.<sup>128</sup> Some early petitions even predate the passage of the Printing Law, such as an 1850 petition submitted by one Hafız Ahmed Efendi, a madrasa student formerly employed as a typesetter at the press of *Cerîde-i Havâdis* and the Imperial Press, who cited his lack of income as grounds for asking permission to open his own lithographic print shop.<sup>129</sup>

As expressed by the Supreme Council (Meclis-i Vala-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliye) in their response to Hafız Ahmed Efendi, opening print shops was strictly forbidden prior to 1857. Yet even so, an exception was made for the above-mentioned Henri Cayol, who was granted permission to open his own print shop in Kulekapı, Pera, in 1836, likely because of his privileged status as the “father of lithography.” Like Alexandre Blaque, Cayol was viewed with suspicion and even contempt by local agents of literary culture, particularly

124 Green, “Stones from Bavaria,” 14.

125 Ian Proudfoot, “Lithography at the Crossroads of the East,” *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, no. 27 (1998): 131.

126 For details on the 1857 regulation, see Başaran, “The Ottoman Printing Enterprise,” 108–12.

127 BOA, A.MKT. MHM. 132/88, 29 Şevval 1274 (12 June 1858).

128 Anonymous, *Kitâb-ı Fal* (Istanbul: Abdülvehhab Efendi, 1273). Abdülvehhâb’s name is also associated with the printing of the *Tefe’ül-nâme* in 1273/1856.

129 BOA, MVL. 97/9, 28 Safer 1267 (2 January 1851).

booksellers, once again not because of religious fanaticism, but rather because of a growing rivalry that manifested as a general atmosphere of distrust toward the “infidel,” as specifically noted in archival documents. In 1852, Cayol was accused by Muslim booksellers of printing “Islamic books” (*kütüb-i İslâmiyye*) such as the *Hilye-i Şerîf*, a practice prohibited by Ottoman officials in the 1850s.<sup>130</sup> This prohibition was in fact very loose; some Muslim printers themselves had been involved in the profitable business of printing popular religious texts. Still, traditional Ottoman actors seem to have taken a dim view of foreigners involving themselves in the trade in religious books; a British traveler noted in 1848 that infidels were forbidden from even laying eyes on the Qur’an.<sup>131</sup>

As demonstrated above, particular aspects of lithographic printing were especially relevant to the continuity of the scribal tradition and the continued importance of calligraphers and ulema members as critical actors in the world of letters. While they had utilized their set of editorial skills to good effect upon the advent of the Ottoman printing press, the new technology of lithography opened even more new professional possibilities to them.

#### PRINTING AS A CAREER: EXPANSION OF CAREER LINES FOR THE ULEMA

The previous sections have shown that Esad Efendi and various other ulema members, calligraphers, and other agents of scribal culture eagerly availed themselves of the professional possibilities afforded by the rise of print in the nineteenth century. In doing so, in adopting the technology of the press and adapting it to their own purposes, they ensured that Ottoman manuscript culture left an indelible mark on the culture of the Ottoman press. But, as this section will show, this was not a one-way street. In the case of the ulema, the close links they established with the press seem to have had significant ramifications for the nature of scholarship itself.

130 BOA, İ. MVL. 293/11827, 1269 (1852/53). Cayol stated that his print shop in Galata burned down in 1852. Even though the archival documents do not link the fire to the accusations levied against him, the fact that both happened in the same year may not have been a coincidence.

131 C. B. Elliott, *Travels in the Three Great Empires of Austria, Russia and Turkey* (London: R. Bentley, 1838), 188.



This section begins by returning to the matter of scholars' integration into the editorial ranks of the Imperial Press. As their numbers swelled, scholars increasingly sought to use the medium of print as a means for advancement and promotion within the scholarly ranks. This could take several forms, some of which I have touched on above. One was the mere fact of publication itself, whereby a member of the ulema might secure for himself greater recognition, and potentially an additional source of income, by publishing his work as a printed volume. Another was the rise of the printed scholarly endorsement, through which scholars could show their support for one another and thereby augment their credibility and advance their careers. Some sought to parlay their experience at the press into professorships, arguing that their work as correctors, collators, and the like was a scholarly endeavor that merited the same recognition as any other. Others sought to do the reverse, using their scholarly bona fides to secure for themselves a position of respect within the press, as if the printing enterprise was simply an offshoot of the broader realm of traditional scholarship.

To begin with, various members of the ulema recruited to the Imperial Press from the late 1830s onward were systematically promoted within the *ilmiyye* ranks.<sup>132</sup> Esad Efendi is a case in point: in 1835, while still serving as director of the press, he was promoted to the rank (*paye*) of chief judge of Anadolu; three years later, after he had left the press, he was promoted to the rank of chief judge of Rumelia, an office he would later occupy for some eighteen months in the 1840s. Moreover, he attained the prestigious post of *nakibüleşraf*, first as a deputy in 1838, and as principal from 1841 until his death.<sup>133</sup> Though the heights Esad Efendi attained during his career were somewhat exceptional, the pattern of promotion

132 The *müderreses* appointed to Istanbul madrasas often represented the top of their profession. The *ilmiyye* career track in the nineteenth century included the following ranks, in ascending order: İbtida-i Hariç, Hareket-i Hariç, İbtida-i Dahil, Hareket-i Dahil, Musıla-i Sahn, Sahn-ı Seman, İbtida-i Altmışlı, Hareket-i Altmışlı, Musıla-i Süleymaniye, Havamis-i Süleymaniye, Süleymaniye, and Dar'ül-Hadis. Bektaş, *Religious Reform*, 40–42. It must be noted that these promotions did not necessarily correspond to actual teaching positions; they could mean promotion in status (*itibari görev*) rather than to an actual position. See Altuntaş, "Sultan Abdülmecid Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı," 128–31.

133 Yılmaz, "Sahaflar Şeyhizade Esad," 341–45. For more information on the context of *nakibüleşraf*, see Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, "Nakibüleşraf," in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32 (Istanbul: TDV, 2006), 322–24.



itself was anything but. His nephew Ahmed Nazif Efendi (d. 1858), for example, a *müderris* and *kadı* who filled in as deputy director of the press while Esad Efendi served as ambassador to Iran in the 1830s, was promoted in 1837 from *hareket-i dahil* to *musıla-i sahn* in recognition of his service at the Imperial Press.<sup>134</sup> In 1841, he was further appointed as the *kadı* of Jerusalem.<sup>135</sup> This pattern of promotion is clearest in the first decades after the establishment of the directorate in 1831, and is particularly pronounced in the case of madrasa professors.

This pattern holds across the Ottoman printing enterprise, which, as discussed above, comprised the Tab'hâne-i Âmire (the book press) and the Takvîmhâne-i Âmire (the publisher of the official gazette), with the staff of the Imperial Press officially divided between the two. At the Tab'hâne-i Âmire, for example, Karahisar Sahibli Ali Efendi, a *müderris* and member of the ulema,<sup>136</sup> appeared as the "first" or chief corrector (*musahhih-i evvel müdürlüğü*) in 1837 in recognition of his scholarly traits as well as his dignified character.<sup>137</sup> Following this, in 1839, his rank as *müderris* at the Ebubekir Paşa Dersiyyesi at Murad Paşa Mosque was raised to *ibtida-i altmışlı*.<sup>138</sup> Meanwhile, at the Takvîmhâne-i Âmire, Karşızade Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi (d. 1845), a *müderris* at Süleymaniye who had worked as a corrector right

134 BOA, C. MF. 8/392, 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1253 (11 August 1837). For his promotion, see Güldöşüren, "II. Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı," 317.

135 Altuntaş, "Sultan Abdülmecid Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı," 159, 314.

136 BOA, HAT 1611/101, 29 Muharrem 1253 (5 May 1837). The Karahisari family was an extended family of scholarly origins, members of whom later immersed themselves in bookselling and private book publishing. See İsmail Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Kitap Ticareti: Sahaflar ve Kitapçılar* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2021), 153. A different Ali Efendi from the same family would become a successful private lithographer in the Ottoman Empire after 1853. See Başaran, "The Ottoman Printing Enterprise," 114.

137 BOA, İ. DÜİT. 136/39, 19 Zilhicce 1254 (5 March 1839). Ali Efendi identified himself as the chief corrector in chronograms in numerous book editions, including the following: Cemal Hüseyinî-i Şîrâzî, *Ravzatü'l-ahbâb fî siyeri'n-nebî ve'l-âl ve'l-ashâb*, trans. Mahmud Mağnisavî Benlizâde (Istanbul: Tab'hâne-i Âmire, Evâhir-i Cemâziyelâhir 1268); Edirnevi Mehmed Mecdî, *Hadâiku's-Şekâik (Tercüme-i Şekâik)* (Istanbul: Dârü't-Tibâati'l-Âmire, 1269); Nev'izade Ataullah b. Yahya, *Hadâiku'l-hakâik fî tekmileti's-Şekâik* (Istanbul, Evâsıt Muharrem 1268); Muhammed b. Ebu Bekir İmamzade, *Şerhü'l-Şir'atü'l-İslâm* (Istanbul: Dârü't-Tibâati'l-Âmire, 1273).

138 Güldöşüren, "II. Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı," 205. Mosques where madrasa courses were taught were called Dersiyye.

from the establishment of the institution,<sup>139</sup> was promoted as a *kadı* to Salonica in 1837, and his tenure in this office was extended for another year in 1838 in recognition of his continuous service as corrector.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, who was affiliated with the Imperial Press first as a collator at the Takvîmhâne-i Âmire in 1837, had his rank as *müderris* at the Dayezade Hidayet Bey Dersiyyesi at Kumrulu Mescid raised from *ibtida-i haric* to *hareket-i haric* in 1838 with direct reference to his work at the Imperial Press.<sup>141</sup>

Such recognition, and the promotions within the *ilmiyye* ranks that came with it, eventually came to be expected as a matter of course, as one's natural due for work at the Imperial Press. Cezayirli Ahmed Nazif Efendi, for instance, a *müderris*, author, translator, and collator at Takvîmhâne-i Âmire,<sup>142</sup> demanded and received the rank of *hocalık* in 1846.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, another corrector, Ömer Efendi, applied for a *ruus* in 1854 to become a *müderris*.<sup>144</sup>

139 SL- Yazma Başışlar-201, 161a. See Abdülkadir Özcan, "Karslızade Cemaleddin Mehmed," in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: TDV, 1993), 312–13. Also noting the "madrasa effect" on the editorial ranks of the official gazette, Orhon Koloğlu argues that the recruitment of *müderises* was a deliberate decision by the reformist Sultan Mahmud II to win over the ulema to his side rather than losing them to opposition. See Koloğlu, *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 28–29.

140 Güldöşüren, "II. Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı," 318. Cemaleddin Efendi was further rewarded with *elmaslı nişan* in return for service at the Imperial Press in 1840. BOA, İ. DH. 7/301, 6 Zilhicce 1255 (10 February 1840).

141 Ahmed Lutfi Efendi served in many editorial positions with intervals until its annexation under the Ministry of Education in 1863. For his biography, see Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lutfi Efendi Tarihi*, vol. 1, ed. Münir Aktepe (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), xvii; Münir Aktepe, "Ahmed Lutfi Efendi," in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: TDV, 2012), 97–98. Güldöşüren, "II. Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı Ulemâsı," 318.

142 BOA, İ. DH. 72/3558, 4 Cemâziyelâhir 1258 (13 July 1842). Ahmed Nazif Efendi also translated the following book: *Tercüme-i Elfü'l-Leyle ve Leyle* (Istanbul: 1258).

143 BOA, İ. DH. 116/5893, 7 Safer 1262 (4 February 1846). Ahmed Nazif Efendi was the brother of Hamdan b. Osman Cezairî (d. 1842), who a *müderris* from Algeria who served as the editor (*muharrir*) and corrector for the Arabic version of the official gazette. For more information about the family, see Zekeriya Kuşun, "Osmanlı Cezayiri'nin Son Müdâfii Hamdan b. Osman Hoca (1773–1842)," in *Tarihimizden Portreler: Osmanlı Kimliği (Dr. Cevdet Küçük Armağanı)*, ed. Haydar Çoruh and Zekeriya Kuşun (Istanbul: Ortadoğu ve Afrika Araştırmacıları Derneği, 2013).

144 BOA, HR. MKT. 75/71, 29 Receb 1270 (27 April 1854).

The reverse also occurred, with traditional scholarly credentials coming to be viewed as a prerequisite for the increasingly prestigious positions at the press. Kastamonulu Mehmed Efendi, for example, in a 1857 letter, credited his long years of study for his ultimate appointment as a corrector at Takvîmhâne-i Âmirî.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, when the *müderriş* Seyyid Mehmed Nuri requested a position as a corrector, he was appointed only after being deemed qualified for the task by the sultan in 1856.<sup>146</sup> In both cases, a position at the Imperial Press was presented as a deserved outcome of scholarly endeavors.

Positions at the press seem to have been so sought after among the ulema that some were even willing to work for free, as in the case of Tarsusizade Osman Kamil Efendi (d. 1896), a *müderriş* and a lecturer (*dersiam*) at Fatih Mosque, who asked for and was granted employment as a corrector without salary in 1852.<sup>147</sup>

These examples reveal that affiliation with the press had become a natural career path for scholars. Yet there were also efforts to keep the two career tracks separate. Osman Kamil, for example, soon ran into trouble with his colleague Ahmed Muhtar Efendi (d. 1882), also known as “Molla Efendi,” a member of the ulema and another corrector at *Takvîm-i Vekâyi*, who did not want a partner.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, the director, Recai Mehmed Efendi (d. 1848/9), explained that a corrector could only be appointed through a special decree. The position of a corrector, in other words, was not a rank within the *ilmiyye* tracks, where promotion could be attained through one’s personal connections to a higher-ranking scholar. Himself from scribal roots, Recai Efendi thus attempted to keep promotions to the editorial ranks at the Imperial Press separate from the *ilmiyye* career track.

145 BOA, A. MKT. NZD. 231/74, 14 Zilhicce 1273 (5 August 1857).

146 BOA, A. MKT. NZD. 198/26, 21 Safer 1273 (21 October 1856).

147 BOA, A. MKT. NZD. 57/24, 21 Şevval 1268 (8 August 1852). Interestingly, Osman Kamil Efendi was appointed as the deputy astrologer (*müneccim-i sanî*) after Tahir Efendi and would replace him as the chief astrologer in 1880. See Salim Aydın, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Müneccimbaşılık,” 173.

148 BOA, İ. DH. 121/6145, 20 Receb 1262 (14 July 1846). See Mehmet İpşirli, “Ahmed Muhtar Beyefendi, Molla Bey,” in *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: TDV, 1999), 105. He was the grandson of the *müderriş* and former Ottoman grand vizier Koca Yusuf Paşa (d. 1800). His family connections might be the reason for his self-assured attitude at the Imperial Press.

Such divisions aside, the book had always been a vehicle for the scholarly advancement of ulema in their career tracks at the Ottoman court. Respected members of the ulema from across the empire had long presented their written tracts to the sultan in hopes of receiving gifts and scholarly promotions,<sup>149</sup> and the Ottoman court's patronage of books by both local and foreign authors continued in the nineteenth century.<sup>150</sup> For instance, Diyarbakirli Şaban Kami Efendi (d. 1884), a member of the ulema who had presented various works on divan poetry and mysticism to the sultan, was rewarded with monetary gift in 1863 in recognition of his knowledge.<sup>151</sup>

But with the popularization of printing practices from the 1830s on, the right to have one's work published itself came to serve as its own form of reward and mark of prestige in the bureaucratic and scholarly ranks.<sup>152</sup> Competition could be fierce. Publication not only expanded one's fame and prestige; it also carried monetary rewards, as authors were allowed to keep the profits from the sale of their books. In this light, Fahreddin Efendi, a Sufi sheikh from Bursa, appealed to the sultan in 1855 for the right to have his book printed. In his letter, he complained that he had not yet been able to publish his book, and had therefore been deprived of the level of income enjoyed by other Sufi sheikhs in the empire; he hoped to be granted a higher salary and the right to print his book in recognition of his scholarly work.<sup>153</sup> Aside from the monetary gains, petitions addressing the sultan reflected authors' belief in the value of their scholarship and its potential to benefit the wider community. In 1862, Hacı Mustafa Efendi, an ulema from Amasya, introduced

149 One early example is Abd al-Rahim al-Abbasi (d. 1555), a Cairene scholar who dedicated and presented a book to the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II in 1501, for which he was rewarded with money and a teaching position at a madrasa. Helen Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons: Conquest and Community in Early Modern Ottoman Lands* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 39.

150 For a forthcoming article on the books presented by European authors to the Ottoman sultans in the nineteenth century, see Ayşe Başaran, "Book Diplomacy Between European Authors, Embassies, and the Ottoman Court: 1830s to 1860s," *Quaerendo* 54, no. 6 (forthcoming 2023).

151 BOA, İ. DH. 505/34358, 4 Şevval 1279 (25 March 1863).

152 For a discussion of the right to print books, see Başaran, "The Ottoman Printing Enterprise," 123–28.

153 BOA, İ. DH. 325/21197, 11 Receb 1271 (30 March 1855).

his glossary on *Netâyiciü'l Efkar* by stating that it would benefit students and the expansion and dissemination of knowledge.<sup>154</sup>

In all these cases, we see an emergent pattern: as the number of scholars involved in the printing enterprise increased, their work in the sector came increasingly to be viewed and articulated as a scholarly pursuit, one that deserved the same recognition as any other scholarly endeavor. Some even came to view a position at the press as a more attractive path to scholarly advancement than traditional routes. Even those ulema members with no connection to the work of the press itself found themselves drawn in by the cachet that being a published author carried with it. Though the maxim “publish or perish” was still some ways off, a clear link was beginning to bind the worlds of scholarship and printing ever more closely together.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, taking Istanbul as my focus, I have argued that a realignment of professions traditionally associated with manuscript culture took place around print publishing in the Arabic script after the Ottoman adoption of the press in 1727. I have demonstrated that several members of the ulema, whose expertise in manuscript production largely carried over to the new field of printing, continued to be assigned to important positions at the Imperial Press through the 1860s. Other specialists in manuscript production, such as calligraphers, were also integrated into the enterprise through typographic and lithographic printing.

In advancing these claims, my argument runs against a current in the traditional scholarship that holds that the Muslim religious classes, and perhaps Islam in general, were largely opposed to the introduction and spread of printing technology in the Ottoman realm. According to the evidence I have presented here, quite the opposite was the case: many members of the Ottoman ulema themselves pioneered, embraced, and shaped the development of the printing enterprise from typography to lithography in various ways. The same holds true for calligraphers, who facilitated the transition from the manuscript to the printed book by providing

<sup>154</sup> BOA, İ. MVL. 479/21718, 12 Cemâziyelâhir 1279 (5 December 1862).

the aesthetic continuity necessary to appeal to audiences whose expectations were still largely shaped by the manuscript tradition.

What opposition there was seems to have been that of a more personal sort: an animosity directed against foreign agents of the press such as Blaque and Cayol, born of concerns for status and a fear of being edged out of the book business on the part of Ottoman Muslims seeking a place for themselves in the new world of print. In other words, it was a matter not of technophobia or bigotry but of trying to maintain their cultural and economic hold over books by adapting to the new technology at their own pace. If Blaque and Cayol did indeed become targets, this was, if anything, an indication of local Ottoman agents' vested interest in the press rather than the opposite.

The connections between such actors and the printing press should not come as a surprise. The Ottoman transition from the world of the handwritten manuscript to that of print was, as elsewhere in the world, gradual and marked more by continuity and overlap than by rupture. Traditional scribal culture continued to flourish. The Ottoman incunabula, or the stage where printed books looked very much like their manuscript versions, continued well into the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>155</sup> When Necib Asım (d. 1935) wrote his *Kitâb* in 1893, he could still buy manuscripts from booksellers with ease.<sup>156</sup> Nor was the continuity and overlap evident in the case of the press particularly unique. The Ottoman ulema, like the Muslim learned classes elsewhere in the Islamic world, were actively involved in many other modern institutions of the nineteenth century. As some of the most educated people in the empire, the printing enterprise constituted but one of the many areas in which they participated, contributed, and expanded their role in the period.

Yet if the involvement of the ulema and other actors of manuscript culture in the early years of the Ottoman press is in many ways unsurprising, the lack of research on the subject to date means that

155 For further studies on the Ottoman incunabula extending into the nineteenth century, see Hatice Aynur, "Arap Harfli Türkçe Kitaplarda İç Kapağın Gelişimi: 1826–1923," in *Yücel Dağlı Anısına*, ed. Evangelia Balta, Yorgos Dedes, Emin Nedret İşli, and M. Sabri Koz (Istanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2015), 78–101; Mehmet Ali Akkaya, *Türk Beşikdevri Basmalarında Yazma Kitap Geleneğinin Etkileri ve İç Kapağın Gelişimi* (Istanbul: Hiperlink, 2015).

156 Necib Asım, *Kitâb* (Istanbul: Matba'a-i Safâ ve Enver, 1311).

the full implications of this involvement have yet to be investigated. As I suggest in the third section of this article, the ulema's growing role in the print enterprise was not a one-way street. Their newfound position in the press and the growing importance of the printed book seem to have had significant ramifications for the nature of scholarship and promotion within *ilmiyye* ranks. By the middle of the nineteenth century, a pattern began to emerge whereby the scholarly expertise of the ulema would get manuscripts printed, and the proliferation of printed books, in turn, created more job opportunities for other ulema. As scholarship and the world of print became increasingly intertwined, many members of the ulema came to view the printing enterprise as an extension of the traditional scholarly domain and sought, often successfully, to use their experience at the press to secure promotion in the scholarly career tracks, and vice versa. Others wrote recommendations to advance the careers of their colleagues or the fortunes of books they felt particularly deserving. And many from across the *ilmiyye* ranks competed for the prestige and monetary rewards that came with being a published author.

These developments raise several important questions. As scholarly work became increasingly linked to publishing, in terms both of prestige and financial reward, what consequences did this have for the nature of scholarship in the Ottoman milieu? Did scholars begin to write more popular tracks to appeal to a wider readership, which would have promised greater income? Did the cachet that came with being a published author affect career trajectories within the ulema ranks? What role did the scholarly endorsement play in this process, and what can such endorsements tell us about scholarly networks and intellectual currents and divisions during the period? And what of the role of the Ottoman ruling elite, long the principal patrons of scholarly production, and the growing number of private presses that emerged as alternatives to the state press?

Across the Muslim world, the ulema's close involvement with the printed medium would grow only more intense into the twentieth century, as they increasingly turned to the press to promote their religious agendas.<sup>157</sup> Studies examining the Hamidian period

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157 See, for instance, Scott Reese, "'The Ink of Excellence': Print and the Islamic Tradition of East Africa," in *Manuscript and Print in the Islamic Tradition*, ed. Scott Reese (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 217–42.



in particular demonstrate that the ulema came to supervise councils regulating religious publishing, thus allowing them to control and shape publications to a significant extent.<sup>158</sup> Given the growing prominence of publishing and the printed book and the simultaneous rise of new gatekeeping practices and mechanisms of control and surveillance, what dynamics affected whose voices made it into print and whose did not? And as competition for publication mounted, what new gatekeepers and gatekeeping practices emerged to decide what deserved to be printed and what did not?

These and other potentially promising lines of inquiry begin with an acknowledgment of the hitherto underappreciated role of the Ottoman ulema and other actors of manuscript culture in the rise of the press, a role I have sought to document here in the case of the early years of the Ottoman Imperial Press. It is my hope that future research into the burgeoning Ottoman world of print will follow up on these lines of inquiry, especially in the context of the increasingly complex world of publishing that began to emerge from the 1860s onward, when a more distinctively Ottoman print identity would be shaped by the participation of both traditional and new actors, who would utilize and manipulate technological tools to project their own agendas.

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İ. DUIT (İrade Dosya Usülü)

A.MKT (Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Evrakı)

<sup>158</sup> Dıġıroġlu, *Osmanlı'da Dini Matbuat*, 62–88.



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## GELENEKSEL YAZMA ESER AKTÖRLERİ VE 19. YÜZYILDA OSMANLI MATBAASI: UZUN SOLUKLU BİR DÖNÜŞÜM

### Öz

Osmanlı matbaası üzerine yapılan çalışmalar uzun bir süre boyunca matbaanın yükselişinde ulema ve hattatlar gibi yazma eser dünyasının geleneksel aktörlerinin oynadığı rolü ihmal etmiştir. Tartışmaya dâhil edildikleri zaman bile bu aktörler genellikle yeni teknolojinin düşmanı olarak konumlandırılmıştır. Oysa hem ulema hem de hattatlar hızla değişen kültürel ortamda editoryal katkıdan matbaanın tekno-materyal yönlerine uzanan bir çeşitlilik içerisinde kendilerine yeni fırsatlar yakalamayı ve yeni sistemin parçası olmayı başarmışlardır. Bu makale ulema ve hattatların bilgi birikiminin devlet matbaası özelinde bilhassa 1860'lı yılların ortasına kadar matbu kültürün oluşumuna verdiği katkıyı vurgulamaya çalışmaktadır. Bir yandan bu aktörlerin matbaaya hızla adapte olup becerilerini yeni ortama taşıdıklarını gösterirken diğer yandan kendi mesleklerinin de yeni teknoloji ile karşılıklı etkileşim sürecine ışık tutmaktadır. Belki de daha önemlisi matbaa ile beraber yazılı kültür dönüşürken ilim geleneğinin kendisinin de bir değişim içerisine girdiğine ve bir kariyer alanı olarak ilmiyenin bundan payını aldığına işaret etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı Modernizasyonu, Matbaa, Ulema, Editoryal Ekip, Hattatlar.

