

A BOOKSELLER ON BAB-I ALI STREET: ARAKEL TOZLIAN AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TURKISH READING CULTURE IN THE LATE OTTOMAN PERIOD*

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Abstract: Arakel Tozlian (?-1912), one of the most famous booksellers of Hamidian Istanbul, had significant contributions to the intellectual development of the public. He dedicated his life to the goal of reading more books not only in Istanbul, but also in every corner of the country where Turkish was spoken and undertook a wide range of innovative projects in line with this goal. His initiatives related to reading include opening one of the first modern bookstores in the Ottoman Empire and establishing the dealerships in 24 Ottoman provinces; writing a reading training book reprinted 36 times and revised by Muallim Naci; not only buying and selling books, but supporting young writers by investing in their books and printing them in his own printing press. However, the most important service he did is to prepare the first known special book promotion catalogue in Turkish. This study aims to determine the importance of these publishing catalogues, the first published in 1884, claiming to contain a list of all Turkish books printed up to that time, in terms of Turkish cultural history and their contribution to reading rates and the early problems of publishing in the Ottoman Empire, as reflected in the catalogues.

Keywords: Arakel, Book, Bookstore, Publishing, Catalogue, Bab-ı Ali, Ottoman Empire, Istanbul.

Bâb-ı Âli Caddesi'nde Bir Kitapçı: Arakel Tozluyan ve Geç Osmanlı Döneminde Okuma Kültürüne Yaptığı Katkılar

Öz: Sultan II. Abdülhamid devrinde İstanbul'un en önemli kitapçılarından biri olan Arakel Tozluyan (?-1912), halkın entelektüel gelişimine ciddi katkılarda bulunmuştur. Yaşamını sadece İstanbul'da değil, memleketin Türkçe konuşulan her köşesinde insanların daha çok kitap okuması hedefine adanmış. Kitapçı Arakel, bu gaye doğrultusunda çeşitli yenilikçi çalışmalara imza atmıştır. Bu çalışmalar arasında Osmanlı'daki amacı sadece kitap satmak olan ilk modern kitapçılarından birini açmak ve 24 Osmanlı vilayetinde bu kitapçının bayiliklerini kurmak ve de Muallim Naci'nin gözden geçirdiği, 36 kez yeniden basılmış bir okuma eğitimi kitabını hazırlamak bulunmaktadır. Arakel, açtığı kitap dükkanında sadece kitap alıp satmamış, genç yazarları destekleyerek onların kitaplarına yatırım yapmış ve bu kitapları kendi kurduğu matbaasında basarak Türk okuma kültürüne kayda değer hizmetlerde bulunmuştur. Ancak, hiç şüphesiz yaptığı en önemli hizmet,

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Türkçede bilinen ilk özel kitap tanıtım kataloğunu hazırlamasıdır. Bu çalışmada - ilki 1884'te olmak üzere- o güne değin basılmış tüm Türkçe kitapların listesini içerdiği iddiasıyla yayımlanan katalogların Türk kültür tarihi açısından önemi ve okuma oranlarına katkısı değerlendirilecektir. Bunun yanında kataloglardan yansıdığı kadarıyla Osmanlı'daki basım ve yayıncılık faaliyetlerinin erken dönemdeki problemleri üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Arakel, kitap, kitapçı, yayıncılık, katalog, Bâb-ı Âli, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, İstanbul.

Introduction

Through the process approaching the Second Constitutional Era in the Ottoman Empire, bookstores in the European style emerged on Bab-ı Ali Street and played a pivotal role in the development of the Ottoman press contributing significantly to book reading habit in the late 19th and early 20th century.

“Bâb-ı Âli”, meaning *Sublime Porte*, was the administrative center of the Empire. At the end of the 18th century, it consisted of “the grand vezir, his household, his *divan*, and the departments headed by *çavuş başı* or cheff bailiff, the *kahya bey* or steward, and the *reis-ül küttab* or chief scribe.” (Findley, 1980, p. 70). This was an environment where the scribal services were carried out as well as the governmental bodies, and it was of cultural significance. The street hosting *the porte* was lying at the heart of the Ottoman press, it had many media outlets, from bookstores to printing presses, newspaper executives to contractors, stationery dealers and clichés, etc. (Kabacalı, 1998). Owing to this privileged spot, tradesmen of Babıali Street had the ability to follow the country’s politically agenda closely and, at times, to steer it. But their main function was to ensure the easy and fast circulation of information.

According to sources, one of the first bookstores established on Babıali Street belonged to “Kitapçı Arakel” or Arakel Tozlian Efendi (?-1912). His bookshop was founded in 1875, and later, he was accompanied by mostly other Armenian book dealers, such as Artin Assadourian, Assir Efendi, Biberdjian, Derkrikorian, Garabetian, Ipekdjian, Kayserian brothers, Kechichian, Mardirossian, Mihalian, Ohannes Ferid, Tchouhadjian. Along with Turkish booksellers, Hüseyin Efendi, Rauf Bey, Tefeyyüz, and Tüccarzade, and Greek Joannidis, the number of Babıali bookstores was about twenty by the 20th century, meanwhile in Istanbul this number was 60 in total. Increase in their number is dramatic when we consider that the number of bookstores was 32 in 1880 in entire Istanbul (Yıldırım, 2019, pp. 141–142; 161–163). In this regard, it would not be wrong to claim that the enterprise, most probably, pioneered by Arakel Efendi became a widespread vocation over the following years.

After the death of Arakel Efendi in 1912, his son Leon Lütfi, who converted to Islam and changed his name to Semih Lütfi, ran the bookstore for a while until it

was permanently closed in 1914 (Seymen, 1993a, p. 292). However, bookstores of Bab-ı Ali continued to serve the public for many years.

Arakel Bookstore was one of the most popular bookstores in Istanbul until his death. Arakel increased its trade volume considerably by establishing dealerships or franchises of his own bookstore in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. His bookstore offered readers a large variety of books, from Turkish and French textbooks taught in schools to thematic books on subjects such as medicine, law and politics, from the fictional works of famous authors of the era such as Ahmet Rasim and Halid Ziya to translations of Western classics and best-selling romances. Seeking to develop new sales strategies and increase the margin of profit, Arakel Efendi reduced the cost of printing by building his own printing press and thus eliminated intermediary bodies in book printing. In this sense, he was not only a bookseller, but he was more like, as he puts it, “nâşir”, “mümessil”, and “tâbî” in Ottoman Turkish (Kitapçı Arakel, 1888, pp. 4–5), meaning respectively publisher, author agent, and printer. It shows that Bookseller Arakel was a skillful tradesman who would not hesitate to undergo difficult endeavors in “service to patrons of reading”, as his motto suggests.

Apart from bookselling, Arakel Efendi was printing and publishing written materials as well. One of them was a reading training book consisting of four sections called *Talim-i Kıraat* “Reading Training”, which was revised by Muallim Naci (1849–1893) and used at schools by being printed 36 times. It shows that besides his skills in merchandising, he believed he had a mission to educate and serve the public in terms of increasing book reading. But, his most important service was to publish the first private publication catalogue in Turkish, printed in 1884 with the title of *Arakel Kitabhanesi Esami-i Kütübü* “Arakel Bookstore Book Titles”. The catalogue, which claims to promote *all works* written in Ottoman Turkish until its time of printing, contains highly important data regarding the reading habits and tendencies of the public in the second constitutional era. The purpose of the catalogues of Arakel Efendi and 44 publication catalogues prepared between 1884 and 1901 by other bookstore owners at Bab-ı Ali Street following Arakel’s footsteps is explained as “*erbab-ı mütalaaya hizmet*”¹, that is to say providing much more books for readers to facilitate book reading and the accessibility of books. Arakel’s secondary aim with publishing these booklets was, assuredly, to boost the book sales, which were not at a desirable level, given book selling was not the most profitable job for the period. The success of this sales method was proven by readers’ increasing interest in the books not long after and, as a result, Arakel continued to prepare publication catalogues with seven new editions in subsequent years.

¹ The phrase can translate as “service to patrons of reading”.

1. Life and Works of Arakel Efendi

The most comprehensive research on Arakel Efendi was carried out by İ. Lütfü Seymen. He determined the place and importance of Arakel Tozlian in the late 19th century İstanbul in his article “Erbâb-ı Mütalaaya Hizmet: I. Meşrutiyet Kitapçılığı ve Arakel Tozluyan Efendi’nin Mektupları”, which was published in the first issue of *Müteferrika* magazine in 1993. In addition to providing important material on Arakel’s life story, he published both the original copies and the translation texts of ten letters sent by Kitapçı Arakel in 1893 to the supply officer Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi, who served in the seventh army in Yemen at the time (1993, pp. 67–111).

Arakel Tozlian, an Ottoman citizen of Armenian origin, was one of the most important book dealers in İstanbul during the late 19th and early 20th century. Not so much information is available about his life and there is a confusion concerning his birthplace as well. According to Server İskit and A. D. Jeltyakov, he was born in Afyonkarahisar. But in Teotoros Labdjindjian’s (Teotig) *Dib u Dar* (1912, “Print and Letter”), which was published to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Armenian script by reminding the first book written with Armenian characters in 1512 with the same title (Strauss, 2013, p. 249), it is suggested that Arakel was born in Kayseri, like many other Armenian booksellers worked in Bab-1 Ali (Teotig, 2013, p. 125). According to the same source concerning the historical development of Armenian printing as well as the profiles of personalities who were occupied with printing and press, Arakel Tozlian Efendi was one of five brothers from Kayseri. One of his older brothers, Ohannes, earned his life selling bacon bread in Kayseri bazaar, even though he was well-educated. In 1869 Ohannes opened a small printing press in Vezirhan, published several books, but in 1875 he shut down his shop and started practicing law. The other Tozlian brothers were called Garabet, Tatul and Mordiros. Mordiros was alive in 1912 and living in Afyonkarahisar, when *Dib u Dar* was released. Seymen suggests that this may be the reason of why other researchers were mistaken about Arakel’s hometown (pp. 69–70). Yıldırım (2019), on the other hand, offers an explanation as to why Arakel was given an insignificant recognition in *Dib u Dar*, while his brother Ohannes had more part in it: It might stem from the fact that Arakel was recognized as a “Turkish Bookseller”, and that he was mentioned as Turkish in the *Annuaire Oriental du Commerce* and even in his own advertisements (p. 43). But apart from his origin, it is also possible that Arakel’s interest in bookkeeping arose out of his brother Ohannes’ experience in this field together with the long-established tradition of book trade among merchants from Kayseri. Many of these book sellers were distributing newspapers and magazines on the streets of İstanbul when they were younger, and, by the time, they transformed their occupation into opening proper bookstores in certain quarters of İstanbul, especially on Bab-1 Ali Street (S. Çetin, 2010, p. 40).

Naturally, there were shops selling books in various Ottoman provinces long before Kitapçı Arakel and his successors. However, those “old-fashioned”, antiquarian kind of places also served as tobacco shops, cafés, or hookah/shisha houses where people gathered and chattered on, books were only of secondary importance in these places. Although there was a great interest in novels and stories published by newspapers and magazines of *Dersaadet*, the number of audiences interested in contemporary literature was not very high. The fact that Turkish books were considered expensive was among one of the obstacles to acquire them. Since there was no regular book trade sector in Istanbul, authors like Ahmed Midhat Efendi had to do the typing, printing and distribution of their works themselves. Due to this muddle in the book trade, customers had to obtain books and magazines from the addresses that the publishers wrote on their covers. These addresses mostly belonged to afore mentioned tobacconists, tea vendors, pharmacies, paper makers etc. (Strauss, 1993, p. 8; M. Çetin, 2012, pp. 19–20). Understandably, neither these shops were ideal places for the bibliophiles who enjoyed solemnly browsing the books in silence, nor the situation was impeccable for the authors who were in need of regular bookstores to reach more audience. For all these reasons, this new type of bookstores, like Arakel’s place, brought a new impetus to the bookselling business. Instead of a shop where the musty odor of worn books was mixed with the smell of tobacco and coffee on dusty shelves, Arakel offered his customers a modern, fresh, and reader-friendly environment where newly published books also could be found with ease.

Erdem (2001) explains this transformation process of book trade from antiquarian into bookstore and change in the book sales format:

Bedesten’de ve daha sonra Sahhaflar Çarşısı olarak bilinen mahalde kuşkusuz çok eskiden beri kitapçılık yapılmaktaydı. İlk dönemde çarşıda kitapçılar yalnız kitapçılıkla uğraşıyorlar, hattatlarla forma forma çoğalttırdıkları kitapları daha sonra müşterilerine satıyorlardı. Ama matbaaların çoğalması, devlet matbaalarının dışarıya da iş yapması ve litografya ve tipografya ile çalışan özel matbaaların peş peşe açılmaya başlamasıyla, kitapçılık işi daha da yaygınlaşmaya başladı. Artık çok fazla sayıda kitap elden ele dolaşıyordu. Özellikle 1860’lı yıllardan sonra kitapların tütüncü dükkânlarında, İranlı tüccarların tezgâhlarında satıldığı görüldü. O devirde çıkan dergi ve kitapların arka kapaklarında bu kitapların satıldıkları tütüncülerin, İranlı’ların isimleri kayıtlıdır² (p. 12).

² “Book trade had been carried out undoubtedly for a long time in ‘Bedesten’ and the place later known as the ‘Sahhaflar Bazaar’. Bookstores in the bazaar initially was only dealing with bookselling, and then selling books to their customers, which they had duplicated to calligraphers. But the bookselling business became more common with the proliferation of printing presses, the outsourcing of state printing, and the initiation

It was certain that there was a need for entrepreneurs to save the books from these tobacconists. In these respects, it would not be wrong to claim that Arakel was among the first entrepreneurs to open a bookstore in the Ottoman Empire similar to its counterparts in the West. It is possible that some people had also sold nothing but books before his time, but Arakel brought unprecedented professionalism and competence to the market, making himself the most well-known bookseller of the time.

This innovative character of Arakel brought himself success, fame, popularity, everything but money. Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil (1936), maybe the biggest novelists of the time, regarded him as the most important bookseller among all the other Armenian booksellers who held the book market of İstanbul at the time, owing to their assiduity: “Cadde(*Bab-ı Ali*) baştan başa Karabet ve Kasparlar’la, Aleksanlar’la, sonra hepsinden mühim, köşede Arakel’le dolu idi. Bunlar da kitap, gazete, matbaa hayatına ırklarına ait çalışkanlık, beceriklilik yeteneklerini getirmemiş olsalardı acaba ne olacaktı?”³ (p. 29).

He then asserts that Arakel was a brave and talented merchant who knew the books very well and who was not afraid to invest in the books that he felt he could sell. At the same time, he was an audacious entrepreneur, so much so that he would not hesitate to give a five-lira advance payment to the authors of the books which had not yet been completed (pp. 40-41). This remark also clarifies that Arakel was not only a bookseller, but also an editor who made book arrangements with the authors before they wrote the books.

Another famous literary person of the time, Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın (1975) also refers to Arakel Efendi as “the most famous bookseller” in his memoir *Edebiyat Anıları*. However, he does not speak of Arakel very well. Apparently, they had an unpleasing meeting when Yalçın was a young writer who was in need of acknowledgement and brought his work to Arakel to be published:

Mektepten çıkar çıkmaz Babıâli Caddesi’ne koştum, eserimi kitapçı Arakel’e verecektim, o zamanın en meşhur kitapçısı o idi. Dükkâna girip çıkarken bazı muharrirlere rastgelirdim. Fakat şimdi ben de oraya bir fâth gururu ile giriyor, hiç bir hicap duymuyordum. Arakel Efendi ne benim o

of special printing presses working with lithography and typography. Now there were plenty of books to go around. It appeared that books were sold in tobacco shops and stalls of Iranian merchants, especially after the 1860s. The back covers of the magazines and books published at that time record the names of the Iranian tobacconists, in which these books were sold” (translated by me).

³ “The street (*Bab-ı Ali*), from head to toe, was full of Garabets and Kaspars, Aleksans, and then more important than all of them, Arakel in the corner. What would have happened if they had not brought their skills and diligence peculiar to their race into the field of books, newspapers, and printing?” (translated by me)

büyük eserimi okudu, ne de ona parlak bir istikbal vâdeden takrize baktı, romanımı basamıyacağını söyledi, önündeki hesap ile meşgul olmağa başladı. Bu adeta bir istiskal idi; hiç kadir bilmeyen bir adam!.. Nefret ve galeyan ile dükkândan ayrıldım⁴ (p. 26).

Although we do not fully understand the reason for Arakel's attitude towards the young writer, this manner seems hardly surprising considering the clues about his character that appear in the prefaces of the catalogues he prepared. We shall return to this topic later, but based on the diction he uses in these prefaces, we might say that Arakel was, so to speak, a person who liked money. Likewise, he disliked offering discounts, bargaining over prices, and selling books on the never-never, inasmuch as he offered the publishing catalogues for a fee, about which the customers, who acquired similar brochures for free in Europe, voiced their concern and regarded it mean.

In addition to opening one of Istanbul's first *alafanga* bookstores, Kitapçı Arakel also published the first private publishing catalogue in 1884. Besides, he founded his own printing press in 1899, in Musullu Han in Sirkeci. Apart from the publishing catalogues which were reprinted 8 times with the addition of newly published books in each new edition, he wrote the aforementioned reading training book which was reprinted 36 times. The last printing of this book was made in 1912 in Arakel's own printing press. The attention the book taken and success of the sales was so high that it was pirated by "Şirket-i Sahafiye-i İraniyye" "Persian Second-Hand Books Company" and sold for thirty *paras*. In this regard, another "first" made by Arakel Tozlian is that he is the author of the first pirated book in the Ottoman-Turkish publishing history (Seymen, 1993b, p. 70).

Arakel Efendi made great efforts to improve reading habit in the country. By means of his good relations with intellectuals in the countryside, he expanded his store's dealer network and tried to send books to almost every piece of land on which Turkish was spoken. Owing to the distribution organization he built, which can be considered quite advanced for the period, he opened Arakel Bookstore "franchises" in twenty-four major provinces and *sanjaks* of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, he was able to serve the "patrons of reading" in the countryside, as well as expanding the trade volume and profit margin of his business. Besides books,

⁴ "As soon as I left the school, I rushed to Babiâli Street, where I was going to give my work to the Kitapçı Arakel, he was the most famous bookkeeper at the time. I used to bump into some authors coming in and out of the store. But now I was going in there with the pride of a conquerer, I wasn't shy at all. Arakel Efendi neither read my great work, nor took a glance at the appraisal vouching for its prospect, he said he couldn't publish my novel and began to occupy himself with a ledger ahead. It was almost a contempt; A man who has no sympathy... I left the store with hatred and rage." (translated by me)

newspapers and magazines published in Turkish and foreign languages were also conveyed to readers from İstanbul through this means (Seymen, 1993b, p. 69).

Arakel's distribution network often comprised the people related to books in a professional level, such as antiquarians, bookbinders, and stationers. Based on the information given by Seymen, Arakel had distributors in various regions of the Empire, from Rhodes, Skopje, İonnina to Aleppo, Diyarbakır, and Rize (p. 69). The chart below shows the extent of Arakel's book distribution network, which was definitely a hard task given the difficulties in transportation and carriage.



Chart 1. Arakel Bookstore's Distribution Network

However, despite his diligence and devotion to his profession, his unwillingness to haggle over book prices caused the deterioration of his business. According to İskit (1939), Arakel's stubbornness, coupled with his propensity to sell the best-quality books, led him to bankruptcy by running up debts. As a result, he had to cede the store on Bab-ı Ali Street, 46-48 to Andon Nahnikian, the person to whom he owed the most money (p. 119). It should also be noted that the information provided by İskit contradicts the one that of Lütfü Seymen. As I highlighted before, according to Seymen, Arakel's bookstore was handed over to his son Leon shortly before his death.

2. Publishing Catalogues

The main purpose of printing and handing out the publication catalogues titled *Esami-i Kütüb*, of which we had access to eight in all, was to make more profit by selling more books in my opinion. Arakel explains thoroughly in the foreword "İfade-i Mahsusa" sections of the catalogues how difficult job was to publish book catalogues that include small descriptions about each and every book and the categorizations of the books as well. In addition, many problems related to publishing are addressed in these prologue sections, such as difficulties in publishing books, how hard it was to distribute books to the countryside, and

disagreements with customers about determining the prices of books and catalogues.

In the light of *Eski Harflerle Basılmış Türkçe Eserler Kataloğu*⁵ by Seyfettin Özege (1971), we can stick on the claim that the first catalogue prepared by Arakel in 1301/1884 was the first example of the private publication catalogues in Turkish. Arakel then continued to publish 7 more catalogues in 1304/1887, 1305/1888, 1306/1889, 1307/1890, 1308/1893, 1311/1893 and 1312/1894. Some of them were titled “zeyl” (addendum). The most comprehensive among them is the first 272-pages catalogue, in which Arakel introduced 1036 books in total.

Arakel constantly improved the book catalogues in terms of cataloguing and classifying method after the first one and they became technically better by reaching the level of providing the most accurate information about the book that readers were looking for. On the other hand, the first catalogue has a greater importance with respect to the fact that it is the first book catalogue published in Turkish and has a wider scope than all the others. Although the catalogues have clear deficiencies, it is possible to find answers to important questions such as which books were circulating in Turkish at that time, what kind of books were read, how much book prices were, and from which languages books were translated, etc.

In *Esami-i Kütübs*, books are primarily classified according to their genres. For example, in the “Literary Books” section, there are non-fictional books concerning the theoretical aspect of literature, meanwhile there are different chapters about different literary genres, such as “Novel”, “Poetry”, or “Humorous Stories”. Through the chapters called “Law Books”, “Books on Religions and Sects”, “Medicine Books”, “School Books”, and etc., Arakel attempted to introduce most read and sold books in the 19th century and before. What he intended was clearly that everyone could easily find the book they needed in the area they are interested in. In this way, he aimed to make the book a more attractive, desirable, and accessible commodity. This aim was reinforced by short promotional texts that functioned the same way with today’s back cover blurbs of books. This was a very costly and time-consuming sales strategy for that period, but it made easier to find the requested book for both readers and book dealers. Moreover, thanks to the catalogues, there was a considerable increase in book sales rates and book reading rates. The first catalogue’s success was also recognized by “Oriental scholars in the West” (Strauss, 2003, p. 47). Erkul Yağcı (2017) also claims that Arakel Efendi’s aforementioned correspondence with Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi proves that he attempted “to modify the habituses of readers by encouraging more reading, thus introducing a new habitus” (18). It means that he encouraged the reader to change their approach to book reading.

⁵ “Catalogue of Turkish Works Printed in Old Letters”

The sections in the catalogues are sorted by the Arabic alphabet order. The short book descriptions include information such as the author's name, the translator's name— if there is —, the printing number of the book, whether it is hardcover, if it is the hardcover price and the paperback price of the book, and the postage rate of the book for the countryside.

When we look at the inner structure of Arakel's catalogues, first of all, we find information about what these books are on the inner cover page: "Meşâhir-i müellifin-i eslâf ile muâsırının müellefât-ı mergûbelerinin esas ve muhteviyâtını ve husûsât-ı sâiresini mübeyyîn bir defterdir ki her nev-i müellifât aksâm-ı mahsûsasında kayıt ve işâret olunmuştur" (Kitapçı Arakel, 1884)⁶.

He changed this introductory piece, by saying that only "some of the most admired work" were introduced in the booklet. Again, beginning with the edition printed in 1888, these inner covers contain two quotations by two local and foreign authors or philosophers about the virtue of reading. Besides, there are two more informative pieces of writing in these inner covers. The first one is a statement about that the catalogues are free of charge, and the second is that they were printed through "the License of the Royal Education Ministry". However, as mentioned before, the first catalogue had been sold for a price. Later ones were given out free of charge, after complaints from customers.

The forewords of Arakel catalogues are the sources that provide first-hand information about this important initiative. If we talk about the first catalogue, in its foreword, Arakel first praises Sultan Abdulhamid II as it was customary, and then gives information about the purpose for why and under what conditions the catalogues were prepared, what the function of the catalogues was, and why he needed to charge a "token fee" for them.

Arakel Efendi initially mentions that, despite the noticeable increase in book numbers, there had not been such comprehensive publication that displays the newly published books in the market with the names of their writers, and to some extent their prices. For this very reason, he completed and printed this long-needed "index" so that those who are dedicated to reading books could easily access any book they wanted. He then says that he described the works in the catalogues based on his own personal opinions, but corrections could be made in the second edition if requested by book authors or translators (Kitapçı Arakel 1884, chap. "İfade-i Mahsusa").

Arakel indicates the lack of price information for every book as one of the most important flaws of the publication catalogues. He attributes this deficiency to the

⁶ "It is a book that displays the works, contents and other features of the famous authors of the past and the most popular authors of our time, and all kinds of authors have been recorded and pointed out in their respective sections." (translated by me)

fact that, unlike Europe, books in the Ottoman Empire were not yet the property of bookstores and that writers or translators had not set a fixed price on their books, which, in fact, was not only a defect of the book catalogues, but also a problem of the whole Ottoman publishing sector in early period. This problem caused Arakel to show only the price of books with fixed prices.

The issue of their price was another problem with catalogs. For the indexes, which were distributed free of charge later, Arakel mentions that he had to demand a reasonable price—10 kuruş—at the beginning.⁷ Because preparing such voluminous catalogue, as we could also see, was not an easy task and costed a lot of money and time. He says that he had set a “harmless price” in order to cover this cost (Kitapçı Arakel, 1884).

As the foreword of the index he printed in 1888 suggests, he felt aggrieved about the customers’ negative reactions to selling the index for money. The vast majority of customers who had been to Europe shamed Arakel for charging fee for the booklets. In response to customers, he raises the question of “bookseller” and the difference between bookseller and editor in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. For him, there were two types of booksellers. The first one buys and sells all the books that are printed and will be printed, as much as they can. The other one is called “editor” in Europe. It is the person who buys, prints and sells works written by authors and translators, and sometimes orders books, too. In Europe, these two professions were separate, but since the difference in the Ottoman empire had not yet been understood, two professions were often mixed. He puts himself into the second category as an editor kind of bookseller (Kitapçı Arakel, 1888, pp. 4–5). Then he tries to clarify the dispute over catalogue prices. Similarly, book catalogues available free of charge in Paris included the list of books in each bookstore’s own collection. A catalogue, like his own, containing all works published in France up to that time, would definitely cost at least five hundred and six hundred francs, as Arakel claims:

‘Esâmi-i Kütüb meccânen virilmeli!’ diyenlere gelince: bunlar, şurasına dikkat itmiyorlar ki Paris kitâpçılarında bir kitâb fihrisi meccânen alıyorlar ise o fihris umûm Fransa matbûâtının fihrisi olmayub yalnız o kitapçının kendi hesabına olarak tab ittirdiği kitâpların esâmisidir. Yoksa bir adam Fransa’da şimdiye kadar tab ve neşr olunan kitâpların bir fihrisini idinmek istese beş yüz elli, altı yüz Frank virmesi icâb ider.

⁷ One *kuruş*, Ottoman piaster, was equal to 120 Ottoman *akçe* after 1720 as an Ottoman monetary unit. For a better understanding the value of the catalogues, we must consider that the food prices were around 850 *akçe* (approximately 7 *kuruş*) in Ottoman cities between 1850-1900 (Pamuk, 2004, p. 456).

İşte bu kâbilden olarak âcizleri de bundan evvel on guruş fiyatla neşr itdiğim Esâmi-i Kütüb, o târihe kadar bizde (Arapça Kitâplar müstesnâ) hemân umûm kitapların fihrisi idi⁸ (pp. 5–6).

In the same chapter, Arakel not only states that the cost of the catalog was fifty-sixty liras, but also gives other important information about publishing practices at the time. An example of this is that he claims, with explicitly whining tone, only less than 25% of a book sale is bookseller's share. For Arakel, even though being he "invented" the catalogues, he still was the one who made the least money out of it. The most significant profits from the indexes were gained by the authors and other bookstore owners, however – here Arakel reproach them, too –, they did not offer a small percentage of their earnings, nor did they present a free copy of their work. He then proudly explains that, despite all reasonable grounds, he decided to give the indexes out to the readers for free. However, he reiterates his dissatisfaction with domestic customers, saying that the indexes were approached with huge interest by foreign customers, who would gladly pay 10 kuruş to obtain such valuable document (pp. 7–8).

While many different sections were found in the first catalogue published in 1884, Bookseller Arakel, beginning with the second catalogue, established a method of catalogue preparation and chose the same method in the other six following catalogues. The sections are more limited, the information about books is more detailed, and the number of books is also much less than the first catalogue in the catalogues printed in later years. These later catalogues sometimes contain the data about the second, third or more printings of some of the books included in the first catalog. In addition, some newly published books or those that had never been mentioned before, can be found in these. Furthermore, the emphasis on books that printed many times may be an indication that he intuitively discovered the advertising and sales strategy which anticipates a best-selling book will sell more, for "any book making it to the top of the bestsellers list will sustain its sales longer compared to the books that barely make it to the list, indicating that the higher the initial success, the longer it will persist" (Yucesoy et al., 2018, p. 23).

⁸ "As for those who say, 'Esâmi-i Kütüb must be free of charge!': they do not pay attention to this, that if they get a book index for free in Paris, it means that index only contains the books that are sold and printed by that certain bookseller on their own account. Otherwise, if one would like to obtain a book index which includes all the books printed and published, they would need to pay five-six hundred francs. For this very reason, the previous Esami-i Kütüb I humbly published and sold for 10 guruş price was the list of the books (Arabic books excluded) which had been printed and published in our country up to that time." (translated by me).

Conclusion

Thanks to these sources, which contain some emotional statements and reveal the greedy side of Arakel as well, we obtain important data about the struggles in the early stages of publishing experience in the Ottoman Empire. As a result of Arakel's complaints and criticisms about readers, authors and other booksellers/editors, we can list what we have learned as follows:

- Both local and foreign readers showed great interest in the catalogues. There was a significant reading public in Istanbul who was able to compare the catalogues to their European counterparts. Local readers demanded that the catalogs be free, meanwhile European readers had no trouble paying fees. Besides, some foreign readers had significant interest in the catalogues and they sent them to their countries.
- Arakel Efendi mentions that the two different types of book dealing were done by one person in the Ottoman Empire at that time. He says he did a very expensive and time-consuming job as both an editor and a book seller. Perhaps his endeavors to reach more audience and please his customers caused his bankruptcy, since he had always money issues.
- Arakel Efendi's catalogues were prepared with the promise of introducing all books printed and published in Turkish. He also attempted to deliver them to the reader in a way that we called "distribution network".
- We can determine what the purpose of Arakel was to include all books available on the market over time and to provide the most accurate and comprehensive information about these books to readers.

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