



## **Part 1. Printing in Istanbul, for Istanbul**



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# İbrahim Müteferrika and the Ottoman Intellectual Culture in the Early 18th Century: a Transcultural Perspective

Why have they not read? Why have they not developed curiosity?  
Why have they not wanted to learn? ... In my inheritance,  
they will find piles of unsold books. They have not read the ones  
that I printed. They have not paid attention to the thing  
that I call science. Descartes, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo  
were fairy tales to them... They have not read...  
What is this life then? What have I lived for?  
What have I achieved?<sup>1</sup>

Written in a stage play in the 1980s, these sentences allude to İbrahim Müteferrika's disappointment with his legacy as a printer on his deathbed. The prized play was written by Jale Baysal, a prominent expert on Müteferrika and printing in Ottoman Turkish. Although she wrote a fictional account of Müteferrika, Baysal relied heavily on her knowledge of the primary and secondary sources on Müteferrika and took care to include pieces of this knowledge into her play.<sup>2</sup> She also gave special importance to presenting Müteferrika with due attention to the qualities that he had both before and after his conversion to Islam. In a similar effort of transcending physical and mental borders, she advised in the introduction that the roles of the people around Müteferrika both in Kolozsvár/Cluj and Istanbul should be played by the very same stage actors and actresses.<sup>3</sup> The image of Müteferrika in this play is that of an intellectual fighting for progressive values against a rather rigid intelligentsia and society despite the presence of a handful of individuals in the Ottoman court who tried to help him with his task of estab-

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1 J. Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi (İbrahim Müteferrika Oyunu)*, Istanbul, 1992, p. 89–90.

2 For a case in which she included a passage from Niyazi Berkes' *Encyclopedia of Islam* article on Müteferrika, see Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi*, p. 24. The said article can be found in N. Berkes, "İbrahim Müteferrika", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, vol. III, ed. by B. Lewis, V. L. Ménage, C. Pellat, J. Schacht, Leiden, 1971, p. 996–998.

3 Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi*, p. 3.

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lishing his printing press. Throughout the play, we see Müteferrika, among his other tasks, writing, commentating, and translating several books, and dealing with many technical and administrative aspects of establishing and maintaining a printing press in Istanbul.

Recent scholarship on İbrahim Müteferrika has shed light on many aspects of this Ottoman printer's life, career, and scholarly and printing activities in the Ottoman Empire, aspects that had been little explored or simply unknown until recent decades.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, thanks to recent revisionist historiography, the earlier caricature image of an intellectual fighting for progressive values against a rather rigid intelligentsia and society gradually gave way to a more realistic understanding of Müteferrika and his scholarly and printing endeavors. Despite such depth and breadth of scholarship, I believe that there is still a need to delve further into Müteferrika's intellectual entanglements with broader Ottoman intellectual society, one that mirrors the diversity of the Ottoman world. For this purpose, the present paper focuses on some illustrative examples in which a transcultural perspective could help provide a better understanding of both Müteferrika and Ottoman intellectual culture at large. Focusing on Müteferrika as an Ottoman intellectual who was born and raised as a non-Muslim outside the direct influence of the Ottoman scholarly currents, and his own contributions to the larger Ottoman intellectual culture, a broader aim of this paper is to point out the crucial importance of the transcultural aspects of Müteferrika and the intellectual culture surrounding him. This paper maintains that despite his rather exceptional qualities, İbrahim Müteferrika was not alone in his endeavor in generating knowledge across cultural borders. Therefore, it draws on the transcultural networks connected directly and indirectly to him. Accordingly, it highlights the necessity to think beyond the conventional communal borders by highlighting the networks

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<sup>4</sup> *Matbaanın Ön Sözü "Basmacı İbrahim Efendi": Müteferrika Sergisi*'21, Ankara, 2021; Y. Erdem, *Müteferrika'nın İzinde: Kitap ve Matbuat Tarihi Yazıları*, İstanbul, 2021; K. Beydilli, *İki İbrahim: Müteferrika ve Halefi*, İstanbul, 2019; O. Sabev, *Waiting for Müteferrika: Glimpses of Ottoman Print Culture*, Boston, 2018; O. Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika ya da İlk Osmanlı Matbaa Serüveni*, İstanbul, 2016 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2006); E. Afyoncu, "İbrahim Müteferrika Hakkında Önemli Bir Vesika", *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 28, 2013, p. 51-56; V. Erginbaş, "Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context: İbrahim Müteferrika and His Intellectual Landscape", in G. Roper (ed.), *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East. Papers from the Symposium at the University of Leipzig, September 2008*, Leiden, 2013, p. 53-100; S. Karahasanoğlu, "Osmanlı Matbaasının Başarısını/Başarısızlığını Yeniden Gözden Geçirmek ya da İbrahim Müteferrika'nın Terekesinin Tespitine Katkı", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 33/1, 2010, p. 319-328; F. Sarıcaoğlu, C. Yılmaz, *Müteferrika: Basmacı İbrahim Efendi ve Müteferrika Matbaası/Basmacı İbrahim Efendi and the Müteferrika Press*, İstanbul, 2008; E. Afyoncu, "İlk Türk Matbaacısının Kurucusu Hakkında Yeni Bilgiler", *Bellekten*, 243, 2001, p. 607-622.

between individuals and institutions that do not immediately pop into our minds when we talk about the Ottoman world of printing. These networks involve individuals such as the Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos Notaras, one of the most important Muslim scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Esad Efendi of Ioannina, the Armenian engraver Mıgırđıç Galatavi, and the Jewish printer Yona Ashkenazi. In working on these individuals and institutions, it also offers a discussion of the major activities related to printing such as copy-editing, translating, commenting, engraving,<sup>5</sup> and broader aspects of printing such as the history of reading and libraries.

In discussing this topic, this paper benefits from the theoretical framework offered by Wolfgang Welsch, notably his conception of transculturality. Welsch maintains that the earlier conception of culture as defined by Herder refers to three major characteristics: social homogenization, ethnic consolidation, and intercultural delimitation. As such, cultures do not interact with each other as if they are islands. Later on, several alternatives have been suggested against Herder's conception of single cultures. While interculturality was aimed at fostering interactions between cultures that occupy different spaces, multiculturalism defined the presence of different cultures that share the same space. Nonetheless, Welsch claimed, for all their positive intentions, these alternatives contain a somewhat similar conception of cultures as homogenous entities. Welsch offers an alternative to these approaches by focusing on the interactions of cultures in several layers. Welsch's conception of transculturality refers to three main characteristics of cultures: their networks with external cultures, their internal differences, and hybridity.<sup>6</sup> Even though Welsch rarely delves into the historical aspects of the term except for his recent book, in which he analyzes certain historical figures through the concept of transculturality,<sup>7</sup> several scholars, includ-

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5 A. Kabacalı, *Türk Kitap Tarihi*, Part 1. *Başlangıçtan Tanzimat'a Kadar*, İstanbul, 1989; İ. E. Erünsal, *Orta Çağ İslâm Dünyasında Kitap ve Kütüphane*, İstanbul, 2018.

6 For a review of Welsch's criticisms against the Herderian conception of cultures and the alternative concepts of interculturality and multiculturalism, and Welsch's proposal of the concept of transculturality, see W. Welsch, "Transculturality: the changing form of cultures today", *Filozofski Vestnik*, 22/2, 2001, p. 59–86; W. Welsch, "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today", in M. Featherstone, S. Lash (eds.), *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, London, 1999, p. 194–213.

7 W. Welsch, *Transkulturalität: Realität – Geschichte – Aufgabe*, Vienna, 2017.

ing some Ottomanists,<sup>8</sup> have incorporated this concept as an analytical grid for explaining historical phenomena.<sup>9</sup>

The three characteristics of transculturality perfectly fit the persona of İbrahim Müteferrika. First, as an intellectual who was in contact with scholarly currents in Europe through his knowledge of several European languages, his networks with external cultures support the idea that he was an exceptional figure in Ottoman intellectual history. Second, despite his conversion to Islam – and even writing an individual tract on Islam<sup>10</sup> – İbrahim Müteferrika's persona probably differed in several ways from other Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, with all their internal differences, which serves his image as an exceptional character. Finally, his hybrid persona, which combines his pre- and post-conversion qualities also strengthen the exceptional nature of his persona in the Ottoman world. While it would be unfair not to recognize Müteferrika's rather exceptional qualities, presenting him as a unique figure in Ottoman intellectual history as we see in the play by Baysal would also be unfair to the people who frequented the same intellectual circles as Müteferrika.

This paper is not the first one to analyze Müteferrika as part of broader Ottoman realities. Nevertheless, there is still a need for a more systematic analysis of both the Müteferrika press and Müteferrika's intellectual network from a transcultural perspective. While the scholarship on the Müteferrika press is careful to mention that there were other presses in the empire owned by Ottoman non-Muslims, until recent decades the possibility of interaction between different presses in the Ottoman Empire had been either little-explored, ignored, or overruled rather than actually analyzed as a topic. Baysal, for instance, claimed in her 1968 magnum opus on the books published by the Ottoman Turks, that the print-

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**8** P. Firges, T. P. Graf, “Exploring the contact zone: A critical assessment from the perspective of early modern Euro–Ottoman history”, in L. Abu–Er–Rub, C. Brosius, S. Meurer, D. Panagiotopoulos, S. Richter (eds.), *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, London/New York, 2019, p. 109–122; R. Murphey, “Ottoman Medicine and Transculturalism from the Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Century”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 66, 1992, p. 376–403.

**9** For a few examples, see C. Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism*, Evanston, 2017; M. Herren, M. Rüesch, C. Sibille, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources*, Berlin-Heidelberg, 2012; A. Benessaieh, “Multiculturalism, Interculturality, Transculturality”, in A. Benessaieh (ed.), *Amériques Transculturelles – Transcultural Americas*, Ottawa, 2010, p. 11–38; L. Abu–Er–Rub, C. Brosius, S. Meurer, D. Panagiotopoulos, S. Richter (eds.), *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, London/New York, 2019.

**10** For information on İbrahim Müteferrika's *Risâle-i İslâmiyye*, and the transliteration of this text (p. 55–139), see H. Necatioğlu, *Matbaacı İbrahim Müteferrika ve Risâle-i İslâmiye (Tenkidli metin)*, Ankara, 1982.

ing houses owned by non-Muslims “did not publish anything in Turkish or about Turkish culture” and “played no role whatsoever” for the Müteferrika press.<sup>11</sup> After drawing on the role of Müteferrika and the Ottoman ambassador Mehmed Said Efendi, and the protection offered by the grand vizier İbrahim Pasha and the sultan Ahmed III, she asserted that the Müteferrika press “was established and developed in complete disconnection from the minority presses.”<sup>12</sup>

Recent years have witnessed important developments in the literature on the Müteferrika press and Müteferrika himself. One of the major occupations of this revisionist scholarship is its accent on contextualizing Müteferrika within the broader Ottoman world rather than emphasizing his exceptionality. However, unless we delve into the transcultural aspects of Ottoman intellectual culture, these revisionist works might also suffer from the problems of earlier scholarship.

In a recent piece, Vefa Erginbaş, for instance, draws on the importance of the “environment where he was surrounded by an enlightened elite.”<sup>13</sup> In presenting this enlightened circle, he notes that it “was not confined to his friends among the Ottoman intelligentsia”<sup>14</sup> and that it “included Muslim as well as non-Muslim bureaucrats, religious dignitaries, scholars, linguists, commanders, soldiers, and scientists.”<sup>15</sup> In his analysis, however, if we exclude the case of Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha/Comte de Bonneval, the Ottoman intellectuals in his circle are presented as if few of them had networks with external cultures, internal differences, or hybridity. All the Ottoman figures in his network appear to be Muslims, all the Christian ones are Europeans and there is no reference to a single non-Muslim Ottoman intellectual. So, this image of Ottoman Muslims and European Christians reminds us of the concept of interculturality in which somewhat homogenous groups from different spaces collaborate with each other. Therefore, Erginbaş reaches the inevitable conclusion of presenting Müteferrika as an exception: “an Ottoman man of the Enlightenment in a unique way.”<sup>16</sup>

To return to the play by Baysal quoted at the beginning of this piece, it is necessary to note that it presents Ottoman Muslim men of learning (*ulemâ*)<sup>17</sup> as being opposed to printing. She narrates the meeting between the young Müteferrika

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11 J. Baysal, *Osmanlı Türklerinin Bastıkları Kitaplar, 1729–1875*, Istanbul, 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1968), p. 4.

12 Baysal, *Osmanlı Türklerinin Bastıkları Kitaplar*, p. 4.

13 Erginbaş, “Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context”, p. 95.

14 Erginbaş, “Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context”, p. 84.

15 Erginbaş, “Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context”, p. 84.

16 Erginbaş, “Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context”, p. 85.

17 For an introductory essay on the *ulemâ*, see H. A. R. Gibb, H. Bowen, *Islamic society and the West: A study of the impact of Western Civilization in Moslem culture in the Near East*, Vol. I *Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century*, part II, New York, 1957, p. 81–113.

and the judge (*kadı*) of Istanbul as a conflictual one. The judge, who is depicted as a rather difficult character, is initially happy with Müteferrika. Yet, after interpreting his eagerness for learning as lack of manners, he has Müteferrika lashed and swears at him as “the accursed one who fell from the waist of an infidel!” (*gâvur belinden düşmüş lain!*).<sup>18</sup> Likewise, as Baysal writes in one instance, the French ambassador to the Porte, de Lacroix, tells Müteferrika that “men of religion and the teachers in the *medreses*” reported to the Ottoman sultan only the potential negative results of printing, a point that Müteferrika confirms.<sup>19</sup>

However, it is well known that the Ottoman *ulemâ* took a very active role in the building and functioning of the printing press.<sup>20</sup> First and foremost, the Ottoman grand mufti Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi issued a *fetva* in favor of printing “dictionaries and books of logic, philosophy, astronomy, and other high sciences” (*lugat ve mantık ve hikmet ve hey’et ve bunların emsali ulûm-i aliyyede telif olunan kitaplar*).<sup>21</sup> An often-overlooked aspect of this *fetva* is its particular emphasis on copy-editing conducted by competent people. The *fetva* specifies the book to be printed as “a copy-edited book” (*bir musahhah kitap*) and identifies the copy-editors of the text as “a few men of learning who will be appointed with the task of copy-editing the book to be printed” (*birkaç âlim kimesneler sureti nakş oluncak kitabı tashîh için tayin olunup*). As a side note, it must be remarked that after being appointed as the grand mufti by the grand vizier Damat İbrahim Pasha, Yenişehirli Abdullah remained in his post for a long period of time (12.5 years) and was in agreement with the reformist policies of the grand vizier.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, a cursory glance at his *fetvas* on Muslim-non-Muslim interactions also shows his concern for social cohesion.<sup>23</sup> Such concern for social cohesion was probably a key factor for the cohesion between the Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim men of letters.

18 Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi*, p. 49.

19 Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi*, p. 57–58.

20 For a recent evaluation of this theme, see Beydilli, *İki İbrahim: Müteferrika ve Halefi*, p. 15–16. For the role of the *ulemâ* in legitimizing the reforms in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire, see M. İpşirli, *Osmanlı İlmîyesi*, İstanbul, 2021, p. 36.

21 Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü’l-Fetâvâ*, ed. by S. Kaya, B. Algin, Z. Trabzonlu, A. Erkan, İstanbul, 2011, p. 567–568. On this *fetva*, see also, H. Y. Nuhoglu, “Müteferrika Matbaasının Kurulması için Verilen Fetvâ Üzerine”, *Basım ve Yayıncılığımızın 250. Yılı Bilimsel Toplantısı, 10–11 Aralık 1979, Ankara, Bildiriler*, Ankara, 1980, p. 119–126.

22 M. İpşirli, “Lale Devrinde Yenilikçi Bir Âlim: Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi”, in M. Armağan (ed.), *Masaldan Gerçeğe Lale Devri*, İstanbul, 2014, p. 267–277.

23 Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü’l-Fetâvâ*, p. 178–186.



To return to the role of the copy-editors (*musahhih*), in the play by Baysal, there is also reference to an unnamed copy-editor. This character is possibly the most interesting person and is depicted in stark contrast to Müteferrika. He is portrayed as an arrogant person who lacks Müteferrika's idealism and threatens him with quitting his job of editing a text in which he found a grammatical problem in Arabic prose.<sup>24</sup> The representation of his indifferent attitude towards the printing press is understandable given the rather negative representation of the Ottoman Muslim men of learning in this play. Only after Müteferrika feeds the arrogance of the copy-editor with sweet words does he calm down and, with a narcissistic smile, says the following words about Müteferrika: "The rascal is a reasonable infidel!" (*Makul keferedir kerata!*).<sup>25</sup>

As the historian of that time Çelebizâde İsmail Âsım informs us, three of these copy-editors came from the *ulemâ* ranks and one was a Mevlevî shaykh: İshak Efendi, Pîrîzâde Sâhib Mehmed Efendi and Esad Efendi, the former judges of Istanbul, Thessaloniki and Galata, and Mûsâ Efendi the shaykh of the Mevlevî tekke in Kasımpaşa.<sup>26</sup>

A closer look at the personae and activities of at least one of these copyeditors, Esad Efendi from Ioannina, shows that he displayed quite similar characteristics to Müteferrika in addition to collaborating with him in printing. He was the judge (*kadı*) of Galata, a teacher (*müderres*) in the prestigious Eyüp Sultan *medrese*, and a prominent man of thinking and letters.<sup>27</sup> He wrote and translated several books in what the Ottomans called *elsine-i selâse*, the three major languages in which Ottoman Muslim scholars wrote: Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. He was also a notable translator and commentator of several texts by Aristotle and his commentators. His interests concentrated on logic, philosophy, astronomy and physics, and he was also a prominent poet of his time. What caused several scholars to regard him as rather an exception, much like in the case of Müteferrika, is the fact that he also knew Greek. His most notable work is *al-Ta'lim al-thâlith* which he wrote in Arabic.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi*, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Baysal, *Cennetlik İbrahim Efendi*, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> Râşid Mehmed Efendi, Çelebizâde İsmail Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, ed. by A. Özcan, Y. Uğur, B. Çakır, A. Z. İzgöer, Istanbul, 2013, vol. 3, p. 1548.

<sup>27</sup> K. Sarıkavak, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Bir Osmanlı Düşünürü, Yanyalı Esad Efendi: Bir Rönesans Denemesi*, Ankara, 1997; B. H. Küçük, "Natural Philosophy and Politics in the Eighteenth Century: Esad of Ioannina and Greek Aristotelianism at the Ottoman Court", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 41, 2013, p. 125–158.

<sup>28</sup> For the copy handwritten by Esad Efendi himself, see Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Ragıp Paşa Collection, 824.

This book is a commentary of the first three books of Aristotle's *Physics* and it is based on Ioannis Kottounios' 17<sup>th</sup> century Latin commentary on the *Physics*.<sup>29</sup> In translating the books by Aristotle and Kottounios, Esad Efendi was assisted by a Greek Orthodox intellectual, who was attached to the Patriarchal Academy. So, in great contrast with the copy-editor's attitude to even a convert from Christianity such as Müteferrika in Baysal's play, Esad Efendi in fact collaborated with a Greek Orthodox translator, but there was even more than that.

Esad Efendi was also in correspondence with one of the most influential and notable Orthodox scholars of the time, namely Chrysanthos Notaras, the patriarch of Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> Just as Müteferrika and Esad Efendi, Notaras knew both Eastern and Western languages and, just like Müteferrika, was presented as a representative of the Ottoman Enlightenment by Erginbaş.<sup>31</sup> One of the most definitive books on Notaras describes him as the "precursor" (*prodromos*) of the Neohellenic Enlightenment.<sup>32</sup> His studies in astronomy were nourished by works written in Greek, Latin and Arabic. One of the manuscripts that he wrote, for instance, shows that he worked on astronomical terminology in Greek through Arabic. Esad Efendi and Chrysanthos Notaras corresponded in Greek and exchanged gifts such as delights (*rahatulhulkum*, which Esad wrote not in Arabic but Greek characters) and fascicles (*ta tzouzia*). Were these fascicles the ones that Chrysanthos Notaras published? Did they have any influence on the materials that Müteferrika published or vice versa? Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer these questions on the basis of the correspondence between them. However, given the depth and breadth of their correspondence, one should not be surprised to see the scholarly exchanges in the realm of printing. We should also remark that the two men also mention other scholars in their correspondence. These include the chief astrologer, an unnamed friend of the chief astrologer, and some other Christians.<sup>33</sup>

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29 I. Kottounios, *Commentarii lucidissimi in octo libros Aristotelis de physico auditu; una cum quaestionibus*, Venice, 1648. On Kottounios, see G. K. Myaris, "O filosofos tou 17ou aiona Ioannis Kottounios kai i ideologiki prossengisi tou ergou tou", *Peri Istorias*, 4, 2003, p. 183–215.

30 P. Stathi, "O 'sofotatos Esat Efentis' filios kai allilografos tou Chrysanthou Notara", *O Eranistis*, 18, 1986, 57–84.

31 Erginbaş, "Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context", p. 67–82.

32 P. Stathi, *Chrysanthos Notaras Patriarchis Ierosolymon: Prodromos tou Neoellinikou Diafotismou*, Athens, 1999.

33 Stathi, "O 'sofotatos Esat Efentis'". For an analysis of Chrysanthos Notaras' activities in the connected fields of science, theology, and politics with special reference to the Ottoman realities of the time, see H. Çolak, "Bilim, İlahiyat ve Siyasetin Merkezinde Bir Osmanlı Münevverisi: Kudüs Patriği Chrysanthos Notaras", *Kebikeç İnsan Bilimleri İçin Kaynak Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 47, 2019, p. 31–56.

Several other Muslim intellectuals around Müteferrika were also in connection with Europe. The first Ottoman ambassador to Europe, Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi, and his son Mehmet Said Efendi, who accompanied his father to Paris and went to Stockholm as the Ottoman ambassador, supported Müteferrika's endeavours in establishing a printing press in Istanbul. Therefore, Müteferrika was not much different in terms of his connections with external cultures beyond the nominal borders of the Ottoman Empire.

One of the Ottoman non-Muslim printers with whom Müteferrika exchanged ideas was Yona ben Ya'akov Ashkenazi, an Ottoman Jew from Poland. Yona's printing house was the most active Jewish printing house in Istanbul. Between 1710 and 1778, Yona, his three sons and grandsons published 188 out of the 210 Jewish books published in Istanbul.<sup>34</sup> We know that Müteferrika quoted his collaboration with Yona in his famous tract on the usefulness of printing. In particular, Müteferrika depicted Yona as someone who was "skilled in the craft of the required tools in (printing) and knowledgeable in the art of printing" (*fenn-i merkum kârhanesinde muktezi edevat ve alât ve mühimmat san'atinde mahir ve san'at-ı basmada ârif ve cümle bisât-ı mühimmeye malik Yona veled nam Yahudi*).<sup>35</sup> As such, Müteferrika requested that Yona be provided with an imperial *berat* that exempts him and his children from taxation in order to recognize his "privilege and honor" (*imtiyaz ve iftihar*).<sup>36</sup> Several European observers refer to a Jew from Poland who had a poor command of Turkish and helped Müteferrika.<sup>37</sup> However, there are also several indications that the two interacted through other media: There was probably an inconsequential attempt by Yona at partnering with the Müteferrika press, and finally, as Müteferrika's inheritance published by Sabev shows, Müteferrika had offered Yona a loan of 1770 aspers.<sup>38</sup>

A major aspect of printing was the engravings and here, we see Müteferrika in collaboration with an Ottoman Armenian, namely Mıgırdiç Galatavî, alongside two Muslims, Ahmed el-Kırımî and İbrahim Tophanevî, whom some scholars associate with none other than İbrahim Müteferrika himself. As his name sug-

<sup>34</sup> Y. Meral, *İbrahim Müteferrika Öncesi İstanbul'da Yahudi Matbuatı (1493–1729)*, Ankara, 2016, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> The text of this petition by Müteferrika was published in the unpaginated plates in S. N. Gerçek, *Türk Matbaacılığı I: Müteferrika Matbaası*, Istanbul, 1939.

<sup>36</sup> Y. Meral, "Yona ben Yakov Aşkenazi ve Matbaacılık Faaliyetleri", in F. M. Emecen, A. Akyıldız, E. S. Gürkan (eds.), *Osmanlı İstanbulu IV: IV. Uluslararası Osmanlı İstanbulu Sempozyumu Bildirileri, 20–22 Mayıs 2016, İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi*, Istanbul, 2016, p. 799.

<sup>37</sup> For a review of these references, see Meral, "Yona ben Yakov Aşkenazi ve Matbaacılık Faaliyetleri", p. 799–800.

<sup>38</sup> Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika*, p. 381.

gests, Mıgırđıç was from Galata, across the Golden Horn<sup>39</sup> and as Sabev maintains, he was probably not a permanent employee of the Müteferrika press and collaborated with İbrahim Müteferrika only when there was a need.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it is very likely that Mıgırđıç also worked for an Armenian printing press in Istanbul. While further research is needed on this topic, one may assume that there was at least some interaction between the Armenian and Muslim printing presses.

The aim of this paper is not to overwhelm the reader with a substantial network of multi-cultural Ottoman intellectuals by emphasizing their communal differences. Instead, it pinpoints cases in which the transcultural networks between these individuals fostered interactions for the process of Müteferrika's printing activities. To return to Wolfgang Welsch's conception of transculturality, we can easily say that Müteferrika was not alone in having the following qualities: 1) networks with external cultures, 2) internal differentiation, and 3) hybridity.

After establishing the similar qualities between Müteferrika and his intellectual circles and the entanglements between these individuals, it would be pertinent to highlight a few points about the circulation of knowledge between them through printed and unprinted media. The *Gazette de France* issued on January 18, 1727 notes that the Ottoman sultan wanted to establish a printing press and İbrahim Müteferrika was entrusted with this task. The newspaper also mentions that if this first project succeeds, the grand vizier Damat İbrahim Pasha would entrust the Ottoman ambassador to Stockholm, Mehmet Said Efendi, with the task of pursuing the same project in the other cities of the empire and "establishing a printing house for works in Greek and Latin characters."<sup>41</sup> While the newspaper does not offer any further information, one should not be surprised by these seemingly two separate projects.

As mentioned above, Esad Efendi of Ioannina, who was a copy-editor in the Müteferrika press, translated a 17<sup>th</sup> century Latin commentary on Aristotle into Arabic together with a Greek Orthodox intellectual. Several modern scholars have accused Esad Efendi of choosing to translate an outdated book which was not informed of the New Science in Europe. This is epitomized in the very title of the only monograph devoted to him, i.e. "An Attempt at Renaissance" (*Bir Rönesans Denemesi*). Likewise, as the final sentence of this monograph suggests, had Esad chosen another text to translate and comment on, "without doubt, it would not have been necessary to wait for another century to catch up with Western schol-

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39 T. Hanstein, *A New Print by Müteferrika (?): A Comparative View of Baron's Qibla Finder*, Berlin, 2021, p. 8–10.

40 Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika*, p. 177.

41 *Gazette de France* (18 January 1727), p. 26.

arship and technology.”<sup>42</sup> However, this text was a neo-Aristotelian response to the New Science and was important not only for the Greek Orthodox but also for Muslim communities. Here it should be noted that the majority of Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals of the time had a somewhat balanced attitude towards the New Science. This is understandable to a certain point, given the catastrophic developments influencing these communities. The execution of the three patriarchs of Constantinople, namely Kyrillos Loukaris (1638), Parthenios II (1650), and Parthenios III (1657), and a grand mufti, namely Feyzullah Efendi (1703), and the trial of Methodios Anthrakitis for charges of heterodoxy in 1723<sup>43</sup> were probably in the memories of the men of letters at the time. Their caution can be seen clearly in the choice of texts to be written, translated, and published.<sup>44</sup> When Chrysanthos Notaras published his *Eisagoge eis ta Geographika kai Sfairika*, for instance, he presented both geocentric and heliocentric systems coexisting with each other.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, in his published works, Müteferrika did not abandon the account of the geocentric system while presenting the heliocentric system. Showing a similar character, practicality was often preferred at the expense of conflict with tradition, values and principles that were deemed as sacred. When Iosipos Moisioudax published his first translation in 1761,<sup>46</sup> for instance, he did not choose the fields of mathematics or physics, but that of moral philosophy, which he “judged ... to be more useful for the needs” of his community.<sup>47</sup> In a similar case of caution, Müteferrika often commented that the new science that he was introducing in his works was not in conflict with the principles of Islamic law.

Such similarities among Ottoman intellectuals irrespective of their communities are also worth noting when it comes to the key works of reference. Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi’s account of France, for instance, was translated into Greek a few years after it was written and was a popular reading among the Greek Orthodox

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42 Sarkavak, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Bir Osmanlı Düşünürü*, p. 150.

43 K. Sathas, *Neoelliniki Filologia: Viografiai ton en tois grammasi dialampson ton Ellinon apo tis katalyseos tis Vizantinis Autokratorias mechri tis Ellinikis Ethnegersias (1453–1821)*, Athens, 1868, p. 435–437.

44 For a comparative study of Ottoman Muslim and Orthodox intellectuals towards the developments in Western Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see R. Murphey, “Westernisation in the eighteenth-century Ottoman empire: how far, how fast?”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 23/1, 1999, p. 116–139.

45 C. Notaras, *Eisagogi eis ta Geografika kai Sfairika*, Paris, 1716.

46 I. Moisioudax, *Ithiki Filosofia metafrastheisa ek tou italikou idiomatos*, Venice, 1761–1762 (two volumes).

47 P. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosipos Moisioudax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Princeton, 1992, p. 43.

intelligentsia in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Müteferrika's books were also read and, for some researchers, misread, making their way into other manuscripts.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Evgenios Voulgaris used Müteferrika's works quite extensively when trying to prove to Catherine the Great that the Ottomans could reform their empire and become invincible enemies of Russia again.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the above-mentioned *Eisagoge eis ta Geographika kai Sfairika* published by Chrysanthos Notaras in 1716 was translated into Arabic and remains in manuscript form.<sup>51</sup> While more research is needed for this particular manuscript, on the basis of the first expression on the first page, i.e. the Islamic *basmala* comprising the expression "in the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful,"<sup>52</sup> we can claim that it was translated by a Muslim and for Muslims.

In addition, a word must be said on the place of printed Christian Arabic books in this picture. In 1939, a pioneer in Turkish printing, Selim Nüzhet Gerçek published the cover page of a Bible in Arabic printed in Aleppo alongside many other books published by non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>53</sup> His presentation of this book contains problems such as not engaging with a discussion of how this book can be contextualized or his misreading of the translator of this manuscript: "Abdullah ibni Fazıl El Fettaki", instead of 'Abdallāh ibn [al-]Faḍl al-Anṭākī.<sup>54</sup> However, his information that the text has 121 folios and 242 pages helps us to identify another copy for the Corpus of Arabic Christian books in the Millet Library in Istanbul. The Arabic Christian book in question is the *Book of the Holy and Pure Gospel or the Resplendently Shining Lamp* (*Kitāb al-Inḡil al-šarīf al-ṭāhir wa-l-miṣbāḥ al-munir al-zāhir*) published in 1706 by Athanasios Dabbās in Aleppo.<sup>55</sup> The Millet Library copy seems to be located in the Carullah Efendi collec-

48 P. Stathi, "Enas Othomanos Presvis sti Gallia to 18o aiona", *I kath' imas Anatoli*, 5, 2000, p. 135–177.

49 Kalaycıoğulları claims, for instance, that Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı misunderstood certain parts of Müteferrika's books and repeated conflicting arguments in the same work. İ. Kalaycıoğulları, *İbrahim Müteferrika ve Yeni Bilim'in Türkiye'ye Girişi*, Istanbul, 2020, p. 92–94.

50 E. G. Atalay, "Rusya'da Bir Osmanlı Rum Âlimi Eugenio Voulgaris ve Ortodoks Kilisesinde Aydınlanma", unpublished MA Thesis, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, 2022.

51 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Arabe 2249.

52 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Arabe 2249, p. 2.

53 Gerçek, *Türk Matbaacılığ*, unpaginated plate.

54 Gerçek, *Türk Matbaacılığ*, p. 22–26.

55 For more on this book, see I. Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection*, Berlin/Boston, 2023, esp. p. 266–267; I. Feodorov, "Beginnings of Arabic printing in Ottoman Syria (1706–1711). The Romanians' part in Athanasius Dabbās's achievements", *ARAM Periodical*, 25/1&2, 2013, p. 242.

tion, as we also see on the cover page in the book by Gerçek. Because the Carullah Efendi collection has been moved from the Millet Library to the Süleymaniye Library, this book has also been moved there, apparently with the same catalogue number.<sup>56</sup> A prominent member of the *ulemâ*, Carullah Veliyyüddin was a notable bibliophile with his collection of more than 2,000 books and his marginalia in these books. The extent of his notes led to the publication of a volume devoted solely to his marginalia, which excludes his books on Christianity.<sup>57</sup> While more research is needed on this particular copy, it is possible that Carullah Efendi acquired it when he was in Aleppo. So, transcultural networks seem to have featured in the circulation of printed Christian Arabic books as well.

Even though the 1706 copy of the *Book of the Holy and Pure Gospel or the Resplendently Shining Lamp* published by Athanasios Dabbās in Aleppo does not contain any marginal notes, an analysis of Christian Arabic texts owned by Muslims has the potential to shed light on transcultural relations in the Ottoman context and to inform us about the readership of these texts. A copy of the *Book of Psalms of David the Prophet* published in 1764 in Khinshāra, currently preserved in Süleymaniye Manuscript Library in Istanbul<sup>58</sup> presents an interesting case in point. In this copy, the first two lines of the first page after the cover page, right before the introduction, appear to have been scratched out. A comparison of this copy with other copies of the same work shows that the “*bi-smi l-āb wa-l-ibn wa-l-rūh al-quḍus*” (“in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”) is missing.<sup>59</sup> It suggests that at least this part of the text was read and scratched out by a Muslim, possibly the owner of the book in the early 1790s whose record of ownership seems to have been written with the same ink.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, the story of unprinted and printed books after their owners died is a point worth mentioning. When a collection is sold off to others, there is a tendency to see this as a negative development. When referring to the death of Nikolaos Kritias, the prominent teacher at the Patriarchal Academy, the author of the most definitive book about this institution, Gritsopoulos, laments that his son sold these books to Jews and grocers in the streets.<sup>61</sup> The grocers mentioned in this episode probably refer to Turkish-speaking Christians from Asia

56 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Carullah Efendi Collection, 2.

57 B. Açı (ed.), *Osmanlı Kitap Kültürü: Carullah Efendi Kütüphanesi ve Derkenar Notları*, İstanbul 2021 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2015).

58 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Nafiz Paşa Collection, 37.

59 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Nafiz Paşa Collection, 37, p. 2.

60 Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Nafiz Paşa Collection, 37, p. 1.

61 T. A. Gritsopoulos, *Patriarchiki Megali tou Genous Scholi*, Athens, 2004 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1966), vol. I, p. 359.

Minor whom Greek-speaking members of Istanbul's Orthodox community often viewed with contempt. Hence, when Kritias' son sold his father's books, the sale of these books involved not only inter-communal but also intra-communal interaction through the circulation of books. Of course, one of the biggest problems in the Ottoman intellectual world at the time was the limited number of libraries in Istanbul, as Nicolas Mavrocordatos also mentions in his *Philotheou Parerga*.<sup>62</sup> However, this was also a way for knowledge to circulate across different communities and, possibly, various strata of the same community. Despite frequent references to İbrahim Müteferrika's unsold copies, Sabev concludes that he was able to sell two thirds of the books that he printed. A substantial number (747) of the rest of the books (3,087),<sup>63</sup> which Baysal characterizes as "piles of unsold books" were actually purchased by a Greek Orthodox buyer. We learn about this incident from a document that Kemal Beydilli published.<sup>64</sup> This was a bookseller<sup>65</sup> by the name of "İstefanaki son of Dimyaki." The fact that he bought a large number of these books shows his confidence that his customers would be able to buy at least some of them. Apparently, he sold these books to a single buyer, another Greek Orthodox by the name of "Panayot son of Kiryako" who lived across from the patriarchate. We know that he was also a publisher and that he also published works in Armenian.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, transcultural interactions appear to have continued even after printers such as İbrahim Müteferrika left behind substantial amounts of unsold books.

In conclusion, the story of İbrahim Müteferrika and the Müteferrika press cannot be understood without regard to other Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals who were directly and indirectly connected to the Müteferrika press. Likewise, the interaction between the individuals around Müteferrika show that an extensive understanding of the establishment and maintenance of the Müteferrika Press requires delving into the experiences of the printing houses owned by Ottoman non-Muslims. Similar intellectual attitudes towards the major developments in the Ottoman Empire and Europe appear to have generated

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<sup>62</sup> N. Mavrocordatos, *Les Loisirs de Philothée*, ed. by Jacques Bouchard, Athens/Montreal, 1989, p. 86.

<sup>63</sup> We learn about this number thanks to Karahasanoğlu's discovery of the relevant parts of Müteferrika's deed of inheritance. Karahasanoğlu, "Osmanlı Matbaasının Başarısını/Başarısızlığını Yeniden Gözden Geçirmek", p. 322.

<sup>64</sup> Beydilli, *İki İbrahim: Müteferrika ve Halefi*, p. 119, 143.

<sup>65</sup> On booksellers in the Ottoman Empire, see İ. E. Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Sahafılık ve Sahaflar*, İstanbul, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> R. F. M. Anhegger, "Hurufumuz Yunanca. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der karamanisch-türkischen Literatur", *Anatolica*, 7, 1979–1980, p. 170.



similar responses among the intellectuals around Müteferrika. As a result, the transculturality in the Ottoman space appears to have caused several interactions between institutions through printed and unprinted media. Evaluating the story of the early Arabic printing for the Arabic-speaking Christians with reference to the broader Ottoman transcultural networks is a task that is worth pursuing during future stages of this project.

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