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MADRASA BOOK SELLERS IN DIYARBAKIR: THE TRANSFORMATION OF A TRADITION FROM PEDDLERS TO BOOKSELLERS

Serdar Şengül
Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi, Antropoloji Bölümü,
serdarsenguls@gmail.com, serdar.sengul@ahievran.edu.tr
https://orcid.org/ 0000-0003-4709-3745

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Madrasa Book Sellers in Diyarbakir: The Transformation of A Tradition From Peddlers to Booksellers

ABSTRACT

In Turkey, the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law (March 3, 1924), which came into force with the establishment of the Republic and aimed at bringing education completely under the control of the state within the framework of a common curriculum, and the process of transition from the Arabic to the Latin script, the so-called 'Letter Revolution" in 1928, led to radical changes in book printing and literacy.

This paper analyzes the basic characteristics and changes in the practice of selling books in Arabic script from peddlers to booksellers. The study is limited to Diyarbakır. For the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with three booksellers in Diyarbakır, with people who worked in bookselling at different times, and with madrasa teachers who visited the bookstores.

As places of religious and, to some extent, literary education, madrasas were one of the most important institutions that contributed to the formation of an literate community. Bookstores were one of the places where this community socialized. They served as a place where madrasa teachers could exchange ideas about books and, in case of disagreement, take the relevant books from the shelves and discuss them. For this reason, changes in the book trade will also make important contributions to the analysis of changes in the literacy tradition.

Keywords: Madrasa, books, bookstrores, bibliopoly, arabic script, literacy.

Diyarbakır'da Medrese Kitap Satıcıları: Seyyar Satıcılardan Kitapçılara Bir Geleneğin Dönüşümü

ÖZ

Türkiye'de Cumhuriyetin kuruluşuyla birlikte yürürlüğe konulan ve ortak bir müfredat çerçevesinde eğitimi tamamıyla devletin denetimi altına almayı amaçlayan Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu (3 Mart 1924) ile 1928 yılında gerçekleştirilen 'Harf Devrimi' olarak adlandırılan Arap harflerinden Latin harflerine geçiş süreci kitap basımı ve okuryazarlık üzerinde köklü dönüşümlere neden oldu.

Bu yazıda gezici kitap satıcılığından yerleşik kitapçılığa Arap harflerine dayalı kitap satış uygulamasının temel nitelikleri ve dönüşümü analiz edilecektir. Çalışma Diyarbakır ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Çalışma için Diyarbakır'daki üç kitapçı ile farklı dönemlerde kitapçılıkla uğraşmış insanlar ve kitapçıları ziyaret eden medrese hocaları ile derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Medreseler dini ve bir ölçüye kadar edebi eğitimin görüldüğü yerler olarak okur yazar bir topluluğun oluşumuna kaynaklık eden temel kurumlardan biriydi. Kitapevleri söz konusu topluluğun sosyalleştiği mekanların başında gelmektedir. Medrese hocaları için hem kitaplar üzerine sohbet edebilecekleri ve ihtilafa düştükleri konularda raftan ilgili kitapları indirip üzerine tartışabilecekleri bir mekan işlevi de görmüştür. Bu nedenle kitap satıcılığında yaşanan dönüşümler okuryazarlık geleneğindeki dönüşümleri analiz etmek için de önemli katkılar sunacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Medrese, kitap, kitapçı, sahaf, arap harfleri, okuryazarlık.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from manual reproduction of texts to printing had the most immediate impact on the way books were produced and delivered. The possibility of reproducing the book by machine led to an increase in the number and types of books that cannot be compared with earlier times. These developments, which were closely linked to the political and religious struggles of the time, took on a new dimension in the late 18th and early 19th centuries with the institutionalization of mass education and the increased demand for books as part of public policy. Books became part of the lives of a larger group of people who were subject to compulsory education in order to become citizens, in addition to those who pursued education to learn a trade.

This close relationship between education and literacy had implications not only for the process of book production, but also for the process of dissemination. to the extent that public institutions and the private sector began to play a central role in the process of book production and dissemination, decisions had to be made as to which of the hundreds of thousands or even millions of documents, most of which had been copied by hand in the pre-modern understanding of knowledge and education, would be reproduced in the printing press (Atiyeh, 1995). Books that did not have the possibility of being reprinted to accommodate the new, modern educated people began to turn to new book-related professions and educated groups such as manuscript libraries, collectors, and booksellers, who were given the status of 'ancient artifacts."

The social history of knowledge (Burke, 2000), the cultural impact of the invention of printing (Lefebvre, 2010; McLuhan, 1962), colonialism and the transformation of literacy (Mignolo, 2003; Mitchell, 1991), modernization and the transformation of literacy (Mahdi, 1995; Messick, 1992; Hanna, 2003; Sajdi, 2013), and similar topics have also been addressed in sociological and anthropological studies.

Sahafs, bookstores, libraries, and reading venues are the main places highlighted in these studies of the culture of the book and literacy. The impact of the invention of printing on literacy and on the production and transmission of knowledge also fired the literary imagination. The novels about 'lost libraries' and 'lost books and manuscripts' written by eminent literary figures aroused great interest among readers and were translated into many languages, contributing to a worldwide curiosity and interest in the adventure of the book (Eco, 1992).

In Turkey, the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law (March 3, 1924), which came into force with the establishment of the Republic and aimed at bringing education completely under the control of the state within the framework of a common curriculum, and the process of transition from the Arabic to the Latin script, the so-called 'Letter Revolution" in 1928, led to radical changes in book printing and literacy. Letterpress printing and the new literacy based on Latin letters were considered the foundation for the political and cultural construction of the state and were implemented in an atmosphere of mobilization throughout the country. Books served to inform citizens about the demands of modern life and the state (Fortna, 2010; Yılmaz, 2023; Niyazioğlu, 2021).

As restrictions and prohibitions on education and publications in 'languages other than Turkish' only allowed and encouraged Turkish publications, there was a sharp decline in the printing and distribution of books in 'other languages" As the printing of books in both Arabic script and languages other than Turkish declined and had to serve a very narrow market, the books and manuscripts that could not be printed became rare artifacts and began to be given away by sahafs and collectors to their readers. In this process, a literature has emerged that compares old and new writing cultures with the professions of bibliopoliy and bookseller (Erunsal, 2021; Bali, 2020, 2021; Kara, 2022; Aynur-Artan, 2023).

During my doctoral research, in which I studied the transformation of madrasas that continued to exist illegally during the modernization process in majority Kurdish populated areas, I found that the madrasa teachers continued their education and literacy based on the Arabic script and formed a reading and writing community with their students called *feqî*, which was based on the Arabic script. Considering the fact that, as mentioned earlier, after literacy in Turkey, which was in Turkish and based on Latin letters, except for subjects such as Arabic literature, I planned a study on this literacy based on Arabic letters in several different languages.

One of the first questions I wanted to answer was how the madrasa teachers, called *mele* or *seyda*, obtained both the textbooks and the books necessary for their own study.

In my research and interviews, I learned that there are bookstores that meet this need for books. During my doctoral studies, I visited these bookstores regularly and conducted some of my interviews in them.

After completing my doctorate, I conducted field research in these bookstores. For the field research, I conducted interviews with the owners of the bookstores and the madrasa scholars who bought books there. The questions I sought answers to were as follows:

By what means were the books written and reproduced?

By what means did they reach the madrasa scholars in question?

This paper analyzes the basic characteristics and changes in the practice of selling books in Arabic script from peddlers to booksellers. The study is limited to Diyarbakır. For the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with three booksellers in Diyarbakır, with people who worked in bookselling at different times, and with madrasa teachers who visited the bookstores. The interviews were mainly conducted between 2005-2007 and 2021-2022.

As places of religious and, to some extent, literary education, madrasas were one of the most important institutions that contributed to the formation of an literate community. Bookstores were one of the places where this community socialized. They served as a place where madrasa teachers could exchange ideas about books and, in case of disagreement, take the relevant books from the shelves and discuss them. For this reason, changes in the book trade will also make important contributions to the analysis of changes in the literacy tradition.

My grandfathers also had madrassa education. One of them worked as a honorary (fahri) imam in the Suriçi district of Diyarbakır. Since the moments I spent with him in my childhood were the time when my perception of the relationship between madrassa and books was first formed, I will begin this article with some observations and memories from that time. I will then share and analyze the data from the interviews and observations I made during my doctoral studies and field research on this topic. In accordance with research ethics, the names of places and people have been anonymized or changed if the interviewees did not give their consent. Informed consent was obtained from the interviewees for the parts of the interviews used in this study.

1. DIVIDED GEOGRAPHY OF A CITY: FROM THE BAGLAR (VINEYARDS) TO THE SURICI (WALLED CITY)

Since my childhood, we usually spent the summer months in Diyarbakır, where my grandparents and other relatives lived. My grandfather's house was in Bağlar. He had completed his madrasa education by taking lessons from various scholars. Since he did not have an official degree, he was not an official imam, but he was an honorary imam at the Iskender Pasha Mosque in Suriçi.

The contrast between the Bağlar neighborhood, where my grandfather lived, and Suriçi, where he worked as an imam, was always striking to me. Every time we came to Diyarbakır from the sheltered neighborhoods of the big cities where my father was stationed, I was impressed by the Bağlar neighborhood with its mostly brick and tile houses lined up along the narrow streets called *kûçe*, the children playing in the streets barefoot or in rubber boots, the women in their mostly monochromatic fashion with their white cheesecloths falling from their heads to their waists, and the men walking head first through the streets.

Suriçi, where the Iskender Pasha Mosque is located, has a historical structure that impresses you as soon as you enter. The imposing walls, built of black basalt stone, welcome visitors with bastions that reflect fine architectural taste and inscriptions, most of which have fallen victim to the ravages of time and cultural politics. Within the walls were mosques, libraries, houses and baths made of the same basalt rock. In between were makeshift buildings, most made of reinforced concrete, that did not fit into the architectural structure.

When I compared the houses in the Baglar and these makeshift buildings with the historical architecture, I had the impression that I was moving from the Middle Ages to prehistory and not to modern times. It was as if the flow of history had been interrupted or reversed somewhere.

To get from Baglar to Suriçi, one had to cross the railroad tracks that separated Yenişehir from Baglar. The railroad tracks, or simply rails as the locals called them, were both a psychological and a physical dividing line that separated this poor part of the city from Yenişehir, where the modern state buildings, especially the Valilik (Governor's Building), were located and where most of the officials lived. Yenişehir began outside the city walls.

The Iskender Pasha Mosque and the Great Mosque in Suriçi were the places I liked to visit the most. Whether it was prayer time or not, the courtyard of the mosque was full of people talking, sleeping, or gathered around a scholar to listen and discuss. On the sides of the mosque were coffee houses shaded by mulberry trees. In these coffee houses,

the madrasa teachers and other people gathered to talk before or after prayer.

I think I was fifteen or sixteen years old. One of my friends, with whom I had gone for a walk in Suriçi, started telling me about the mosque when we arrived in Grand Mosque. He pointed to the second floor of the mosque and said:

> "Until the 1980s, this place was a library... It was a very rich library. When Saladin Ayyubi conquered Damascus and Egypt, he took many books, including medical books. Many scientific developments were due to these books taken from Diyarbakır. At that time, there were exactly one million and forty books in the library of the Grand Mosque [Ulucami]... After 1980, the books were taken away by trucks, and no one knows where they are now"

Everyone who talked about Grand Mosque or any of the other historic mosques in the area told similar stories. They spoke of the hundreds of thousands of books once kept in the libraries of these mosques, and of the madrasas where scholars from all over the Islamic world came to study or continue their studies. I remember comparing the dilapidated state of the mosques and libraries of that time with their glorious past, when Diyarbakır was remembered and described as the capital and administrative center of various empires, a commercial center with its inns and caravanserais, and a city of knowledge so advanced that it sent books to Damascus and Egypt.

2. THE MADRASA AND THE FORMATION OF A DIFFERENT CULTURE OF LITERACY

The childhood memories I briefly mentioned above also had an impact on my choice of the topic of madrasas and modernization for my doctoral dissertation. Between 2004 and 2008, when I was conducting field research in Diyarbakır for my doctoral thesis, the 'book theme' resurfaced. I wanted to study madrasa education in depth, and almost all sources on education were in Arabic. Those that were not in Arabic were written in the Arabic alphabet.

In my interviews with *mele*s, who had received a madrasa education, I found that they referred to the original texts in Arabic script when referring to works from different fields of scholarship, such as fiqh, tafsir, literature, history, or the textbooks they had used in their education. The first question that came to my mind was how they acquired such linguistic competence at the end of an educational process, and the other related question was by what means they obtained the books in question.

After one of the interviews, we all went to a bookstore. We went to the underground bazaar in front of the Grand Mosque. There were a number of stores in the bazaar, including a bookstore. The sign in the window said "Dini Neşriyat" [Religious Publicatios] We went inside. The bookstore looked like a large room with shelves that reached the ceiling on three sides. In front of the shelves were lecterns and seats for no more than six or seven people. Almost all the books were in Arabic, and there were books on various subjects such as Islamic history, fiqh, hadith, siyar, sarf, and nahv. In addition to these bound books, most of which were imported from abroad, there were also simpler, mostly second-hand books on teaching Arabic, such as sarf and nahv. Although the owner of the bookstore was not involved in madrasa teaching, he had completed his madrasa training and received an *ijazah*. For this reason, the madrasa teachers who visited the bookstore addressed him as *mele*.

Over the years, I often visited Mele A. Hakim's bookstore and had many conversations with him about books and the reading culture of the madrasa people. When I decided to do a special study on bookbinding, I conducted a series of interviews with him about how he started bookbinding and how he continued it. The information provided by Mele A. Hakim is very important in shedding light on the changing nature of a profession and the cultural environment surrounding it.

The following is a general summary of my interviews with him.

2.1. Travel for the Book

Mele A. Hakim said:

> "It was my father who brought the first Arabic books to Turkey in the 1950s. At that time it was forbidden in Turkey. He brought books from Egypt and Syria. At first he carried the books across the border on his back... He was caught a few times, he was beaten up many times and even spent two years in prison. In the 1960s, he traveled from Damascus to Baghdad. There he talked to a big publishing house. He said, 'I would buy books from you, but I have no money, I will sell them and give you your money in three or four months. They asked for time to discuss the matter, and after a few days they said, 'We will send you the books, but you will send the money after

four months'. They sent the books in carts. He sold them and sent the money. He went to Egypt. He had the books taken by ferry from Egypt to the port of Alexandria.

I started teaching in the madrasa in 1972. İn 1979, I went to the army. I returned in 1981. I recovered for a few years and started working for my father in 1985. First I brought books from Beirut, Damascus and Egypt, then there were book fairs in Tehran and I brought books from there.

Most of the readers of these books were madrasa students. of course, Imam Hatip high schools and theological faculties were opened, and they were also in demand, but the main readers of Arabic books were madrasa teachers. Imam Hatip high schools and theological faculties could read Arabic to some extent, but the teaching was in Turkish and the textbooks were written in Latin letters.

At that time there was a big ban on Kurdish books. It was not possible for us to bring books on the subject in public. But some scholars (*seyda*) asked for books about Kurds and Kurdish literature. When the ban on Kurdish was lifted in the 1990s, it was now possible to bring and keep books. The Kurdish book most requested by the s*eyda*s was *Dîwan* by Melayê Cizîrî. I know it has been sold in Turkey since the 1980s. I brought the *Dîwan* from Aleppo and sold it, it did very well. I always brought 100 copies, and they were sold out in a short time. It was already being printed in Turkey.

In the 1990s, Meles read a lot. There was a madrasa in every village and dozens of feqîs. The *seyda*s looked for books and could not find any. We used to bring 2-3 wagons of books, which were used up in a few months. Now we bring half a wagon of books and can not finish them. This was the case even though there used to be a lot of poverty. There was a great love for books, *seyda*s bought many books".

Mele A. Hakim also shared some information that some of the other *mele*s I interviewed had expressed:

"Before going abroad to procure books, we would inform our regular customers and make a note of any requests for books. Sometimes we would share the catalogues of the place we were going to before we left and compile the list of requests accordingly. Although the places we visited were usually book fairs and large distribution houses, we also visited sahafs and people and places with personal collections, trying to find and bring out-of-print original works for enthusiasts. For this reason, the return of the booksellers was eagerly awaited by the *mele*s. If special books were brought, they wanted to be the first to see them. The books were in three languages - Arabic, Persian and Kurdish. For this reason, when we went on 'book trips' [*gera kitebê*], we sometimes travelled 'across the border', sometimes to Iran and Iraq".

Mele A. Hakim also explained that after the 2000s, they established a publishing house with the same name as the bookstore and started publishing books. These publications, which are Kurdish translations of some hadith and tafsir works that form the basis of madrasa education, are important because they show that Kurdish publishing based on Arabic script gained momentum with the lifting of the ban on the use of Kurdish in the press and media.

In this process, not only Mele A. Hakim, but also a number of other individuals involved in the sale and distribution of madrasa books entered the publishing industry and pioneered the transition from hand-copying to printed production by printing popular literary works in addition to textbooks.

2.2. Traveling Booksellers and Their Experiences with Reading Communities

During the fieldwork, my interlocutors mentioned Mele Mihemed's store as another place where I could find madrasa books. However, they commented as follows: "There are no such diverse and luxuriously printed books as in Mele Hakim's store, but you can find used books there at a cheaper price, and you can find some books there that some seydas wrote by hand and reproduced with a copying machine".

Mele Mihemed's bookstore was also located in the passage in Suriçi. I visited him one day. The store was on the second floor of the arcade on the right corner and was smaller and more modest than the first bookstore. Some of the books were stacked outside in baskets and boxes. There were a few shelves in the store window for display, which were not lit. The books were visible in the light of the aisle and the overhead lamp in the store.

I entered the store, greeted him, introduced myself, told him the names of the *mele*s who had told me to visit him to build trust and acquaintance between us, and conveyed their greetings. After he acknowledged the greeting with head and hand gestures, we began to talk. Our first meeting was more to get to know each other. During my further visits, I had in-depth interviews with him about the madrassa education.

During one of the interviews, I asked him why he was selling books instead of teaching. He hesitated, tilted his head, smiled a little sheepishly, and said that he loved books and had done so since childhood. I was intrigued by his words and asked him to elaborate. He straightened up a bit in his chair and began to explain. He said that at the beginning of his madrasa training, the *feqî*s had great difficulty finding books. One of the main reasons for this difficulty was the ban on madrasa education. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain the books in question legally. Second, the financial situation of the *feqî*s was very bad, and most of them could not afford to buy new books.

Mele Mihemed told that during this time he decided to start selling books by traveling around the villages, sometimes on foot and sometimes in a minibus. This was how he procured books: when the *feqî*s finished reading a book, they moved on to the next book. They gave the book they had read to Mele Mihemed and bought the continuing book for a small fee. Or sometimes they just sold them. They used to copy the books they needed. Sometimes he went to book auctions and bought books. Sometimes he bought books in large quantities in bookstores, like that of Mele A. Hakim's father, and took them to the villages to sell them, since these books were not included in any official distribution network. In this way, a small number of books circulated among the *feqî*s.

Since it was difficult to get printed books, the madrasa students copied the books they needed by hand. Although most of the books they copied by hand were textbooks, they also copied some valuable books that they could not afford. Melayê Cizîrî's *Dîwan* was one of these books.

One of the *mele*s I interviewed told me about the traveling booksellers who came to the village where he studied as a young *feqî*. He told me that they eagerly awaited the arrival of the traveling booksellers, but since they had no money, they traded the books they had reproduced with their own hands for other books. When I asked what books were most in demand besides the textbooks, he replied that the *Dîwan* of Melayê Cizîrî was very popular, but since it was hard to get, the students would copy it by hand.

In his travels to different cities and villages, Mele Mihemmed had the opportunity to experience different madrasa environments. In a way, he contributed to the intellectual exchange by distributing different books to be read according to the field of interest of each madrasa teacher, as well as the books to be read for obtaining an *ijazat*, called "kitebên rêzê" in the madrasa curriculum. Mele Miheme's "bookshop on foot" served to supply the *feqî*s and *seyda*s with books when there was no printing of books for madrasa education and cross-border transportation was difficult and smuggling dangerous. Then he opened this bookstore.

The story of Mele Mihemmed seemed to me to be very important because it provides information about a form of education and the languages used in that education, and illustrates the way in which the sale and distribution of books in that alphabet took place at a time when the Arabic alphabet was forbidden. This history also provides important data for understanding how the institutions and perceptions that sustained interest in books printed in Arabic script and in literacy in languages other than Turkish were historically structured and how they changed.

2.3. Testimonies of a Scholar from Madrasa to Travelling Book Dealing and Book Auctions

After interviewing Mele Mihemmed, I wondered if there were other people selling books on the road and conducted a series of interviews to find an answer to my question. One of my interviewees, Mele Khalil Ibrahîm Banûkî, provided me with very important information in this regard. In addition to his classical madrasa education, he had studied Islamic philosophy and classical Kurdish, Persian, and Arabic literature. Because of his love and passion for books, he started working as a bookseller.

Mele Ibrahîm said that the search for rare books had become a special occupation and passion for him through his participation in book auctions. He said that most of the books that come to the auctions are from the libraries of deceased scholars. They were either brought by their children who could not read them, or by dealers who bought them very cheaply from the children of the deceased scholars and brought them to the auctions to sell them at a high price. Some of the most valuable books, of which there were almost none left, according to him, were sold at very high prices to libraries and book collectors abroad.

He himself traveled 'across the borders' to procure books. He traveled to cities such as Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad, Zakho, Duhok, and Erbil, bringing back bags of books. Istanbul was also one of the important cities where he procured books. Although the books were generally used for madrasa classes, he also brought history books such as *Meşahiru'l Ekrad* [Kurdish Celebrities] and Kurdish *dîwan*s.

When I asked him whether there had been traveling booksellers in his time and before, he told me about a man named Mele Y. He was a bookseller. He traveled from village to village selling books. Mele Ibrahîm also told me about a man named Mele H. who sold books from his house because he did not have a store. He bought books in Aydın, İzmir and Konya and sold them in madrasas.

When I asked him how much interest there was in books, he said that *mele*s and the *feqî*s had a great interest in books in the last 20-30 years when he was in the book trade and in the period before that when he continued his education in the madrasas:

> "*Mele*s spent most of his income on books. They worked as imams in the villages and waited eagerly for the day when the booksellers would come to the villages. Or if they traveled to the city, they would go directly to the bookstores, where they would stay for a long time to study the books and, as far as they could, spend a large part of their income on books".

To illustrate how great the demand for books was, he mentioned a man named Mele Ismaîl:

> "When Ismaîl worked for Hêcî M. in 1977-1978, Mele Ismaîl came from Van. He had a bookstore there. He used to buy a hundred packages of books. They were all for madrasa teachers. After a while, he would come back and buy a similar number of books. So there was a great demand for books. Nowadays, booksellers buy a few packages of books at most. So there is a decline.

The madrasa teachers had a great interest in literature and knowledge books. Hafiz's *Dîwan* and Sa'dî's *Gulistan* and *Bostan* were brought from Istanbul along with their Ottoman commentaries. *Mele*s read Sa'dî not only for literary and linguistic purposes, but also to gain political insights, such as understanding his critical advice to rulers".

In addition to Mele Y., he mentioned a number of other names of booksellers on the move:

> "Then there was M.D. from Urfa. He had studied in a classical madrasa and received an ijazat. In the 1950s, he printed books in Syria and smuggled them into Turkey. In the 1960s, he gave up his job as an imam and began working as a bookseller. He always traveled around with his bag and sold books. M. mentioned another scholar who worked in the book trade in the 1940s. Until the 1960s, this person supplied the madrasas in Adıyaman, Urfa, with books. He had learned the business from him".

Mele Ibrahîm said about these people: "These are only the ones I know. There are many more names that we do not know". Another important and interesting piece of information about the traveling booksellers was that the booksellers were also involved in the book trade because of the demand for books. The traders knew in which village there was a madrasa and who the *seyda* of that madrasa was. They sold books in barter. For example, they traded a book for 10 eggs or two kilos of wheat. of course, the ratio varied depending on the value of the book. In the fall, after the farmers had brought in their harvest, the *feqî*s went to the villages to collect the alms (*zakah*). The villagers paid their alms in kind from the harvests they had collected. The *feqî*s sold the crops they received as alms, such as grapes and wheat, to the merchants who came to their villages to buy books. They in turn sold the books and bought the products they needed. In some cases, the bookbinders also acted as a cover for the sale of books. Especially in the 1940s and 1950s, many people whose main business was bookselling were banned, so they continued this business under the guise of bookselling out of fear.

3. BOOKS POPULAR AND BELOVED IN MADRASA CIRCLES

The books available in bookstores can be divided into the following categories: Books on madrasa education; books on basic Islamic sciences such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith; history books, most of which were written in the classical era of Islam by scholars such as Tabari, Ibn al Asir, and Ibn al Kesir; books of the *mu'cem* (dictionary) type, which are written in the form of dictionaries and provide information about people and countries; and works on classical Arabic, Persian, and Kurdish literature. Almost all books are written in Arabic script.

Books on basic Islamic sciences, most of which were imported from abroad, were usually bound and printed on high-quality paper. Books on Arabic, which were used as teaching materials, differed in printing style and quality. The differences between these books were not only due to printing style and quality. There were also serious differences in the way the information was organized.

The madrasa teachers preferred the expanded editions of the grammar books with commentaries and glosses that explained grammatical subtleties in detail and presented different schools and approaches to the subject. Having read these books themselves, they knew how to teach.

Moreover, their knowledge of these books was not limited to the written text. They also had the oral knowledge of their masters, which they had successively learned from their own masters while reading the text in question, and which they passed on to their students while reading the text (Nasr, 1995: 57-70) Modern printed books, on the other hand, were usually shortened by removing comments and glosses to make them easier to read, and the texts were arranged in a single form with a straight line on the page (Messick, 1995).

In addition to the Arabic textbooks, there were also Kurdish textbooks written in Arabic script. These included grammar books titled *Terkîb û Zûrûf* [Syntax and Adverbs], which were usually taught at the beginner level, and books on faith and etiquette such as *Eqîda Îmanê* and *Nehcu'l Enam*, which were intended to teach beginners the basic principles of the faith in verse. *Mewlûd*, which was written in verse about the life of the Prophet of Islam, and *Nûbihara Biçûkan*, which was written in the form of a verse dictionary to facilitate and accelerate the learning of words during Arabic lessons, were the books that students read at the beginning of their education.

Although these books were read at the beginning of madrasa training, they were very prestigious and respected books with symbolic meaning. One of the reasons for this was that they were written by scholars who were highly respected in madrasa circles. Although the works of scholars such as Mele Ûnisê Helqetênî, Melayê Batê, Ehmedê Xanî, and Mele Xelîlê Sêrtê are novice works, they exhibit a competence that shows the authors' deep understanding of the subject. Moreover, the works, most of which were written and included in the madrasa curriculum during the rule of the Kurdish Emirates, had a symbolic value as a distinguishing feature of the regional madrasas for almost three centuries.

These books were also available in various editions. After 2000, when the ban on publishing in Kurdish was largely lifted, the books in question were usually reproduced by hand by the feqîs or written by someone with good handwriting and reproduced with a mimeograph machine until new editions were produced with different covers and page layouts. Although there were new editions of the works, the madrasa teachers usually preferred the old editions that they were used to teaching.

The literary works popular among madrasa teachers and students were mystical and spiritual works. These books can be broadly divided into two groups. Sa'di Shîrazî's *Bostan* and *Gûlîstan*, often referred to as *Kulliyata Sa'dî*, and Feriduddin Attar's *Pendname* were among the most popular works. These works were read not only for private pleasure, but also by some madrasa teachers to obtain a certain level of intellectual education. These works were also read as a means of learning the Persian language. Students who read these works with a seyday learned the grammatical rules of the Persian language while reading the particular text.

The *Dîwan*s of Melayê Cizîrî and Hafiz were read as the product of advanced literary and scholarly taste. It was considered one of the marks of a good scholar to be able to read and "understand" these dîwans, since they were considered to have deep meanings that were revealed to each reader in a different way, and in which the scientific, literary, and linguistic accumulations of the Islamic world were expressed in poetic splendor. It was therefore also a matter of prestige to possess these works.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF THE MADRASA BOOK MARKET

The fact that the obstacles to printing and publishing in different languages, especially Kurdish, were largely removed, at least on the legal level, has also been reflected in the printing of Kurdish works in Arabic script for the madrasa circles after the 2000s. In the early 2000s, some of the people who sold madrasa books also entered the publishing business.

In my interview with two publishing house owners who were also in the book-selling business, when I asked them what prompted them to enter such a business, they did not cite financial gain as one of the reasons. Both of them, who had been educated in madrasas, explained that madrasas were not only educational institutions but also institutions that created a culture and a tradition, and that they had established their publishing houses to preserve and perpetuate that culture.

The fact that books are printed by publishers in much better quality and distributed more effectively than before was cited as another factor encouraging madrasa scholars to publish. They stated that the printed books, some of which are copyrighted and some of which are translations of the basic works used in madrasa education in the areas of tafsir, fiqh, and hadith, contribute to the continuation of centuries-old literacy traditions in madrasa circles.Another publishing house closely followed by madrasa circles is Nûbihar Publications. Established in 1996 to coincide with the launch of Nûbihar magazine, the publishing house initially followed a Latin publishing policy, although it mainly

published books on Islamic and classical Kurdish literature. Over time, however, it also published works of classical literature as well as works on fiqh and aqeedah written in Arabic by scholars trained in madrasas.

In our interview with S. Çevik, the editor-in-chief, he explained that in addition to books printed in Latin script, books are also published in Arabic script, especially for teachers and students of the madrasah who are not accustomed to reading and writing in Latin script, and that there is a great demand for these books.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of printing in the Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the aim of creating a public literacy community of unprecedented intensity, and the primary role of the state in book production and literacy led to significant changes in the field of books and literacy, the effects of which are still felt and debated today.

This study, which aims to understand the impact of these changes on the production and distribution of books in the Kurdish madrasa circles that continue to exist illegally in Turkey, examines the ways in which book production and distribution continue in the absence of official patronage and commercial book distribution networks.

There has been no comparable study of the emergence of book publishing and literacy cultures in the regions and institutions studied, and this study aims to provide a starting point for historical anthropological studies on this topic.

In the absence of a legal framework and official patronage, one of the first methods used in this study was to travel from village to village and town to town to distribute books to the appropriate people. In the absence of a strong distribution network, itinerant booksellers also acted as cultural brokers by personally circulating books and facilitating communication between the various madrasas. By helping to ensure that these books circulated between madrasas, they contributed to the creation of a kind of imagined community.

In addition, these individuals, almost all of whom were madrasa educated, had the opportunity to observe the similarities and differences between these madrasas in terms of the books read in the various madrasas, and based on these observations, they were able to identify and evaluate which scientific and literary schools were stronger in which region based on which books were popular and in demand.

Indeed, the changes in the demand for books within certain time intervals can be read as data on the changes in the region or schools with which the madrasa teacher was associated. Therefore, the practice of selling books can provide important data for the study of literacy culture.

Bookstores are not only places where meles purchase the books they need, but also places where they meet and socialize with other meles. During my visits to the bookstores, I observed meles sometimes discussing the books they bought and sometimes, during a more in-depth academic discussion, taking books on the topic off the shelves to support their arguments and deepen the discussion. In cases where more than two Meles were involved in the discussion, other books on the topic they were discussing were also taken off the shelves, and sometimes a dozen books would pile up on the coffee table. In this respect, the bookstores also functioned as small research libraries and formed a kind of public intellectual space.

This study also sheds light on the different ways in which members of different religious and ethnic groups living in the contemporary Middle East experience modernity. The nation-states founded on the legacy of empire restructured languages in a hierarchical sense. While some languages were declared official languages and promoted by the state, the use of other languages was prohibited. Some other languages were not banned, but were outside the state patronage system and had to continue their development without official status. As a result, the written and spoken development of each language had to take a different path.

In countries such as Turkey, where the alphabet was also changed, decisions about which manuscripts to print and which books to print in the new alphabet were made on the basis of the distinction between the new and old regimes. In this sense, printing and book production were central to the context of cultural continuity and rupture. In terms of language, books were printed according to a language policy that conformed to the ideology of the new state and focused on the cultural and semantic frames of reference of language, and a new literary history and canon were constructed through literary genealogies based on the same understanding.

Texts that corresponded to this understanding were retrieved from the dusty shelves of the archives, reprinted in book form and brought into the present. A similar situation existed in countries where Arabic and Persian were

declared official languages, but since the alphabet was not changed in these countries, there was no similar break as in Turkey in terms of transferring literacy and language-based scientific and literary heritage into new books and printing them in the form of printed books.

Conducting similar studies on book printing and distribution in other cities in the region would deepen the conclusions drawn in this study and stimulate new studies by allowing for new research questions.

It is my hope that this study, which analyzes bookstores in their relationship to communities of writers and readers, will stimulate studies that examine the processes of emergence and change of reading cultures outside of official patronage relationships.

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