

Printing in the Arab World
with emphasis on the
Būlāq Press in Egypt

by

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As is well known, printing with movable type was invented in the fifteenth century by Gutenberg. Within a short time the art of printing had spread to many parts of Europe.¹ Its social, religious, and educational impact was incalculable, for this method of publishing books and other material was considerably less expensive and time-consuming than the laborious copying of manuscripts by hand. By the seventeenth century printing presses were publishing great numbers of books in both European as well as Near Eastern languages.

The first printing press in the Arab world came into being in the year 1610, when the Lebanon monastery of **Dayr Qazhiyā** acquired a printing press from Rome, with Syriac letters. Printing in the Arabic language, however, did not start in that part of the world until about a century later.

The first Arabic printing press was started in Syria in 1706. But for political, economic, and other reasons, it was short-lived. In Lebanon, the first Arabic printing press was introduced in 1733 in Shuwayr by 'Abd Allāh Zākhir, an acolyte and liturgical cantor in St. John's monastery.² Printing from movable type was unknown in Egypt until the advent of the French Expedition of Napoleon, 1798-1801, when Napoleon had to resort to this innovation for practical purposes. In Iraq and Palestine printing did not appear until 1830.

This article is a survey of the printing art in the Arab world in general, and Egypt in particular. The first, and still the most important Egyptian printing house, is the Būlāq Press, which was founded in Cairo by the Wālī (Viceroy of the Sultan of Turkey), Muḥammad 'Alī (1805-1849).

The **Bulāq** Press revived the art of printing already in existence since the French campaign and occupation of that country. Brief as its printing during the campaign was, it nevertheless had profound effects upon Egypt. It opened the road for westernization in the Middle East and perhaps was responsible for the beginning of the Egyptian renaissance after the centuries-long darkness of Turkish rule.

In 1798 when Napoleon invaded Egypt, he had not yet become the despot he was in his later years, and the French Revolution still retained many of its democratic ideals. Thus he posed as the liberator of the Egyptian people for whose edification he brought teachers, archeologists, and other savants.³ Among other innovations he introduced into the country was the printing press with Arabic and Greek fonts.

Napoleon's printing presses in Egypt were to fulfill two important functions: First, they disseminated French learning, culture, and ideas while acquainting both Europeans and the natives with the long-forgotten Egyptian heritage and traditions. Secondly, the presses were used as a useful means of propaganda informing the Egyptians of Napoleon's projects and interests in an effort to win their support against Turkey. It may be said that the seeds of nationalism and democracy were first planted in Egypt by the Napoleonic presses.

In Alexandria the French established two printing houses, the **Presse Orientale** and the **Presse Francaise**. In Cairo they founded **Al-Matba'ah Al-Ahliyah** (The Domestic Press).

In addition to books, several journals and newspapers were published during the years 1789-1801. There was the **Journal des Ecoles Normales** for educational purposes and the **Journal des Nouvelles Politiques** for public affairs. The editor of the latter was Jean Joseph Marcel, a journalist and author, as well as an expert in printing.⁴ He can also be credited for the printing of the first Arabic text in Egypt. Napoleon's proclamation of June 28, 1798, informing the population of Alexandria of his purpose in landing there.

Joseph Emanuel Marc Aurel was another influential figure in the world of printing. He established a French publishing house in Cairo, and was the owner of one of the printing houses originally established in Alexandria. The business in Alexandria was transferred to Cairo after the battle of **Aboukir**. After Napoleon's departure from Egypt., Aurel sold his printing press to the French administration.

Aurel, who was known as "the campaign's publisher," became renowned as the publisher of the French occupation authorities. In addition he published **La Decade Egyptienne**, and **Le Courier de l'Egypte**.

The first issue of **La Decade Egyptienne** appeared on October 1, 1798, and was published every ten days. It specialized in the humanities as well as political and economic problems.

Le Courier de l'Egypte was the first newspaper published in Egypt and may be considered the progenitor of Egyptian journalism. It first appeared in Cairo, August 28, 1798. The last issue is dated June 30, 1801. During this period a total of 116 issues were published. Each page of the newspaper had two columns. It carried local Cairo as well as army news, explained Egyptian customs and mores to the French, and the French program and goals in Egypt to the natives.

Another newspaper, **l'Advertissement**, was started in the latter part of the year 1800. It aimed at informing the Egyptians in four main areas: the French government's projects; the affairs of the **Dīwān** (Egyptian administration); events in Europe and Asia; and numerous items in the world of art and science.

Though the French occupation of Egypt was short-lived, its effect on the country was profound and lasting. The cultural and political contacts with France and other European countries awakened Egypt from its lethargy. One of the manifestations of this awakening was the revival of Arabic literature and ideas, which, in turn, gave the impetus to the feeling of national consciousness.

This budding nationalism found early expression under the leadership of Muhammad 'Alī, an Albanian mercenary in the Sultan's army, who succeeded in becoming the **Wālī** (viceroy) of Egypt, 1805-1849.

Muḥammad 'Alī was a vigorous, determined, and farsighted leader. He was interested in all aspects of Egyptian life, and the political, economic, and military reforms brought about by his firm determination put Egypt on the path of modernization.

He invited French scholars and technicians to Egypt and sent Egyptian students on educational missions to France. Upon their return, they benefited the country with their acquired skills and knowledge. It is said that the **Wālī** requested each fledgling scholar to translate a French text into Arabic, and confined him, within the citadel until this assignment was completed.⁷

Muḥammad 'Alī also established free education and built a number of secular schools and colleges. These included a military, medical, and pharmaceutical college, and the School of Languages whose purpose was to train young men as translators of European languages. The latter school was headed by the brilliant Rifā'ah al-Ṭaḥṭawī (1801-1873), a prolific author and translator of books in many fields.⁸

Muḥammad 'Alī's educational and other reforms were motivated, in the main, by his ambition to build a modern army and navy and increase independence from the Turkish Sultan. This resulted in an intellectual revival in Egypt as a by-product, and aroused the Egyptians to a sense of pride in the past glories of their country and furthered the feeling of nationalism.⁹

One of the outstanding deeds of Muḥammad 'Alī was the establishment of printing presses in Egypt, particularly the **Būlāq Press**, named after the a quarter of Cairo where it was built. There is, however, no consensus of opinion among scholars on his motives for establishing the press, or on the precise date of its foundation.

Some scholars have maintained that the **Būlāq Press** was established for the purpose of editing and publishing classical Arabic literature such as the **Arabian Nights**, and Persian literature translated into Arabic such as **Gulistān-i Sa'dī** and others. These books, however, were not published until seven years after the press was established. Others believe that the press's purpose was to publish textbooks for the schools of higher education.

But these schools were started some time after the establishment of the **Būlāq Press**; in addition, each school such as the medical, engineering, military, etc. — had its own specialized printing press. Still other scholars are of the opinion that the purpose of the press was to advance knowledge in Egypt.

Radwān, however, believes that Muḥammad 'Alī established the **Būlāq Press** as a means for advancing his main political ambitions: to increase his power and become independent of the **Bāb al-'Ālī** (Porte, or the official Turkish Empire). There is considerable evidence to support the view that the primary purpose of the press was to fulfill his military ambitions.

Muḥammad 'Alī's major preoccupation was the creation of a powerful and modern army and navy with which to extend his dominions at the expense of his nominal master, the Sultan. Education, engineering, agriculture, and the economic resources at his disposal were subordinated to the needs of his army. The army needed textbooks, manuals, maps, and other materials which only the

Būlāq Press could furnish. The following evidence is offered in support of Raḍwāns view.

The movement of translation, which was mentioned earlier, began with the translation of books on military tactics, organization, and discipline. Translators of military books and manuals were paid higher salaries than their colleagues; in addition the military translators received various rewards and bonuses. The first books printed at the **Būlāq** Press were of a military nature.

There is no definite proof as to when the **Būlāq** Press was established or began its operations, and the exact date is disputed by various eminent scholars.

In one of his books **Taqwīm al-Nīl**¹¹ (**The Almanac of the Nile**), Amīn Sāmī gives one date for the establishment of the **Būlāq** Press, and in another, **al-Ta'lim fī Miṣr**¹² (**Education in Egypt**), a different date.

Muḥammad Amīn Bahjat, one-time director of the press, writes that it was established in 1820.¹³ Jirjī Zaydān states that the press was established on November 4, 1821.¹⁴ But, as Raḍwān points out, one must distinguish between the erection of the building itself, the installation of the machinery, and the rolling of the presses.

It appears that in 1815, Muḥammad 'Alī decided to establish the **Būlāq** Press, because that year he sent Niqūlā al-Masābikī, a Syrian immigrant, to Italy to learn the art of printing. On his return to Egypt, al-Masābikī brought some printing machinery. A dedication plaque over a main door indicates the building was completed in September of 1820.

The installation of machinery began on September 1, 1821, as indicated by a letter of Muḥammad 'Alī to an official ordering him to appoint al-Masābikī to the **Būlāq** Press and pay him a salary. The installation was completed on January 1, 1822, for on that day the **Khedive** ordered his Ministry of Finance to pay Niqūlā al-Masābikī. In this letter he praised him for the job he had done.

The first book printed by the **Būlāq** Press was an Italian-Arabic dictionary compiled by Father Raphael Rahib. The title page indicates it was printed in 1822.

There is no general agreement as to who was the first director of the **Būlāq** Press. Some writers maintain that it was Niqūlā al-Ṣabbāgh, a Syrian born in Italy who immigrated to Egypt in 1815 and was employed by Muḥammad 'Alī to establish several factories there. There is, however, no documentary evidence

to connect him with the **Bulāq** Press. Raḍwān believes that his activities, his nationality, and the similarity of names have led many to confuse him with Nīqūlā al-Masābikī.¹⁵

Others believe the first director was Father Raphael Rāhib. However, evidence indicates he was teaching Italian in the School of Languages and retired in 1823. It is probable that his frequent visits to the **Bulāq** Press to supervise the printing of his dictionary led to this erroneous belief.

There is no doubt that Nīqūlā al-Masābikī established the press. Official documents fully support this. He was sent abroad for special training; he was responsible for the installation, maintenance and repair of the machinery; and he supervised the casting of type, the managing of the printing process, and the training of printers. Documentary evidence indicates that "Nīqūlā al-Masābikī, the Syrian", had the sole responsibility of managing the operations of the **Bulāq** Press. It appears, however, that once 'Uthmān Nūr al-Dīn was responsible for its administration.¹⁶ The correct name of the printing house is also somewhat confusing. The memorial plaque designates it simply as **Dār al-Ṭibā'ah** (The Printing House). The first work, the Italian-Arabic dictionary, states in the Arabic-Italian part that it was printed by **Bulāq** by **Maṭba'at Ṣāhib al-Sa'ādah** (His Grace's Printing House), which in the Italian language is called **al-Maṭba'ah al-Amīriyah** (The Official Printing House). Today it is known as **Maṭba'at Bulāq** (The Bulaq Printing House).

There are some opinions that the printing house was not originally built where it is today. Zaydān states that it was initially established somewhere else and was later moved to **Bulāq**;¹⁷ other scholars specifically name **Abī Za'bal**, a small town near Cairo, as its original location. There is no evidence to support either view, or, to prove them wrong. The first work printed by the press—the oft mentioned dictionary—clearly gives the location of the press as **Bulāq**. It is, therefore, possible that the press was originally built in some other part of **Bulāq** and later established where it stands today.¹⁸

The **Bulāq** Press occupied the same space for over a century, but in 1946 was nearly doubled in size to an area of 10,549 square meters. Some writers believe the press was equipped with printing presses the French abandoned when they evacuated Egypt in 1801. There is, however, serious doubt that the French—who were allowed by the British to remove all their equipment and property in their evacuation—would abandon their printing presses.¹⁹ There is no reference that they sold them to anyone in Egypt; and there are, as was previously stated, references that al-Masābikī bought three printing machines from Italy. In 1831 their number increased to eight. It seems that eight machines

were sufficient to meet the demands of the **Bulāq** Press. As already stated every advanced school had its own printing plant and was able to satisfy its own needs.

The printing type—Arabic, Turkish, Greek and Italian—were made in Milan. There were three sizes of Arabic letters—large for titles, medium for text, and small for footnotes. Publishing materials such as paper and ink were also purchased from Italy. Later, ink was produced locally, and in 1860 Egypt acquired its first paper factory.

Until 1823 there was no publication law in Egypt, when it was introduced as a result of an unpleasant incident. Bilatti, an Italian teacher, wrote a scurrilous poem called "The Religion of the Orient," which he sent to Niqīlā al-Masābikī—a Christian. Whether it was intended for publication or not, no one knows. Salt, the British Consul, learned of this poem and castigated Muḥammad 'Alī, who severely punished al-Masābikī. In July of 1823, the Wāli issued a law forbidding anyone to publish anything without his personal permission. The law provided severe penalties for its transgressors.²⁰

This law remained unchanged until January 1, 1959, when Sa'īd Pasha issued a new publication law. It had separate provisions for Egyptians and European residents of Egypt. For the Egyptians it provided the following: 1) Permission was required before establishing a press, 2) A copy of the material to be printed should be delivered to the Ministry of Interior and its permission secured prior to printing, and 3) No periodicals or newspapers were to be published without permission.

For European residents of Egypt the law provided the following: 1) an office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established to supervise foreign newspapers published in Egypt, 2) Foreigners could not start a newspaper or establish any printing press without permission, 3) It was forbidden to publish anything critical about the government or damaging to its foreign relations, and 4) Violations of any of these provisions would automatically close down the press.

During Muḥammad 'Alī's era, the **Bulāq** Press flourished. In addition to books and other material, it began the publication of two journals, **Jūrnāl al-Khidīwī** (The Khedive's Journal) and **al-Wāq ā'i' al-Miṣriyah** (The Egyptian Events).

The first journal was started in 1827, was issued daily, and carried the official news of Cairo. Lower and Upper Egypt in Turkish and Arabic. The one hundred copies published were distributed to high government officials.

The other journal, still in publication and considered to be the most influential journal in Egypt,²² came into being on December 3, 1828. At first it was published in Turkish, then in both Turkish and Arabic, and later in Arabic alone.²³ It was issued irregularly: sometimes three times a week, sometimes weekly, and sometimes twice a month. One of its editors and regular contributors was the leading Egyptian intellectual Rifā'ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī.²⁴ His book **Takhṭīs al-Ibriz fī Talkhīs Pāriz (Pure Gold in Summarizing Life in Paris)**, a chronicle of his life in Europe, had created a veritable cultural revolution in Egypt. The journal, of course, provided a wider forum for his thoughts and ideas which had great impact and influence on other Egyptian intellectuals.

Under Muḥammad 'Alī's immediate successors, the **Bulāq** Press fared badly. 'Abbās (1848-54) was a true reactionary. He not only ended, but attempted to reverse the modernization process begun by his grandfather. He curtailed the size and activities of the army, closed advanced schools, and shut down all the factories. The **Bulāq** Press escaped this fate. Its activities, however, were reduced to printing government forms and books for elementary schools. 'Abbās was so disinterested in the Press that, for a year after the death of its director, he did not bother to appoint a new one.²⁵

Under his successor Sa 'īd (1854-63), the **Bulāq** Press fared even worse. To supplement its meager budget, the press began printing, in addition to governmental records and elementary textbooks, for private publishers. In early 1861 its director submitted to Sa 'īd a comprehensive plan for the modernization and expansion of the press. He was promptly fired. Then, for reasons of economy, on July 18, 1861, Sa 'īd closed the **Bulāq** Press.²⁶ In August of the following year he gave it to his friend 'Abd al-Raḥmān Rushdī.

The name was changed to 'Abd al-Raḥmān Rushdī Press, and Rushdī became director. He bought new machines, hired a number of European experts, and expanded its publishing activities.

Sa 'īd's successor, Ismā'il (1863-79), on February 7, 1865, bought back the press from Rushdī and made it part of the Royal Domain. Unlike his two predecessors, Ismā'il's greatest ambition was to modernize Egypt; he was keenly aware of the importance of the **Bulāq** Press in the process of modernization.

The **Matba'at Bulāq al-Saniyah** (Royal **Bulāq** Press), the new name of the press, began to flourish. The hand-driven machinery was replaced by the most modern steam-prepared machines available. New equipment and type were purchased, and European printing specialists were hired. Printing and publishing activities were expanded considerably, and the quality of work was excellent.

The press was part of the Royal Domain for fifteen years, and during that time participated in two international exhibitions: in Paris, 1867, and Vienna, 1873.

As is well-known, Ismā'il's profligate expenditures for the modernization of Egypt nearly exhausted his person as well as the national treasury. His son, Khedive Tawfīq (1879-92), found it necessary to transfer the press from the Royal to the National Domain on June 20, 1880. The Egyptian government changed the name of the press to **Maṭba'at Būlāq al-Amīriyah** (Governmental Būlāq Press). On October 9, 1880, the department which was responsible for the publication of **al-Wāqā'i' al-Miṣriyah** was abolished.²⁸

As stated earlier, Muḥammad 'Alī had, in addition to the **Būlāq** Press, established a number of other official printing presses. The first such press was established in the Medical School at **Abī Za'bal**, near Cairo.²⁹ It had four "stone" lithographic machines for printing medical testbooks and illustrations. The Būlāq Press provided this organization with printers and other expert help, but could not satisfy the need for calligraphers. This press published the first Arabic translation of a medical textbook, **al-Qawal al-Ṣarīḥ fi 'ilm al-tashrīḥ**. Also at the Medical School was an auxiliary press for the publication of scientific materials. The first book published by this press was **al-Kanz al-mukhtār fi kashf al-arādī wa-al-bihār**. In 1837, when the school was moved to Qaṣr al-'Aynī, the printing machinery was transferred to the Būlāq Press.

The School of Artillery—established in 1831—had its own printing press, **Maṭba'ah al-Tubjīyah bi-Turah** (The Artillerymen's Press).³⁰ It published, in Turkish and Arabic, manuals and other material needed by the artillery. Another military press was the **Maṭba'at Dīwān al-Jihādīyah** (The Military Ministry Press).³¹ Printers and other expert workers—who were paid on the Būlāq salary scale—were supplied by the Būlāq Press, in 1833 a new building was erected to house expanded activities, for in addition to specialized military material, the press published **al-Jarīdah al-'Askariyah** (The Military Journal), but in two years the printing press was closed. The machines and tasks were added to those of the Būlāq Press.

Maṭba'at al-Dīwān al-Khidiwī was, perhaps, established before 1832, to print official documents and papers needed by the Accounts Office of the Khedive's treasury. According to Ṣābāt,³² this press and the **Maṭba'at al-Wilayah** (The Citadel Press) were one and the same. Be that as it may, the **Qānūn Nāmah** (The Laws), which was distributed to government officials in Egypt and Sudan, were published by the Citadel Press. From June 15, 1833, to July 3, 1845, the **al-Wāqā'i' al-Miṣriyah** was published by this press. The **Maṭba'at al-Qal'ah** was officially closed in 1846.

The first printing press in Alexandria after the French Campaign, was the **Maṭba'at Ra's al-Tīn**,³⁴ established in 1832 in the Alexandria Arsenal. In addition to printing presses, the plant had a "stone" lithograph and engaged in various publishing activities. In 1833 the company published a history of Napoleon, and **Le Moniteur Egyptien** was also published. The plant was closed near the end of Muḥammad 'Ali's era.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, a growing number of Europeans began migrating to Egypt—particularly Alexandria, an important and increasingly busy seaport. As a result, a number of European printing and publishing houses were established.³⁵

The first post-Napoleonic European printing press in the country was established in Alexandria. The earliest work still in existence is in English—"Egypt, a Descriptive Poem", whose inscription indicates it was printed in Alexandria on July 10, 1824.

Other European presses were later established, the most important of which was the **Imprimerie Francaise** founded in 1860. It was the most modern and efficient press in Egypt at the time. One of the owners was asked to go to Cairo to reorganize the **Būlāq Press**, and in 1867 the **Imprimerie Francaise** won a medal at the International Exposition in Paris. Eventually, it became the most influential European publishing house in Egypt and was instrumental in the diffusion of French language and culture there. The **Imprimerie Francaise** issued a great number of books and other publications. Among the most notable was the first index of the archeological treasures in the Cairo Museum. Between 1924-35 it published the journal **L'Egypte**, which served as the intellectual exchange between Egypt and Egyptians living in France.

The first European press in Cairo was French, it was established in 1842 to publish school books for the teaching of the French language. The first non-governmental Egyptian publishing house was the **Maṭba'ah al-Maymaniyyah** founded in 1856. It is still in existence and known as **Maṭba'at Ra's al-Tīn, Ḥalabi**

Al-Maṭba'ah al-Ahliyyah al-Qibṭiyyah (The Domestic Coptic Press), was established by the Coptic Patriarch Kirrulus IV (Cyril IV, 1854-61). It was the first non-secular Christian press in Egypt; it was also the first printing house to use Egyptian-manufactured type.³⁷ In 1860 the Patriarch sent a mission to England to purchase all necessary machinery and equipment to do every type of printing. He also sent four monks to the **Būlāq Press** to learn every phase of printing.³⁸

It has been observed that the establishment of printing in Egypt created revolutionary changes in Egyptian life. The 1952 revolution had similar effects on the presses. Printing has been expanded, modernized, and reorganized.³⁹

Between 1952 and 1962, the number of printing presses in Egypt increased from 664 to 973, an increase of 43 percent. In 1963 there were 21,500 printers of whom 1,500 were employed by the government.

In August 13, 1956, law created **al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah li-Shi'un al-Matābi' al-Amīriyah** (The General Authority for the Governmental Press), to supervise the government's presses. It has a legal personality, its own budget, and is completely autonomous. During 1957-59 it imported nine modern printing machines and in 1960-61 seventeen automatic presses.

The Cairo University Press, originally housed in the library basement, has been enlarged and moved to a special building. It has been completely renovated and equipped with the most modern printing machinery and equipment. In addition to academic books and other material, it publishes research dissertations which it exchanges with other universities. Similar changes were made in the printing presses of other Egyptian universities.

The Postal Authority Press—considered among the largest in the world—has been housed in a new seven-level building since July of 1961. The printing facilities enable it to print stamps in two primary and four secondary colors.

The Survey Department Press has been completely modernized. It has acquired a number of Entertype machines and is well known for its offset printing.

Al-Dār al-Qawmīyah li-l-Tbā'ah wa-al-Nashr (The National Authority for Printing and Distribution), was established in 1959. It publishes various types of books as well as publications and serials of the Information Department. Among the serials, the most notable are: **Kutub Siyāsīyah (Political Books)**, **Kutub Qawmīyah (National Books)**, **Riwāyāt 'Ālamīyah (International Novels)**, and **Kutub Thāq āfiyah (Cultural Books)**.

In 1962 the plant became part of **al-Mu'assasah al-Misriyah al-'Āmmah li-l-Inbā' wa-al-Nashr w-al-Tawzi' wa-al-Tibā'ah** (The Egyptian General Authority for Information, Distribution, and Publication). In addition to the series mentioned, it is now publishing **al-Kitāb al-Māsī (The Diamond Book)**, **Min al-Sharq wa-al-Gharb (From the East and the West)**, and others.

Another important publishing house is **Dār al-Hilāl**, which publishes in color books, pamphlets, and twenty-five periodicals—some weekly, others monthly. The most important are **al-Hilāl** (The Crescent), **al-Muṣawwar** (The Illustrator), and **Ḥawwā'** (Eve).

Dār al-Maʿārif—the largest private press in the Middle East—was nationalized in 1963 and became part of the **Ahram Journal Association**.

Egypt is today the center of the Arabic book trade in the Middle East. It exports books to every Arab country, as well as to Indonesia and Pakistan. In the United States, Egyptian books are imported under Public Law 480 and through private dealers.

LEBANON :

As stated previously, printing was introduced in Egypt to advance Napoleon and later Muḥammad 'Alī's political plans. In Lebanon printing was begun to further Catholic missionary activities.⁴⁰ To facilitate and promote missionary work among Maronites and non-Catholic Christians, a printing press was established in Rome in 1583 to print religious material in Syriac and Arabic. This was, as far as is known, the first time anything was printed in either language. Printing was introduced in Lebanon shortly thereafter.

In the early seventeenth century, some Maronite monks were sent to Rome to learn the art of printing. Upon their return, they brought with them a printing press to the **Qazhiyā** Monastery.⁴¹ This press was named after the monastery and, is referred to as the **Maṭba 'at Dayr Qazhiyā**. Nothing is known about this press after 1610 when it published **al-Mazāmīr** (The Psalms) in Syriac, its first and last publication. The Oriental Library at the St. Joseph University in Beirut has a copy of it.

For over a century there was no printing press in Lebanon, until 'Abd Allāh Zākhir established one in the Monastery of St. John Sabigh in 1733. He was a Syrian Orthodox who, at the request of Patriarch Athanasius, established in 1706 a printing press in Alepo to combat Catholic propaganda. Zākhir later quarreled with the Patriarch and became an ardent Catholic. As a result of his proselytizing activities, Zākhir incurred the Patriarches wrath. Athanasius asked the Sultān's help against him and Zākhir fled to Lebanon to escape arrest, or worse. In 1728 he entered the Monastery of St. John.

The press which he established there—the **Maṭba 'at Dayr Mār Yūhannā al-Sābiḡ**⁴²—and Zākhir are credited with two "firsts." He cast the first Arabic

type, and the press published the first Arabic book in the Middle East. Eight hundred copies of the book **Kitāb al-mizān** were issued in 1734. After Zākhir's death in 1748, the press began a long decline and in 1797 it ceased publication.

American Protestant missionaries were also active in the Near East and had established a printing press in Malta. In 1834 it was moved to Syria, and on May 8, 1834, its Arabic section was transferred to Beirut. This press—**al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amrīkiyah**⁴⁵ — is still in operation. Political instability caused many problems for the press and in 1839 operations were suspended. After the war between Ibrāhīm Pasha and the Sultan, the press resumed publication, and in 1865 it published the Bible in Arabic.

To counter act Protestant activities in the area, Rome sent a printing press to Beirut in 1848, and the **al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kathūlikīyah** (The Catholic Press)⁴⁵ was begun. In 1854 another, and in 1856 a third, printing press was added to the existing ones. The expanded facilities allowed the press to publish 350,000 copies of three books in four years. It published in four languages: French, Italian, Turkish, and Arabic.

The quantitative as well as qualitative publishing competition between Protestants and Catholics was imitated by private publishing houses (Lebanon has no official press). As a result Lebanon has become, after Egypt, the second largest publishing center in the Middle East.⁴⁶

There are over 370 printing presses in Lebanon, most of which produce quality work. In 1960 the Printers Union began publishing the periodical **al-Tibā‘ah** (The Printing Art) to keep its members informed of the latest techniques and methods of printing.

For its size Lebanon publishes an unusually large number of journals and periodicals. Today there are 49 daily journals of which 39 are in Arabic, 4 in French, 4 in Armenian, and 2 in English; 42 weekly political periodicals of which 38 are in Arabic and two each in French and Armenian; of 117 weekly literary periodicals, 95 are issued in Arabic, 9 in English, 8 in French, and 5 in Armenian.

IRAQ :

Printing was introduced in Iraq relatively late, because of its geographic isolation and unstable political conditions which prevented early contacts with Europe.

Ṣabāt believed⁴⁶ that the first printing was brought by Dominican monks in

1856. In 1859 they established a regular press — **Maṭba‘at al-Ābā’ al-Duminicān**. In 1860 the Association of Oriental Schools contributed 6,000 francs to buy a printing machine from the National Press and sent it to Iraq. This press is still functioning today.

The first official press—**Maṭba‘at al-Wilāyah**—was established in 1859. Its steam-operated printing presses were imported from France. In 1913 it was sold to private publishers.

In 1884 a Jewish publishing house was established which printed s̄acred texts in Hebrew and material to be used for commercial purposes in Arabic.

Maṭba‘at al-Ādāb (The Arts Press), the first in Iraq was established in 1909.

Today there are 8 official and 146 private presses in Iraq. A total of 61 periodicals in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, and English, are published there; of these, 45 are located in Bagdad, and the rest in the provinces. In addition, there are 5 daily journals of which 4 are printed in Arabic and 1 in English.⁴⁸

SYRIA :

The first press in Syria, was established in Aleppo in 1706 by ‘Abd Allāh Zākhir and lasted until 1711. During these years it published ten books.⁵⁰ In 1857 the Maronite Christians started their own press in Aleppo—**Maṭba‘at Ḥalab al-Mārūniyah** (The Aleppo Maronite Press).⁵¹

In 1864 the Ottoman government established the **Maṭba‘at al-Wilāyah al-Sūriyah** (The Syrian Press), to publish, in Turkish and Arabic, the Journal **Jarīdat Sūriyah**. **Al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Askariyah** (Military Press) was short-lived and its work was taken over by the **Maṭba‘at al-Wilāyah**.

The **Maṭba‘at Jarīdat al-Furāt** was the first private secular press in Syria.⁶² It was founded in Aleppo by the Turkish historian Jawdat Pasha, and its publications were in Turkish, Arabic, and Armenian. In addition to publishing the **Jarīdat al-Furāt** it also printed various governmental material.

Other private presses were **al-Maṭba‘ah al-Ḥanafiyah** (Hanafi’s Press), 1882-85, and **maṭba‘at al-inṣāf**, founded in 1910, whose name was changed two years later to **Maṭba‘at al-Tarraqī** (The Development Press). In 1933 this press discontinued newspaper printing and specialized in publishing literary and scientific books.

After Liberation from France, the **Maṭba‘at al-Ḥukūmah** (The Government Press) was reorganized in 1947. **Maṭba‘at al-Jāmi‘ah al-Sūriyah** (The Syrian University Press) was established in 1929.

KUWAIT :

In 1947 the first press — **maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif** — was established in Kuwait, and in 1956 the **Dā‘irat al-Maṭbū‘at wa-al-Nashr** (Department of Printing and Distribution), founded in 1954, acquired its own printing press. In the first year of its operation it printed, on behalf of the Government, over eleven million pieces of printing. There is no doubt that the economic development of the country helped greatly in the expansion of printing : there are now twenty-five private printing presses in Kuwait.⁴⁸

JORDAN :

The first printing press in Jordan was introduced in 1909 in Haifa and published the newspaper **al-Urdun** (The Jordan). With the establishment of the state of Transjordan in 1922, it was moved to its capital, Amman. In 1926 **al-Maṭba‘ah al-Waṭaniyah** (The National Press), was established. It is today publishing many Jordanian periodicals and newspapers. There are now over 106 presses in Jordan.⁴⁹

ARABIA :

Al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amīriyah which published **Ṣahīfat al-Hijāz** (Hedjaz Journal) was the first press established in Arabia, in 1884. A second press which published the newspaper **al-Qiblah** was started in 1919.

From 1926, when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formed by the warrior-king Ibn Saoud, until 1937 not much happened in the way of printing in Arabia. That year, however, the king sent a number of students to Egypt to learn printing and founded a government press. As a result of the educational needs of the country and training activities of Aramco, a large press was established in 1961.

Although the purpose for which Muḥammad ‘Ali established the **Būlāq** Press might be likened to a pyramid, with military education as the base and civil education as the apex of distant aspiration, the fact remains that through the creation of a modern press in Egypt the Middle East was brought forward from the dark ages of intellectual neglect toward an appreciation of modern civilization.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction To Bibliography* (New York and Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 2.
- ² Khalīl Ṣabāt, *Tārīkh al-ṭibā'ah fi al-sharq al-'Arabī* (Cairo : Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1966), p. 19.
- ³ Ibrāhīm 'Abduh, *Tārīkh al-ṭibā'ah wa-al-ṣihāfah fi Miṣr Khilāl al-Hamlah al-Faransīyah, 1798-1801*, 2nd ed. (Cairo : Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1949), p. 24.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 30-33.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 36.
- ⁶ Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Boston : Beacon Press, 1962), p. 247.
- ⁷ Umar al-Disūqī, *Fī al-adab al-ḥadīth* (Cairo : Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1954-55), Vol. I, p. 56.
- ⁸ Sāmī A. Ḥannā, "The Arabic Renaissance or al-Nahḍa and the Development of the Novel," *Islamic Culture*, 45 (October, 1971), p. 222.
- ⁹ Luwis 'Awad, *Tārīkh al-fikr al-Miṣrī al-ḥadīth, al-khalfiyah al-tārīkhīyah* (Cairo : Dār al-hilāl, 1969), Vol. I, p. 79.
- ¹⁰ Abū al-Futūḥ Aḥmad Raḍwān, *Tārīkh maṭba'at Būlāq* (Cairo : al-Maṭba'ah al-Amīriyah, 1953), p. 36.
- ¹¹ Amīn Sāmī, *Taqwīm al-Nūl* (Cairo : 1938), p. 325.
- ¹² ———, *al-Ta'lim fi Miṣr* (Cairo : 1917), p. 12.
- ¹³ Raḍwān, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
- ¹⁴ Jirjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughah al-'Arabīyah* (Beirut : Dār Maktabat al-ḥayāh, 1967), Vol. IV, p. 407.
- ¹⁵ Raḍwān, p. 51.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 54-60.
- ¹⁷ Zaydān, p. 407.
- ¹⁸ Ṣabāt, p. 154.
- ¹⁹ Raḍwān, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 488-90.
- ²¹ Aḥmad Ḥaysayn al-Ṣawī, "Tatawwur al-tashrī' lil-maṭbū'āt fi Miṣr al-ḥadīthah," *Majallat al-Maktabah al-'Arabīyah* (Cairo : al-Maktabah al-'Arabīyah, 1963, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 28.
- ²² Ibrāhīm 'Abdūh, *Tārīkh al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣrīyah* (Cairo : al-Maṭba'ah al-Amīriyah, 1948), p. 21.
- ²³ *ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁴ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, **Tārīkh al-tarjamah wa-al-ḥarakah al-thāqāfiyah fi ‘aṣr Muhammad ‘Alī** (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1951), pp. 119-39.

²⁵ Raḍwān, op. cit., p. 156-57.

²⁶ ibid., p. 170.

²⁷ ibid., p. 174-84.

²⁸ ibid., pp. 185-215.

²⁹ Ṣābāt, op. cit., pp. 167-68.

³⁰ Raḍwān, op. cit., p. 358.

³¹ Ṣābāt, op. cit., p. 167.

³² Raḍwān, op. cit., p. 363.

³³ Ṣābāt, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

³⁴ Raḍwān, op. cit., pp. 359-60.

³⁵ Ṣābāt, op. cit., pp. 171-72.

³⁶ ibid., pp. 174-75.

³⁷ Mahmoud al-Sheniti, **al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī bayna al-mādī wa-al-hādīr** (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmīyah lil-ṭibā‘ah wa-al-nashr, n.d.), p. 203.

³⁸ Aziz S. Atiya, **A History of Eastern Christianity** (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 105.

³⁹ Ṣābāt, op. cit., pp. 283-92.

⁴⁰ Louis Cheikho, “al-Ṭā‘ifah al-Mārūnīyah wa-al-Rabbānīyah al-Yasū‘īyah:” **al-Mashriq**, Vol. XXI, pp. 6-69.

⁴¹ Ṣābāt, op. cit., pp. 36-38.

⁴² ibid., pp. 39-43.

⁴³ ibid., pp. 47-50.

⁴⁴ ibid., pp. 50-57.

⁴⁵ ibid., pp. 91-97.

⁴⁶ Rufā‘īl Buttī, “al-Ṭibā‘ah fi al-‘Irāq,” **Majallat lughat al-‘Arab** (Iraq, 1926), Vol. IV, p. 150.

⁴⁷ Abd Allāh Ḥusayn, **al-Sihāfah wa-al-ṣuḥuf** (Cairo: Maṭba‘at lajnat al-bayān al-‘Arabī, 1948), pp. 66-120.

⁴⁸ Ṣābāt, op. cit., pp. 343-45.

⁴⁹ ibid., pp. 325-26.

⁵⁰ Louis Cheikho, **al-Ādab al-‘Arabīyah fi al-Qarn al-tāsī‘ ashri** (Beirut: 1924), Vol. I, p. 78.

⁵¹ ———, “Tārīkh fann al-ṭibā‘ah fi al-Mashriq,” **Majallat al-Mashriq**, 1901, Vol. IV, p. 878.

⁵² Filīb Tarrāzi, **Tārīkh al-Sihāfah al-‘Arabīyah** (Beirut: 1944), Vol. I, p. 67.