16 Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890–1920

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Islamic reformism, in both its liberal and conservative forms, grew up with the printing and telegraphic revolutions in the Muslim world.[1] That early reformist figures such as the Muslim nationalist Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi "al-Afghani," the liberal reformist Muhammad 'Abduh, and the far more conservative Rashid Rida published in and were associated with newspapers has long been recognized, but the full implications of their involvement in the print medium for Mediterranean urban Muslim culture have not yet been explored. The importance of cities here should be obvious. Rural illiteracy was exponentially higher than urban. The rural world was not entirely detached from the technologies of literacy, but was largely a consumer rather than a producer of printing. Newspaper articles read aloud often reached villagers. In terms of Muslim practice, the rural areas were far more likely to be the sites of shrine-based Sufi worship than were cities, and peasants lived in a religious world of miracles, daily dependence on what they thought of as the divinely directed forces of nature for their livelihood, and pleas for intercession that resonated with their relationship to their landlords. In contrast, cities, as the primary entrepot for the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century information economy of telegraphy, publishing, modernist ideas, and the importation of printed materials, were in a sense all "information ports."

In view of Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum that the medium is the message, can we identify any ways in which print itself had an impact on the content of Muslim reformism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century?[2] Did journalistic technologies, including the wire services, affect print's diffusion and organization? What do the rates and techniques of literacy in the period 1890–1920 tell us about the nature of the movement? How is printing implicated in the rise of a new sort of public sphere, in new conceptions of the "nation," and even in a new sort of conception of the author?[3] The most prominent and thoughtful of the European historians concentrating on these sorts of issues, Elizabeth Eisenstein, has indefatigably explored the impact of printing on the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment.[4] Her approach has been unfairly criticized for being overly deterministic and monocausal (in fact she is a careful scholar, attentive to nuance), but that she has illuminated an important and neglected element in modernity is widely accepted. Ironically, students of the frontiers of the Muslim world have been among the first to think seriously about the meaning of the advent of print for Islam, and little has so far been written about this subject in regard to Arab Islam.[5]

The Eisenstein approach to printing as an agent of change might on the surface be thought open to the charge that ruptures and discontinuities are emphasized at the expense of a sense of the continuities in history. Christopher Bayly has recently addressed this problem for South Asia, arguing that a premodern communication ecumene prevailed in the subcontinent, consisting of specialists in written documentation of various sorts (Brahmins, Muslim clergy, court reporters, and scribes) as well as oral networks of gossip that operated across gender lines.[6] In Bayly's view, the British empire did not so much displace this Indian network of communication as gradually penetrate and coopt it. This argument from local knowledge and continuity is a powerful one, and forms a useful corrective to the frequently encountered conviction that the British entirely re-created India. But it does not necessarily contradict the Eisenstein approach. She notes that in the Renaissance, for instance, printing initially was used to publish books on magic and other subjects of great popular interest. That is, printing can be employed, ironically enough, to perpetuate pre-print modes of thinking and forms of knowledge. Still, she insists on a number of features of print that do have cognitive consequences, including the exactitude it makes possible with regard to diagrams (enabling scientific and engineering knowledge to spread in a way that hand-copied manuscripts simply did not), the ability to index a text, which now has fixed page numbers, and the simple accessibility of the text inexpensively to large numbers of readers. Not everything changes

with the coming of print, but some ways of thinking and operating do change. My concentration on Islam here acknowledges that the preexisting ecumene of knowledge in the southern Mediterranean was not so much displaced as put to new uses, a point that meshes with Bayly's work.

The urban information networks of the southern Mediterranean, previously sustained by diplomatic pouch, merchant private post, trading diasporas, travelers, Sufi orders, mosque sermons, sailors, and gossip, were powerfully amplified in the period after about 1850. Relatively new technologies of information and transportation burgeoned, including printing and the private press, telegraphy, and regularized state-run mail delivery. There were also the increasing dominance of the steamship on sea, the expansion of railroads on land, and significant increases in urban literacy. After 1890, one sees many new uses of these transportation and communication technologies, as in the way the telegraph and the expatriate press were mobilized in Iran during the revolt against the tobacco monopoly in 1891–92, and in the 1905–11 and 1908–9 revolutions in Tehran and Istanbul. Alexandria, Beirut, İzmir (Smyrna), and Istanbul, along with hinterland information ports such as Cairo, Damascus, Tabriz, and Tehran, were gathered into a web of information and intelligence that was not so much new as now enormously more lush and rapid. At the same time, they were becoming a regional subunit in a global information ecumene in which European dominance was often challenged by the ways in which peoples of the global south appropriated the new technologies for their own purposes.

I will survey the impact of printing on Islamic reform movements in the urban centers of the Muslim world, with a special focus on Egypt. Private printing sometimes began in seaports, as in Alexandria, the original home in the 1870s of the famous al-Ahram newspaper as well as other important organs, such as al-Tijarah (Commerce), spurred by the foreign news more readily available there. But as telegraph lines and rails were laid to the capitals, the printing presses tended to move closer to the halls of power, assured that the foreign and economic news would in any case come over the wire.

I conducted a keyword search in the online bibliographic database, OCLC Worldcat (with 40 million entries). When I looked under "place of publication," it immediately became clear that there was far more book printing in capitals than seaports in the period 1890–1920. In those decades, 1,405 books now held by Western academic libraries were published in Cairo, but a mere 72 in Alexandria (in Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek—I had to limit the languages because of the large number of Alexandrias in the

world). There were 2,865 titles published in Istanbul in all languages, but only 111 from the major port city of İzmir. Iran had no major port (Bushire was a small place), but Tabriz filled the role of overland port, the entrepôt linking Iran and its Asian hinterland to the Ottoman Empire and points west. Western libraries have 326 books published in those three decades in Tehran, but only 47 published in Tabriz. Beirut formed the major exception to this rule. The catalog showed 718 titles published there in these years, but only 141 from the provincial capital of Damascus. Still, Ottoman Syria had a number of administrative centers, and Beirut certainly played the role of a geographical "central place" in this regard.

The numbers in each case are no doubt unreliable and low, because Western libraries collected haphazardly from those years. But there is no particular reason to think that the ratio between capital cities and port cities was skewed (note that Istanbul stood out in being both). The situation was quite different with regard to periodicals, especially those of minority communities such as Greeks, Armenians, Italians, French, and British, who typically published many newspapers in the cosmopolitan ports such as Alexandria and İzmir, and whose press tended to be oriented toward secular, bourgeois concerns, in contrast to the more Islamic tinge of some periodicals issuing from Cairo and Istanbul.

The Chinese invented and combined the basic elements of printing (paper, ink, and relief surfaces) in the opening centuries of the common era, and in the period circa 1000–1310 they developed moveable-type printing, first using clay pieces and then wooden blocks. The invention spread in East Asia as far as Korea, where in the fifteenth century bronze metal moveable type was employed for the first time. Europe learned paper-making ultimately from China, in the twelfth century, and it is possible, though not established, that knowledge of other elements of the technology migrated west along the Silk Road. Indigenous printing techniques were known in Fatimid and Mamluk Egypt, but their uses were limited to purposes such as decorating fabrics and playing cards, and for unknown reasons the expertise was lost.[7] In any case, moveable-type printing was developed for Roman letters in western Europe 1430–50, thereafter spreading rapidly throughout what is now Germany, Holland, France, England, Spain, and Italy, becoming well entrenched by 1500.

Gutenberg-style printing did not become widespread in the Middle East at this time, though why this should have been remains mysterious. Jews exiled from Spain who took refuge in Istanbul established presses, and the

technology was certainly known, at least superficially, to Middle Easterners. Scholars have often blamed the resistance to the adoption of printing in Muslim realms on the influence of the powerful corps of scribes, whose livelihoods were threatened by the press, and on cultural attitudes among rulers and learned men exalting the Arabic script as too sacred to be desecrated through mechanization. Robinson has emphasized the orality of the transmission of religious and other knowledge in the Muslim world, to which print posed a challenge.[8] Knowledge was not to be gained through private reading but through master-disciple dissemination. I agree that these attitudes are important, but they were not perhaps so universal as Robinson and others suggest. Although Egyptian scholars in the Ottoman period insisted on the oral, master-disciple model of learning, they criticized their Turkish and Kurdish colleagues who studied the rational sciences for neglecting the transmitted, religious sciences, acidly remarking that their technique was "a book in the hand and not in the heart."[9] The great late-medieval scholar al-Suyuti was criticized for writing books on subjects for which he had had no teacher, but telling as the criticism is about attitudes, so also is al-Suyuti's behavior significant.[10] The insistence on person-to-person oral transmission seems to have been strongest in Islamic sciences such as hadith studies, but not nearly as rigid in, say, philosophy and the sciences, where books were often read independently.

I would not wish entirely to discount more material factors. Private printing also did not flourish in eastern Europe or Russia until the mid-eighteenth century, nor in most of Afro-Asia, much of it not Muslim. (The exceptions were China, Japan, and Korea, which published thousands of books using their indigenous versions of the technology.)[11] Rudi Lindner points to the paucity in the Middle East of specialized metallurgical and other knowledge for working the metals used to make moveable type and to construct the necessary machines, the low rag content in Middle Eastern paper of the time, and likewise the unavailability of the rare materials needed for ink and knowledge of how to process them. He also notes the social-control issues, insofar as the Ottoman state was well aware of the subversive potential of print culture.[12] Other factors, such as the apparently low rate of literacy in the early modern period and the smallness of any middle class with disposable income for buying printed materials, should also be taken into account. Social structure as a whole may have overdetermined the resistance to print. The quasi-feudal systems dominating the areas of Eurasia outside western Europe typically were oriented toward the agrarian economy of the military

appanages rather than toward urban activities; they frequently overtaxed their artisans, denied cities autonomy, and attempted to control speech and culture more closely than was common in, for example, England or Holland. The onset of mercantile capitalism in western Europe along with the subsequent establishment of the great seagoing empires may have been important for the spread of printing, given the need they generated for fast dissemination of accurate knowledge about trading conditions and prices, and this sort of capitalism involved social and economic developments also not paralleled in eastern Europe or the Middle East at that time.

In Iran and South Asia, adoption of the printing press was further impeded by preference for the cursive nasta'liq script, which is difficult to reproduce with metal type. The invention of lithography by Aloys Senefelder in 1796 allowed calligraphers to continue produce their work in nasta'liq and so greatly aided adoption of printing. In lithography, the design is executed with a greasy crayon on a stone or limestone slab; then the stone is dampened with water, which the grease repels. Printing ink adheres to the grease but not the damp stone, allowing the design to be printed. Muslim calligraphers wielded the greasy crayon to produce books and newspapers in the nineteenth century with an alacrity not apparent in the earlier experiments with moveable-type printing. Lithography, and in more recent times photo-offset printing, allowed Urdu newspapers in Pakistan and India to be hand-written right into the 1980s, when calligraphers finally began to be displaced by computer-generated fonts and texts.

The preference in the Arab world for the straight, hard-edged naskh style of calligraphy, which is more easily reproduced by printing presses, made lithography less central there, but did not make the Arabs more precocious printers. The only place in the eighteenth-century Muslim world where moveable-type Arabic-font printing was pursued energetically by private printers was in Istanbul, where the famous Mütaferrika Press was active for decades. Although some Arabic printing was carried out, especially by Syrian Christians, its amount and circulation were extremely limited. The first big Arabic-language publication program was the governmentally backed one of Mehmet 'Ali Paşa in Egypt, from the 1820s.[13] The books printed at the official Bulaq press included Ottoman, Persian, and Arabic texts, mainly classical works or translations from European languages. The print runs were small, in the range of 500 copies, and they were mainly distributed by the state to government employees, students in the new civil schools, and military cadets and officers. Occasionally private presses printed

Arabic works—with increasing frequency from the 1850s—but not until the mid-1870s did private Arabic-language printing become a big business in Egypt. Egyptian literacy may have risen from around 1 or 2 percent of the population in 1800 to around 7 percent in 1900 (during the same century, the population more than doubled); this relatively vast change was connected to the new educational programs of the Egyptian reform bureaucracy and made easier through print technology for the inexpensive and exact reproduction of textbooks, dictionaries, geographies, grammars, and other materials.[14]

Manuscripts were not only expensive and time-consuming to produce, but the need to avoid scribal transmission errors gave rise to practices that encouraged only the elite to read. Fancy rhythmic prose and the use of parallelisms allowed authors to fight back against the corruption of their texts by copyists, because rhyming limited the ways in which an unvoweled Arabic word could be read, as did the use of repetition. In consequence, however, authors were forced frequently to employ obscure synonyms, the meanings of which would not be known to the less educated reader. The need for rhyming prose was even reflected in Arabic lexicography, where many medieval dictionaries were arranged by the last letter of the word.

The drawbacks of parallelism and obscure vocabulary were of little importance when writers were producing work for a wealthy patron and a limited circle, but such a procedure was inadequate to the demand for printed information that grew up in the last third of the nineteenth century. Printing freed authors from the necessity of semantically double-loading their texts, because hundreds of copies could be made, error-free, from a single plate. The decline of a preference for rhyme in favor of straightforward prose, and the rise of a taste for simplicity and avoidance of little-known words all coincide with the burgeoning of print culture. With the proliferation from the mid-1870s of private newspapers dependent on newsstand sales and subscriptions, journalists in particular gained an incentive to write clearly, because their ability to sell copy increasingly depended on it. Journalists were, moreover, greatly influenced by the Arabic translations of news off the European wire services, such as Reuters, transmitted by telegraph. Because telegraph companies charged by the word, telegraphy encouraged succinctness, and the wire news reports reflected this. Thus, it was not only print culture that freed and impelled writers to adopt a new, more terse and clear style, but also the new technology of telegraphy (invented in 1844 and widespread in Egypt from the 1860s). In 1872, Egyptian government telegraph lines carried 238,521 Arabic-language messages.[15]

Thousands of members of the governmental class were made literate by Egyptian government publishing and education programs and were acculturated to reading the official newspaper and printed books, which allowed more and more adventurous, personal reading, dissociated from the memorization techniques that dominated the al-Azhar seminary's pedagogy. Robinson sees this new independence of readers from the tutelage of the ulama as a key result of printing, with pivotal implications for cognitive style.[16] The Bulaq printing program set the stage for the rise of urban Muslim reformism by beginning the creation of a reading public that included both high officials and people of the middling sort, who were willing to venture into the world of new and of neoclassical ideas promulgated by the printed book. The proliferation of newspapers in Egypt and Syria in the 1870s and 1880s went even further in widening the impact of print, because these were read aloud in coffeehouses and households and villages—though the Islamist authors were for the most part urban notables. I have estimated Egyptian newspaper readership in the early 1880s at around 75,000 nationwide, not counting the coffeehouse audiences. As readership in 1860 was nil, this change is remarkable even in a population of 8 million, and it is connected to the graduation of 10,000 or so civil-school students in the Isma'il period plus the proliferation of Qur'an schools. Newspapers continued to proliferate and their readership to grow in British Egypt, and the challenges to absolute monarchy in Iran from 1905 and in the Ottoman Empire from 1908 allowed an enormous expansion of the press in the East.

Muslim Reformism and the Print Context

The Salafiyyah (hearkening back to the pious forebears) movement was, despite the differing emphases of its major founders, generally characterized by some salient themes. These included the need to recover a direct contact with classical Islamic texts, rather than relying on late glosses and superglosses; reform of Arabic language and education in view of its centrality as the language of scripture; a criticism of traditionally trained ulama as hidebound prisoners of a non-empirical scholasticism; an attack on Sufi orders and leaders as decadent (though this element of Islamic reformism was more pronounced in the Arab world than in the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, or India) and on many folk practices as departures from pristine Islam; a rebuttal of Christian European assaults on Islam; and a polemic against Muslim rulers who collaborated with European colonialism.

Although this program cannot by any means be accounted for solely or even primarily by the impact of printing, the new medium did affect Muslim reformist thought. Even colonially dominated Muslim realms, such as French Algeria and British India, became sites for the publication of Islamic texts, including the Qur'an. Alarmed at this development, the Ottoman sultan went so far in the late nineteenth century as to ban the printed and lithographed Qur'ans of Leipzig and Bombay from importation into his realms, probably fearing that colonial authorities would use the fact that they were mass-producing these texts for the edification of believers to help justify their colonization of Muslims.[17] European missionaries printed and distributed large numbers of Arabic Bibles in the nineteenth-century Middle East, as well as evangelical apologies for Christianity and attacks on Islam such as that of the nineteenth-century pietist, Carl Gottlieb Pfander. The Protestant message of *sola scriptura*, of "only scripture" as a spiritual authority, became known through translations into Arabic of works on European history and religion. In response to the Christian European onslaught, Muslims produced apologies for Islam, such as that of Rahmat Allah, which were widely printed and read. The argument between the evangelist Pfander and the Muslim learned man Rahmat Allah became more than a mere oral debate in mid-nineteenth-century North India largely because of the printing press.[18] The earlier print debate has its later analogue in 'Abduh's reply to French administrator and polemicist Gabriel Hanotaux.[19]

The proliferation of relatively inexpensive lithographed copies of the Qur'an allowed the circulation of the sacred text much more widely among the non-elite, whose previous exposure to scripture was largely oral, involving memorizing or listening to those who had memorized. The first Qur'an lithographs preserved in the British Library were made at Kazan in Russia, in 1817 and 1832, at Calcutta in 1831, and in Iran at Shiraz (1830) and Tabriz (1842). The Qur'an was regularly lithographed in Bombay, Lucknow, and Delhi beginning around 1850. There are Istanbul lithographs of the Muslim sacred scripture from 1881, 1884, 1888, and 1890, coinciding with the height of Sultan Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamic campaign. There do not appear to be stand-alone lithographed Qur'ans coming out of Cairo before about 1890, but the Ottoman and Indian editions no doubt circulated in Egypt, and Bulaq printed the text with commentaries, such as that of the Mu'tazilite al-Zamakhshari (1864) and that attributed to the Sufi Ibn al-'Arabi (1867). Later on, in 1890–1920, it became increasingly common for a penny press to print particular suras of the Qur'an or commentaries on

them, often in the non-Arab East with interlinear translation into local languages, making such materials available to an ever widening audience for both study and ritual purposes. A wholly unscientific tabulation of Qur'ans, suras, and commentaries published in the Muslim world in the years 1890–1920 according to the OCLC Worldcat electronic list for U.S. libraries, along with evidence for the first part of the 1890s from the British Library, shows 79 items that have place and date of publication (these include reprintings of earlier editions). This is surely only a fraction of those actually published.

What is clear is that capital cities were major centers for the printing of the Qur'anic text in the years 1890–1920. Over 40 percent of my sample was printed in Cairo in British Egypt, even though that city had seen little of this sort of publishing under the khedives (only one Qur'an came from cosmopolitan Alexandria in these years, and only three from Beirut, in my sample). Some 17 percent were published in Istanbul (a port as well as a capital), but primarily before the 1908 Second Constitutional Revolution, when Sultan Abdülhamid II was pushing Qur'an printing and distribution as part of his pan-Islamic policy. About 7 percent of the printed Qur'anic text in my sample was published in Delhi, but I believe this figure to be extremely skewed toward the low end, insofar as U.S. repositories did not collect Indian publications in the early twentieth century and many of my Indian citations come from the 1890s in the British Library listing of printed books. Moreover, Lahore and a number of other cities in British India were important publishing centers. Although Tehran and Tabriz lithographs accounted for 8 percent of the sample, and although even in far-flung Shanghai in 1920 someone brought out a book of selections from the Qur'an in Arabic and Chinese, the indications are that, especially after Abdülhamid's dethronement, the primary centers for publishing the Qur'an in 1890–1920 were cities, especially capitals, of the British empire with substantial Muslim populations. Although the British colonialists practiced censorship of printed materials, they had no fear of the Qur'an itself or of conservative ulama who might feel that printing the Qur'an was sacrilegious. Ironically, reformers like 'Abduh and Rida were actually enabled to promulgate a more textually based Islam to ordinary folk under the shadow of the Union Jack. Although the printing was largely done in internal capitals, port cities remained important as sites for the importation from abroad of such printed Qur'ans and Islamic reformist literature as the journal *al-Manar* (read in Shiraz and Jakarta).

As for what exactly was published in the way of Qur'an commentaries, these tended to be the straightforward Baydawi, the medieval rationalist al-Zamakhshari, the scripturalist Ibn Taymiyyah, and the modernist 'Abduh, along with other classical and very early works, though of course the commentaries of Sufi mystics such as Qashani (ascribed to Ibn 'Arabi), Mirghani, and al-Ghazali also appeared.

The text of the Qur'an itself was becoming increasingly available to ordinary folk, with the inexpensive printings of individual suras (including, in the East, those with interlinear translations) being especially important. And the ordinary folk were increasingly literate, though more in the Arab world and Anatolia than in British India.

The printed Qur'an could be indexed (and many concordances were printed in this period), verses could be looked up for exact citation and study, and a chronological approach to the surah could be attempted with far greater ease than when parts of the book were available only in one's memory. A different way of thinking about the Qur'an emerged. This ability to peruse the Qur'an at any time allowed a more scripturalist approach to Islam to gain plausibility, especially for the sort of urban notables who, all over Africa and Asia, read the reformist Muslim periodicals. The middling sort and certainly the newly literate members of the lower middle class in the cities could not have afforded illuminated manuscript Qur'ans. The Muslim reformism of Sayyid Jamal al-Din and Muhammad 'Abduh was hardly fundamentalist, but their deprecation of later accretions did have a scripturalist bias. Printing, like the early reformist movement itself, contained the potential to promote both humanist rationalism among intellectuals and scripturalist fundamentalism among the less educated.[20]

Printing and lithography therefore raised many questions about Islamic textuality. In addition to allowing the inexpensive circulation of the Qur'an, they also permitted the less costly promulgation of a host of other classical religious texts. One reason the Salafis could afford to dismiss the late glosses of the Azharites, produced by scribes relatively inexpensively as textbooks, is that the classical knowledge was no longer so inaccessible. Multi-volume works such as early Qur'an commentaries or Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* were extremely expensive in manuscript form, and found only in the libraries of the rich. The Bulaq press editions of the nineteenth-century khedival government allowed mere scholars to buy such works, and the new institution of the public library made them available even to the relatively poor.

Not only did less well-off authors now have access to more books, but they could hope to become professional writers themselves. 'Abd Allah al-Nadīm, son of an Alexandria artisan, parlayed his linguistic gifts into a career as a journalist in the late 1870s, and his anti-imperialism and Muslim nativism were influenced by that of Sayyid Jamal al-Din and Muhammad 'Abduh. In a previous generation it is unlikely that Nadim could have been more than an indigent poet of the popular classes, a purveyor of the *zajal*. As it was, his newspaper *Tankit wa Tabkit* (It Is to Laugh, It Is to Cry) had a circulation in the thousands and his later *al-Ta'if* became the chief ideological organ of the 'Urabists. His satirical but more subdued *al-Ustadh* was published in Alexandria in the 1890s.[21]

Sayyid Jamal al-Din's career as a public Muslim intellectual in Egypt and, later, in Paris and Istanbul, was in some large degree made possible by print culture from the 1870s. A Shi'ite Iranian who had studied in the shrine city of Najaf but did not stay long enough to garner genuine theological credentials (*ijazahs*) from the mujtahids there, he had no particular standing to claim Islamic leadership as a learned man or '*alim*. In the Ottoman Empire and Egypt he dissimulated his Iranian Shi'ite background, and the fixity of print allowed him to fabricate an identity as a Sunni Afghan that lasted into the mid twentieth century, through the influence of al-Manar Press, until Nikki Keddie penetrated beyond it.[22] Sayyid Jamal al-Din was lionized from 1876 on by the anti-imperialist Lebanese journalists Adib Ishaq and Salim Naqqash, and by Egyptian Muslims who had newly taken up journalism, such as Muhammad 'Abduh and Muhammad Shamsi. Newspapers such as *Misr* and *Mir'at al-'Asr* (Cairo) and *Tijarah* (Alexandria) made his reputation, reported on his speeches and activities, and regularly praised him.[23]

The emergence of a new sort of authoriality that created Sayyid Jamal al-Din as a public, Muslim intellectual was in some large part made possible by the print culture of private journalism. He used printing in his anti-British *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* newspaper, in the publication in India (by lithograph) of his attack on Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan as a Westernized materialist, and in his later pan-Islamic activities. In the period 1880–1908, pan-Islamism was among the major urban ideologies spread along printing networks in the greater Mediterranean and its Afro-Asian hinterland, with the great capital-port of Istanbul as its center.[24] As Foucault has suggested, an author's name is not a simple referent, as are other proper names. The author's name,

such as "Sayyid Jamal al-Din," involves a complex set of cultural references, evoking key cultural artifacts at the same time as it functions as an individual description.[25] For Muslim reformers, "Sayyid Jamal al-Din" became a giant, and merely invoking his name was often sufficient to authorize new cultural practices. Clearly, key features of the print revolution in the nineteenth-century Muslim world contributed to aspects of this new authoriality, allowing him to comment and be heard on contemporary issues such as the third Anglo-Afghan war while it was being fought, or the British occupation of Egypt, or the tobacco revolt in Iran. In 1800, a thinker of his sort would have been known only by face-to-face encounters or by laboriously copied-out manuscripts with limited circulation.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din's attack on the scholasticism of nineteenth-century Muslim philosophy and his appeal for a philosophic and scientific spirit of inquiry reflected the ideals of some Enlightenment and nineteenth-century European intellectuals that had been largely unknown in the Middle East before the print-driven translation movement of the 1830s and after. By the 1870s, Egyptian physicians were reporting their original scientific discoveries in tropical medicine to educational journals such as *Rawdat al-Madaris*. Although an earlier generation of intellectuals such as Hasan al-'Attar occasionally also conducted experiments and contradicted classical authorities such as Avicenna, they did not publish their methods or results and so these remained purely personal achievements.[26] It was not only new knowledge and experimentation that underpinned the changed attitude among secularly trained thinkers, but the ability to disseminate discoveries widely and with exactitude through print.

The journalists who supported Sayyid Jamal al-Din's line, such as Salim al-Naqqash and 'Abd Allah al-Nadīm, were able to become more than simple writers, emerging as owners and publishers of their own newspapers, in short, as entrepreneurs in an economy in transition from late Ottoman prebendalism to capitalism. By taking nativist, anti-imperial stances during Egypt's debt crisis, they clearly aimed at increasing their sales among the disgruntled public. A charismatic figure like Sayyid Jamal al-Din, who made news by speaking in public, also potentially helped sales, so that it may have repaid these print capitalists to help create his legend.[27] If it is hard to think of a figure like him in earlier eras of Islamic history, an intellectual but not a fully trained member of the ulama, a publicist but not a poet, a journalist and activist, it is perhaps because he was a fish in the water of print culture, who would earlier have had no medium in which to swim.

Neoclassicism and Muslim Nationalism

The wider accessibility of classical Arabic texts made an impact on canons of Arabic literary taste and on Islamic thought in the second half of the nineteenth century. During the period of Ottoman domination of the Arab world (1516–1917), the language of administration, of court chronicles and panegyrics, and of much literature tended to be Ottoman Turkish. Arabic was used for shari'a (Islamic-law) court records, and an Arabic chronicle tradition survived in desultory fashion in Egypt and Syria, but only in the mid eighteenth century, with the weakening of Istanbul and the rise of Mamluk successor-states, does one see a thoroughgoing revival of the Arabic chronicle. Even its proponents such as al-Jabarti were capable of many solecisms and grammatical irregularities. I can attest that nineteenth-century Egyptian archival documents in Arabic sometimes employ rather colloquial grammar. The printing of classical Arabic texts required editors to seek grammatical standardization, and reading them allowed laypersons to encounter nonscriptural prose that predated the Ottoman-period decline of standardization in the written language.

The Bulaq Press printed, in addition to many classical grammars, such works as the pre-Islamic poetry of the *Mu'allaqat,* and presses in Iran and India put out relatively inexpensive editions of the *Nahj al-Balaghah* (Path of Eloquence) attributed to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, which was characterized by a chaste and direct Arabic style and probably actually derives from tenth-century Baghdad. Muhammad 'Abduh's devotion to Arabic language reform must be seen at least partially in this context (he edited the *Nahj al-Balaghah,* for instance).

The now more widely available classical texts carried not only stylistic canons but also ideas. Sayyid Jamal al-Din, an Iranian Shi'ite who inclined to the Shaykhi school, propounded a theology that contained strong doses of Mu'tazilism, an early rationalist school whose central tenets had largely been absorbed into the theology of Twelver Shi'ites and that were especially emphasized by Sheikh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (d. 1826).[28] The unknowability of God, the createdness of the Qur'an, the requirement that God and his creation be good and just and rational, were all premises shared by Shi'ites like al-Afghani and the early Mu'tazilites. With the printing revolution, many early accounts of Mu'tazili ideas circulated as well. The Bulaq Press brought out a two-volume edition of al-Zamakhshari's Mu'tazilite Qur'an commen-

tary in 1864, and it was regularly reprinted in several urban centers thereafter. Muhammad 'Abduh's neo-Mu'tazilism, his rationalism and humanistic assertion of the Qur'an's createdness, then, had roots not only in the influence of Sayyid Jamal al-Din, but also in classical texts made more widely available to him and his audience by print technology. 'Abduh could already consult many more books more easily than his father or grandfather could have, and so could discern conflicts and discrepancies among classical schools more readily, and pick and choose those principles that suited him.[29] When Shaykh 'Illish challenged him on his Mu'tazilite ideas, 'Abduh replied that, having thrown off the whole idea of blind obedience to a school, he had no intention of boxing himself into a narrow neo-Mu'tazilism, either. Throwing off blind obedience, greater religious individualism, and more detailed knowledge of theological options all were in part made possible by the printing revolution. Muslim reformers often sought a return to original sources and a standardization and rationalization of areas such as Islamic law. Again, the technology of print greatly aided the attainment of this goal. Manuscripts of multi-volume works in the areas of Islamic oral sayings (hadith), law (fiqh), jurisprudence, and even the decrees of the ruler (qanunname) seldom had title pages or indexes, lacked standardized page numbers, and were difficult to compare. The expense of manuscripts prevented many scholars from seeing a great number in their lifetime. Printing technology allowed Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi to suggest the collection of khedival decrees to serve as the basis of Egyptian law. The Ottoman project of the *Mecelle*, involving the standardization of Islamic law, was made feasible in large part because of the tools provided by print.

Print culture allowed some Muslim reformist debates to have wider repercussions than they otherwise would have had. Beth Baron has demonstrated that the women's press in late-nineteenth-century Egypt formed an important context for the debate on women's liberation, to which 'Abduh, Qasim Amin, Rashid Rida, and Malak Hifni Nasif contributed in the opening years of the twentieth century.[30] Had such women's writings, or Amin's *Tahrir al-Mar'ah* (The Liberation of Women) remained manuscripts, hand-copied on a one-by-one basis, their impact would have been considerably diluted. As it was, women's journals and speeches, along with the works of men such as Amin, were printed in hundreds of copies and provoked debate in a whole Mediterranean network of newspapers and journals.[31] Gender segregation had earlier limited women's participation in public events and debates. As Habermas says, printing and journalism created a public sphere and a public opinion.[32] It was a sphere in which women like Malak Hifni Nasif could openly join in the Muslim-reformist debates on women and religion in the teens of the twentieth century, a sort of intervention women would have found much more difficult in the days of manuscript culture.

Because Arabic was the lingua franca of Muslim intellectuals, the first wave of printing created a wider, contemporary community of discourse. Egyptian periodicals were read in Ottoman Istanbul and Anatolia, as well as Iran and South Asia. Ottoman Turkish was also widely known and Istanbul periodicals had their (now often forgotten) influence in Cairo, Damascus, Tabriz, and Bukhara. These print and readership networks formed an important context for the pan-Islamic movement with which Sayyid Jamal al-Din in particular was associated, as well as for the more Arab-centered projects of Muslim reformism associated with 'Abduh and Rida later on. As Benedict Anderson has argued, print capitalism allows the growth of an imagined community bounded by territory and language, which can be imbued with a mythical naturalness.[33] Sayyid Jamal al-Din sought a sort of Muslim nationalism, yet the conditions for its achievement were also in part undermined by transborder effects of printing and education. Egyptian literacy rose to 7 percent by the end of the nineteenth century, but very few of those readers could read Ottoman Turkish. Printing may have contributed to the possibility of envisaging pan-Islam, but it at the same time helped undermine it by encouraging language-specific communities of discourse. The Iranian intellectual Aqa Khan Kirmani, associated with a pan-Islamic group in the port of Istanbul in the early 1890s, wrote diatribes against the decadence of Arabs and Islam, and in praise of Persian and old Persian religion. Particularistic, linguistic nationalism was also powerfully enabled by printing. It could be argued that printing in the Ottoman Empire prepared the way for and enabled secularism, and that Ataturk cleverly used language and script reform to undermine any budding Turkish Islamism (as opposed to Kurdish and Turkish provincial traditionalism), which then did not emerge in a big way until much later in the twentieth century. Printing as a medium could be put to many potential uses. Islamic reformism was a major such use, but only one of many.

Printing could lend support to colonial officers and hangers-on among the French and British and to trading and service diasporas such as the Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Maronites, typically based in the Mediterranean seaports. In the period 1890–1920, it also laid the basis for the emergence of a new field of the imagination on which nationalist ideas could be

inscribed by some groups, whether the Young Turks, the Iranian Constitutionalists, or the Egyptian regionalists around Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, Sa'd Zaghlul, and the Wafd party, supported by the newspaper *al-Jaridah*. But it would be wrong to ignore the ways in which the pre-existing information ecumene of Muslim learning, writing, and speaking was continued, amplified, and often reconfigured by printing as well.

The rise of a new sort of public sphere that Habermas sees as having in part developed out of the burgeoning of an uncensored press in eighteenth-century Britain has its counterpart, ironically enough, in British Egypt, where the press continued to be under political pressure but was much freer to address Islam and Islamic reform than it had been under the khedives. The pan-Islamicist imagining of a Muslim nation both confirms and subverts Benedict Anderson's notion of print capitalism driving a new conception of national relatedness. He coded religion as "universal" and tied to dynastic rule as a medieval phenomenon subverted and displaced by the territorial, largely secular nation-state. In fact, pan-Islam proved more imaginary than imagined as a practical project of state-building, and its bankruptcy was complete by 1924, when the Ottoman caliphate was abolished by the secularist nationalist Atatürk. Yet Islam and Muslim reform did reemerge as central to Middle Eastern state-building projects later in the twentieth century in ways that suggest that the Andersonian antimony between medieval religion and modern nationalism is too lacking in nuance. Printing and its use by Muslim reformers do create new forms of authoriality in the period 1890–1920, helping account for the reputations of Sayyid Jamal al-Din, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Rashid Rida. "Sayyid Jamal al-Din" remains not a delineated individual, but rather a generic Muslim reformer, bland and detached from specifics, with a Sunni overtone. This death of the individual and his subsumption by the reformist "author" allows for the ways in which his very name helped subsequent reformers legitimate modernist or fundamentalist projects, and the voluminous printed remains of the generic reformist "author" outweigh the manuscript evidence for his specificity and particularity. Thus, Keddie's restoration of Sayyid Jamal al-Din the individual to history is resisted most fiercely precisely by those in the Arab world who have the most invested in him as the bland "author" of Muslim modernism as a discursive practice.

Several important features of Muslim reformist thought can be shown to resonate with and to have been affected by the primary vehicle of its diffusion, the printing press. The rise of printing encouraged greater public literacy and coincided with increased numbers of children being schooled, creating an audience for new ideas that had been minuscule earlier in the century. The emphasis on a return to original sources and the recovery of Mu'tazilism and other classical Muslim ideas were made easier through the printing in the nineteenth century of large numbers of Arabic texts, many of them from the classical period. The concern with language reform clearly ties in with the rise of privately owned, for-profit newspapers driven by the need for clear and concise, widely understandable copy. Sayyid Jamal al-Din, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Rashid Rida were all journalists at some time in their lives, and some of their supporters were as well.

The imperatives and nature of print journalism had a great impact on debates over constitutionalism and the woman question, as framed by reformers of both sexes. Printed books, newspapers, and telegraphy also allowed news of the entire Muslim world to reach readers quickly, and so encouraged pan-Islamic emphases. These media made the threat of European colonialism more vivid, as with the expatriate Persian press campaign against a tobacco monopoly granted by the Iranian state to a British carpetbagger in 1891–92, or the pan-Islamic support for the beleaguered Ottoman caliphate during and just after World War I. Clearly, the Muslim reformers had other motives in pressing these concerns, including the actual problems of a peripheral bourgeoisie, of Muslim culture, and of European encroachment. Indeed, this reformism must be situated in the urban middle and upper-middle classes, and its opposition to both traditional ulama and popular folk Islamic practices has much to do with its class and geographical location. But printing was more than simply a new medium in which to debate these issues. It helped shape the perception, language, and articulation of the problems themselves.

Notes

1. Anwar Jindi, *Tarikh al-sihafah al-Islamiyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Ansar, 1983); Sami 'Abd al-'Aziz, *al-Sihafah al-Islamiyah fi Misr fi al-qarn al-tasi' 'ashar* (al-Mansurah: Dar al-Wafa' lil-Tiba'ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi', 1992).
2. Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).
3. For these issues, to be explored below, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence

(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), and the essay, "What is an Author?" in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed., with an intro., by Donald F. Bouchard; translated from the French by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113–38.

4. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press As an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also Lucien Febvre, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976).

5. Adeeb Khalid, "Printing, Publishing, and Reform in Tsarist Central Asia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (May 1994): 187–200; and Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993): 229–51; and for the contemporary period, see David B. Edwards, "Summoning Muslims: Print, Politics, and Religious Ideology in Afghanistan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (August 1993): 609–28.

6. Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

7. Richard W. Bulliet, "Medieval Arabic Tarsh: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of Printing," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (July–Sept. 1987): 427–38; Bulliet, "Printing in the Medieval Islamic Underworld," *Columbia Library Columns* 36 (May 1987): 13–20.

8. Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change."

9. Ibrahim Salamah, *L'Enseignement islamique en Égypte* (Cairo: Bulaq Press, 1938), pp. 88–89.

10. E. M. Sartain, *Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 122–23.

11. Peter F. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998).

12. Rudi Lindner, "Icons among Iconoclasts in the Renaissance," in *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print and Digital Culture*, ed. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 89–107.

13. Abu al-Futuh Ahmad Ridwan, *Tarikh Matba'at Bulaq* (Cairo: al-Matba'ah al-Amiriyyah, 1953); Khalil Sabat, *Tarikh al-Tiba'ah fi al-Sharq al-'Arabi* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1966).

14. See chapter 5, "The Long Revolution in Egypt," in Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 110–132;

Ami Ayalon, "Political Journalism and Its Audience in Egypt, 1875–1914," *Culture and History* 1 (1997): 100–20;

15. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, p. 112.

16. Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change," pp. 244–45.

17. Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition As Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (January 1993): 3–29; Deringil, "Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (August 1991): 345–59.

18. Avril Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (London: Curzon, 1993).

19. See Muhammad 'Abduh, *al-A'mal al-Kamilah li al-Imam Muhammad 'Abduh*, ed. Muhammad 'Amarah, 6 vols. (Beirut: Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, 1972), 3: 201–40; Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani, *Miracles and Metaphors*, tr. Juan R. I. Cole (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1982), pp. 88–96; and Abu Bakr 'Abd al-Raziq, *al-Shaykhan al-Afghani wa-Muhammad 'Abduh ya-ruddan 'alá Iftira'at al-Mustashriqin 'ala al-Islam wa-al-Muslimin* (Cairo: Maktabat Misr, 1992).

20. Cf. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, pp. 366–67.

21. 'Abd al-Mun'im Ibrahim al-Disuqi Jumay'i, *Abd Allah al-Nadim* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Jablawi, 1980); Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, see index under Nadim.

22. Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani': A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Rudi Matthee, "Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Egyptian National Debate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21 (May 1989): 151–69.

23. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, pp. 135–51; Juan R. I. Cole, "New Perspectives on Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in Egypt," in Rudi Matthee and Beth Baron, eds., *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddi*, (Costa Mesa, Calif: Mazda Publishers, 2000), pp. 13–34.

24. Jacob Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

25. Foucault, "What Is an Author?"

26. Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

27. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, pp. 126–63.

28. For Sheikh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i, see Juan R. I. Cole, "The World as Text: Cosmologies of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i," *Studia Islamica* 80 (1994): 145–63.

29. Cf. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, p. 74.

30. Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press*

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(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); and see the essays by Booth, Abu-Lughod, and Shakry in Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

31. Juan R. I. Cole, "Feminism, Class and Islam in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981): 387–407.
32. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
33. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.