



## An Iranian Intellectual in Istanbul: Mirza Malkum Khan and Reform Proposal for the Ottoman Arabic Alphabet

*İstanbul'da İranlı Bir Entelektüel: Mirza Malkum Han ve Osmanlı Arap Alfabeti  
İçin Reform Teklifi*

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### Abstract

*Istanbul became a center that attracted reformist intellectuals from various Muslim lands in the Tanzimât era (1839-1876). Among these transregional cosmopolitan intellectuals were Mirza Malkum Khan and Mirza Fethali Akhundzâde, who revived a discussion on reforming the Arabic alphabet in the 1860s. They regarded the Ottoman capital as the center of the entire Muslim World to such an extent that the most suitable place to initiate a most radical and vital reform in the history of Islam until that day. Mirza Akhundzâde and Mirza Malkum Khan aimed to draw the attention of Iranian and Ottoman public opinion synchronously to an inevitable alphabet reform, and the latter tried to legitimize it through the imperial patent to promote his reform project. An Iranian intellectual of Armenian origin, Malkum made a vast political circle through the westernized bureaucratic elites in Istanbul to officially get the Sublime Porte to approve his reform project. This article examines Malkum Khan's political activities in Istanbul, around his reform project that the first alphabet reform project submitted to the Sublime Porte in light of Ottoman documents.*

**Keywords:** *Mirza Malkum Khan, Mirza Fethali Akhundzâde, Arabic alphabet, Ottoman Script, Tanzimât.*

### Özet

*Tanzimât döneminde (1839-1876) İstanbul, farklı ülkelerden reformcu Müslüman entelektüelleri çeken bir merkez hâline geldi. Bu sınır-aşırı kozmopolit entelektüeller arasında, 1860'larda Arap alfabesinin islâh edilmesi üzerine bir tartışma başlatan Mirza Malkum Han ve Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde de vardır. O*

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*döneme kadar bir ölçüde İslâm tarihindeki en radikal ve hayatî reformu başlatmak için Osmanlı payitahtını bütün Müslüman dünyadaki en uygun merkez olarak görüyorlardı. Mirza Ahundzâde ve Mirza Malkum Han, Osmanlı ve İran kamuoyununun dikkatini eş zamanlı olarak kaçınılmaz bir alfabe ıslahına çekmeyi amaçladılar ve sonucusu, reform projesininin teşvik edilmesini Sultanın beratı yoluyla meşrûlaştırmayı denedi. Ermeni kökenli İranlı bir entelektüel olarak Malkum Han, reform projesini Bâbiâlî'ye resmî olarak kabul ettirmek için İstanbul'da Batlaşmış bürokratik seçkinler aracılığıyla geniş bir siyasi ağ oluşturdu. Bu makale Malkum Han'ın İstanbul'daki siyasi faaliyetlerini, Osmanlı Devleti'ne sunulmuş ilk somut alfabe ıslahı projesi etrafında, Osmanlı arşiv belgelerinin ışığında tetkik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Mirza Malkum Han, Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde, Arap alfabesi, Osmanlı yazısı, Tanzîmât.*

On the eve of World War I, a debate for a cultural reform embarked upon the Tanzîmât Era (1839-1876) reignited among intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire, where the public literacy rate was meager. As a result of these discussions in the press, Enver Pasha, Minister of War, attempted to apply a new letter system for the army that later became known as the military alphabet (*ordu elifbası*) in Turkish historiography. As distinct from the classical Ottoman script, this new method utilized a separated letter system (*hurûf-ı munfasıla*), where words are written as they are spoken, some letters are modified to match with Turkish vowels, and some new letters are also introduced when needed. The practical objective of such a reform was to help illiterate soldiers rapidly and accurately learn how to read and write. More importantly, the slightest margin of error in military correspondences in the wartimes must have been out of the question, especially in the battle zone. However, the existing alphabet was insufficient, especially in writing toponyms, proper nouns, or certain terminological words transmitted from foreign languages into Ottoman Turkish.<sup>1</sup>

Before Enver Pasha's project, which was the first and the last implemented alphabet and orthographic reform in the Ottoman Empire, a group of intellectuals addressed the question in the press. In an article published in the *Yeni Yazı* (New Script) journal, the mouthpiece of the Association of Letters' Amendment (*Islah-ı Hurûf Cemiyeti*), the author advocated the method of separating letters (*hurûf-ı munfasıla*), while also proposing to amend some letters in the Ottoman alphabet (*Yeni Yazı* 1, 22 Rebiyüllâhir 1332/ 20 March 1914, p. 1). However, the journal mentioned no explicit reference of

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent publication on the Ottoman military alphabet, see Karakuş (2018, pp.443-484).

inspiration for this new method. The letters published in *Yeni Yazı* were introduced to the readers as an ideal Turkish alphabet prepared by a committee with Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha at the helm. The Members of the Committee, in their declaration, had taken the matter as a question of mass education. For the aimed reform, the alphabet needed to be revised through the ways such as the inclusion of new letters with unique shapes and Turkish vowels. The lack of a few Turkish vowels was one of the major defects of the Ottoman script caused by the structure of the Arabic alphabet. The focal points for the reform were as follows: first, how letters and figures would be aligned, and second, how the standardization of the letters used within the text would be. With this alphabet and script reform for the Turkish language, the committee expected reading and writing to spread to the illiterate masses.

On the other hand, the secondary reasons speculated by *Yeni Yazı* such as diversification and the aesthetic style of the letters were also factors. The Commission of Science (*Encümen-i İlmî*) argued that the letters must have their own apparent and specific shape and also decided that the letters should be written separately rather than adjoined, implying insistently that *hurûf-ı munfasıla* was inevitable for the mass education. Furthermore, the Association of Letters' Amendment (*İslah-ı Hurûf Cemiyeti*) published a sample of the alphabet designed for the readers (see appendix I). There are enough hints to think that the story of how this alphabet, which the members of the Science Commission claimed to have collected from the samples obtained with a two-year study, came into existence to date back to the last century (*Yeni Yazı*, p.2). Although they did not mention whom they were inspired by, it is clear that previous linguists such as Shemseddin Sami were among the scholars they inspired.<sup>2</sup>

When assessing the official historical narrative, it is seen that the transition to the Latin alphabet in 1928 resulted from many failed attempts to reform the alphabet and script since the Tanzîmât Era, in other words, the Kemalist alphabet revolution of 1928 is regarded as an inevitable reform in modern Turkey. Nevertheless, no experimented alphabet or script reform exists in the course of the Turkish modernization period, except Enver Pasha's partial try. Instead, this issue remained a series of projects lost in the vicious cycles of Ottoman bureaucracy. For the most part, conventional historiography maintains to address the alphabet revolution as a part of inevitable

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<sup>2</sup> Shemseddin Sami Bey, is cited as the pioneer of reform in Turkish script. He was famous for his various studies in the relevant field since the Tanzimat Era and even designed an alphabet for Albanians using the Latin alphabet as a reference. See Trix (1999, pp.255-272)

westernization, on the one hand, the revisionist historiography comments on the transition to the Roman alphabet as a predilection regarding secular nation-state building on the other. The revisionist historiography refers to the alphabet and language revolution as one of the major components of the abolition of a cosmopolitan empire in the process of building a secular nation-state. It narrates this elimination as the most radical cultural split of the modern nation-state from the imperial heritage. Discussions on the alphabet are still popular among historians when addressing the continuities and ruptures in the history of modern Turkey and produce either historicist or ahistorical approaches through their point of historiographic standpoint.<sup>3</sup>

The initial debates on *elifba* emerged regardless of any nation-state vision among the Ottoman intellectuals for the Empire's fate.<sup>4</sup> In Turkish national historiography, the retrospective narrative on the history of the alphabet issue includes exaggerated comments and speculative conclusions based on scant shreds of archival documents. The local and reductionist approach ignored the crucial contribution of the foreign Muslims of Iranian and Caucasian origin, who imported the alphabet question into the Ottoman Empire. However, the question of reforming the alphabet and script was regarded by Muslim intellectuals abroad as a common issue of the entire Muslim world, not only the Ottoman-Turkish, in the 19th century. They were Mirza Fethali Akhundzâde, a Caucasian official in Russian Empire, and Mirza Malkum Khan, an Iranian intellectual seeking political asylum in Istanbul, who first started the discussions on the alphabet reform in the Tanzimat period in the 1860s.

### **Origins of the Alphabet Question in the Ottoman Empire: Reformation or Replacement of the Arabic Alphabet**

Until the mid-19th century, the attempts of the Ottoman elites to make the Turkish language easier to read and write focused on providing an infrastructure for building a modern bureaucracy and popularizing a modern education. Moreover, the advent of new communication instruments in the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War prompted more explicitly disputes among the bureaucrats on how the telegraphic reports should have been scripted in Ottoman-Turkish. Therefore, the appearance of telegraphy became grounds for raising the alphabet question among the Ottoman reformers. The

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<sup>3</sup> For general information on this topic see and an all-encompassing bibliography see Ertem (1995, pp.39-44). Also for the discussions on alphabet change in general, see Lewis (1999, pp.27-34); Ülkütaşır (1973, pp.17-59).

<sup>4</sup> For discussions on the alphabet in the Ottoman press, see (Yorulmaz, 1995).

first initiatives began with the proposals on possible facilitation and standardization in compliance with written and printed Turkish.<sup>5</sup> It was soon realized, especially by Münif Efendi, an Ottoman intellectual-bureaucrat, that a reformation restricted only to the script would be inadequate in facilitating reading and writing in the educational system. The figure who drew Münif Efendi's attention to the alphabet issue was Mirza Fethali Akhundzāde<sup>6</sup>, a Caucasian Turkish-Tatar who served in Tbilisi under the Russian bureaucracy.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to prevalent opinion in Turkish historiography, the idea of reformation in the alphabet and letters was initially not devised by Münif Efendi himself. However, an enlightened Ottoman bureaucrat, Münif Efendi, released Akhundzāde's proposal of alphabet reform to the public through the Ottoman Society for Science (Cemiyet-i İlmîye-yi Osmani).<sup>8</sup> Following the

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<sup>5</sup> See Mardin (2000, p.264). A textbook was prepared following a new writing style and intonation, which made it easier to understand vowels such as *elif*, *vav*, and *i* that affect different utterances, by Mehmet Rushdi so that children could quickly learn calligraphy of various scripts in Ottoman Turkish without any instruction. In order to utter the sounds fitting Turkish using *Vav*,  $\vee$  and  $\wedge$  signs would be used. When put on the letter *u* or *ü*, when put under *o* or *ö* would be uttered. This simple combination facilitated the four different utterances of the *vav*. This new and simple type of reading, with other practical features, was the work of Fuad and Djevdet Pashas and was attributed to grammar prepared in 1851 (Bianchi, 1860, pp.335-336).

<sup>6</sup> Akhundzāde was one of the pioneers of secularism in the Muslim world in the 19th century and among the top thinkers seeing religion as the primary barrier to social progress. During the formative period of his ideas, Akhundzāde was thought to have been indirectly affected by the philosophical arguments of the French enlightenment through the Russian and Orientalist intellectual milieu. (Sanjabi, 1995, 39). It is thus argued that the constitutionalist tendencies in Azerbaijan stemmed from the tacit intellectual atmosphere of opposition in Russia, and Akhundzāde's intellectual development rests on the cultural institutions in Russia. (Memedov, 1978, p.21). For an assessment from a nationalist interpretation, see Caferoğlu (1940, pp.69-85); For an effort to interrelate Mirza Akhundzāde and Münif Pasha from a modernist and progressive perspective, see Aydın (1990, pp.222-225).

<sup>7</sup> For the most part, the analysis of consecutive proposals of Münif Efendi, Mirza Fethali Akhundzāde, and Mirza Malkum Khan on the alphabet reform in the 1860s remained limited to the press coverage. These examinations deprived of archival sources caused too much incorrect and incomplete information. For discussions in the press, see Tansel (1953, pp.223-249).

<sup>8</sup> (Algar, 1969, p.116 It is clear that Akhundzāde was the first to raise the issue to Ottoman public opinion. With reference to Münif Efendi's own words in a volume of *Mecmuā-i Fünūn* in July 1863, one can assert that Akhundzāde personally made his proposal to the Sublime Porte: "Akhundzāde Fethali, who served for His Excellency Great Grand Duke Michel, Provincial Governor of Caucasia as his Muslim languages interpreter, came to Der-saadet (Istanbul)..." (Budak, 2011, p.259). For the Ottoman Society for Science see *Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*, (BOA)..A.MKT.MHM.221/33 (24 Zi-l-ka'de 1277/ 3 Juin 1861). The alphabet question was one of the first topics discussed in the Ottoman Society for Science, whose primary mission was to promote science and education in the Ottoman realm.

transmission of the reform proposal to the Sublime Porte by the Russian Embassy in Istanbul, Akhundzāde visited Istanbul to present his new script method directly to the Tanzīmāt bureaucrats.<sup>9</sup> The Sublime Porte assigned Münif Efendi as the head and founding member of the Ottoman Academy (*Encümen-i Dâniş*) to examine the proposal. One of the primary reasons why the Sublime Porte tasked Münif Efendi with such a reform project that covered the entire Muslim world must undoubtedly have been his excellent command of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish – also known as “the three languages” (*elsine-i selāse*).<sup>10</sup> In his articles published in the 1860s, Münif Efendi proposed that punctuation with five new phonetic signs could also be a solution. Furthermore, the essential characters used to facilitate reading would be written in a row of letters. His reform proposal, inspired by Akhundzāde, also included writing and printing words using separated letters (*hurūf-ı mukatta*). In a conference held by the Ottoman Society for Science on May 1, 1862, Münif Efendi, referring to Akhundzāde’s proposal, opened some aspects of the issue to the discussion while adding his own views (Levend, 1960, pp. 254-267). Following the sessions held by the Society, the need for a script reform was unanimously agreed upon, and the content of the conference and the alphabet debate were shared with the public through two articles in *Mecmuā-yi Fünūn* (Journal of Sciences), the bulletin of the Society. In these articles, Münif Efendi proposed two options: the first was to keep the words in their original form while adding vowel points and introducing some new signs; the second was to use isolated letters while adding vowels between them as in foreign languages. He preferred the second alternative since the first would make reading and book printing more difficult (see Budak, 2004; Algar, p.116).

Münif Efendi was a fervent advocate of adopting new technologies such as telegraphy by the Sublime Porte. During the days he shed light on alphabet reform through the Ottoman Society for Science, he penned pieces that introduced and promoted the electric telegraph (Davison, 1990, p.140-141). It was not only Akhundzāde’s proposal that sparked a discussion among the Ottoman bureaucrats about the alphabet and script reform but also the introduction of the telegraph as a new medium of communication.<sup>11</sup> However,

<sup>9</sup>BOA.HR.MKT.453/61 (*Hijri* 5 Rebiü'l-âhir 1280/ 19 September 1863). The Sublime Porte awarded Akhundzāde with the *Mejidiye* order in the fourth degree for his inventing (*ihtirā'*) and composing (*te'lif*) a book on the new script (*cedīd hatt*).

<sup>10</sup> Besides, he is considered to know German, French, English and Greek (Türkgeldi, 2013, p.358).

<sup>11</sup> The Ottoman bureaucracy needed a new form of the script due to this new communication tool, and a recent publication discusses it around the question of telegraphy and typography. (Kuzuoğlu, 2020, p.415-418).

the stimulus for an alphabet reform was not confined to the development of the printing press and the telegraph's introduction into the Empire. First of all, the bureaucratic elite evaluated this multidimensional issue under the question of literacy and education. Before the advent of telegraphy, in the first phase of the Tanzimât period, a transformation in the style of the script of the Ottoman bureaucracy was already underway. (Akyıldız, 1995, pp.220-237). After all these overlapping problems, a dispute between the French officials in Ottoman postal service and the Turkish bureaucrats on how the telegraphic signs should be scripted was temporarily resolved by printing the signs with Arabic letters in compliance with Turkish spelling. Additionally, in the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs correspondences during the 1860s, it was observed that telegraphic codes were sometimes converted into Turkish using the Roman alphabet.<sup>12</sup> As such, the Ottoman bureaucracy typically pursued the pattern of French-Turkish transcription. The telegraphs were translated, if required, by the officials using the French-Turkish transcription method, including the accent sign, such as the following: *üç/utch*, *başıbozuk/bachi-bozouk*, *veyāhād/ve-ia hout*, *irāde/iradé*, *āliyyeleri/aliéléri*. For such a method, there were available to use several dictionaries and grammatical textbooks in French orientalist philology.<sup>13</sup> In the bureaucratic correspondences, the transcription of Arabic letters into the Latin alphabet became a more frequently practiced method in the last quarter of the 19th century than in the earlier period of the Tanzimat.<sup>14</sup> Practical needs of the bureaucracy and the recruitment of foreigners as communication officers in Ottoman civil service during the Tanzimât Era are the likely reasons for some official documents inscribed in Turkish using the Latin alphabet. It would be inappropriate to

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<sup>12</sup> Due to various telegraphic communication problems, some foreign cablers were using the French language during the transfer of cablegrams to the Ottoman Empire. In 1856, communication in French using the Latin alphabet was replaced by Turkish communication in Arabic letters. (Yazıcı, 1983, p.755-756). For instance, it was recorded that some copies of telegraphs from the Governor of Belgrade (*Muhâfız-ı Belgrad*) dated 1867 were transcribed in Turkish using Roman letters. It is plausible to think that this was related to practical needs and the presence of foreign telegraph officers. BOA.HR.SYS.1403/4. see., attc 2. Nevertheless, while the telegraphs were still being scripted using Arabic letters, it was still hard to interpret foreign officers' preference to record some Turkish documents using the Roman alphabet since the mid-1860s, when the debate on the script preoccupied the bureaucratic agenda, beyond that of a practical solution instead of learning Ottoman-Turkish.

<sup>13</sup> When the telegraph was introduced in the Ottoman Empire, there was an entrenched transcription method both in grammar textbooks and dictionaries. For example, one of the most frequently referred sources for transcription methods into Turkish was a grammar textbook of the Paris School of Oriental Languages. see, Dubeux (1856, pp.1-12).

<sup>14</sup> For relevant examples, see BOA.HR.TO. 531/42; 534/100; 550/63; 553/26; 553/28.

approach the heated debates on letters and spelling in the second half of the 19th century without considering the correspondence problems that arose due to new technology and bureaucratic transformation. The first debates had concentrated on spelling well before the alphabet reform.

Understanding the debate on script and alphabet in the Muslim World of the 19th century requires a closer look at the deep interaction between the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Russia. Such interaction resulted from the circulation of ideas and intellectuals as well as refugees. The Ottoman capital was a center of attraction for intellectuals from all over the Muslim world during the second half of the century. Istanbul became an asylum for intellectuals, such as Mirza Malkum Khan, Mirza Aga Khan Kirmanī, and Sayyid Djmal al-Dīn Afghani, who all once opposed the regimes of their countries. As remarked by Homa Nategh, the first of these intellectuals was an Armenian by origin, the second was a *Babi*, and the third was a heretic (Nategh, 1993, p.45). Therefore, the agendum of Ottoman-Iranian relations during the 1860s was not only on border issues but also on political and religious asylum seekers.<sup>15</sup> In the meantime, the ideology of Panislamism (*ittihād-ı Islām*), which promoted a joint action and cultural union of the Muslim world, was in fervent demand among these transregional Muslims. Panislamism later gained a more political form and content, evolving into an official diplomatic strategy.<sup>16</sup> Istanbul was also the center that attracted Russian Muslims who were escaping from the Tsarist autocracy and the reformist Muslims in Russia, known as the *Djedidists*. Among the intellectual refugees coming to Ottoman soil from Iran and Russia, some were affected by the constitutionalist movements in Europe.<sup>17</sup> In short, the reformist ideas were in circulation across the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Iran in the second half of the century, and unofficial intermediaries were often on the stage. One of the non-Ottoman Muslims who influenced Istanbul's intellectual life in the second half of the century was Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzāde (Akhundov).

Akhundzāde, while serving the provincial bureaucracy of Tbilisi with the rank of captain in the 1850s, focused on the issue of reforming the Arabic

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<sup>15</sup> *Babis* were the major group among those coming from Iran to Turkey since they were in opposition to the Shah regime. The Sublime Porte settled these political and religious refugees in various regions by surveilling them. They even interrogated some Iranian dissidents who were suspected of causing unrest in Istanbul or other cities. BOA.HR.SYS.2930/106; İ.MMS.36/1475; BOA.A.MKT.MHM. 422/77.

<sup>16</sup> On Iranian Panislamism see Kia (1996, pp.30-52).

<sup>17</sup> For a comparison of constitutionalist movements in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, see Zarinebaf (2008, p.168-169).



script and sent a reform petition to the Sublime Porte through the Russian Embassy in Istanbul (Rüstemli, 2016, p.163). He was also an interpreter in prestigious Russian scientific institutions, such as the Imperial Geographical Society, and even he became a member of the Archeological Commission in 1864 (Memedov, p.30).

It is plausible that Akhundzāde's ideas on reforming the Arabic alphabet and spelling took their inspiration from the reformation that the Russian language had undergone since the era of Peter the Great.<sup>18</sup> In addition to his intellectual background, his time in Caucasia must have pushed him to such a mission since the scientific institutions of Imperial Russia were carrying out investigations on the languages of Caucasian people and performing transcription studies on scripts and alphabets (Jersild, 2002, p.80-81). The "taming by education" project was one of the approaches adopted to integrate the conquered Muslim societies into the imperial system following Catherine the Great. Russian autocracy cooperated with educated Muslims in bureaucratic and scientific institutions to provide Caucasian peoples with a modern script and alphabet in the 19th century. Various applications made by Akhundzāde to Russian provincial authorities in Tbilisi during his time as an official show that his initial pursuit was to create a body of literature specific to the Turkic people in Caucasia and that he began to think on the issue of letter and spelling as well. In a petition that he submitted to the provincial administration in Caucasia in 1853, he stated that before the Russians arrived in the region, the Muslim and Turkic (*Tatar*) peoples could not develop pure and specific literature due to Iranian and Ottoman influences in the region. At the end of this search, he again presented his new *elifba* design to the local administration in Caucasia; in his successive petition dated September 23, 1857, he touched upon spelling and the alphabet issues. Akhundzāde, who started his argument concerning the shortcomings of the Muslim alphabet, stressed that this alphabet was almost similar to hieroglyphic. Many letters that were needed to utter all sounds in the words were absent in the alphabet. Furthermore, many vowels would not be written with the consonants that should be uttered when enunciating those vowels; instead, the readers were expected to estimate them on their own. It took readers years to specialize in accurately guessing these words and this caused them to waste valuable time. One of the main reasons for this default is that many letters were similar in shape and definable only by dots. Furthermore, many dots omitted by scribes

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<sup>18</sup> Akhundzāde regarded Peter the Great as exemplary progressive enlightened monarchs like Louis XIV and Friedrich the Great (Sanjabi, p. 58; Ahundov, 2009, p.63-64)

were expected to be guessed by readers. Because of this difficulty in spelling, Muslims' literacy rates remained extremely low; according to Akhundzāde, Muslim children hated *elifba* just like algebra and could not acquire a command of the written language even after many years of education, while Muslim women were almost illiterate. Therefore, he realized that this spelling and alphabet could not last forever and a change in the alphabet was inevitable. In his new alphabet design, Akhundzāde considered discarding all the dots, adding new vowels, and inventing esthetic and unique figures. For each letter, in this sense, besides inventing a special figure without using dots, he also created punctuation marks for clarity in spelling and meaning; thus, designing methods to easily teach reading and writing to those who were willing to learn. To this end, he set up new practical alphabets in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish-Tartaric, which were not wholly dissimilar to the previous versions, but compliant with each of these languages' characters. He was aware that Muslim statesmen might disapprove of such an alphabet change that would revolutionize Muslim literature since it could render millions of books useless. Akhundzāde first presented his alphabet reform proposal to the Consulate General of Iran in Tbilisi; if Iran would not dare to accept such a "revolution," he stated that he would also offer his proposal to the Sublime Porte.<sup>19</sup>

Iran's response was not favorable; therefore, Akhundzāde sought to present his proposal in Persian to the Sublime Porte through Apollinariï Petrovich Buteneff, the Russian chargé d'affaires in Istanbul. His goal was to have the project come up for discussion as his private proposal. Should his proposal be accepted, he decided to ask for one-fifth of the publisher's revenue for the duration of fifteen years as a reward.<sup>20</sup> Having spent considerable effort on the alphabet issue after 1857, Akhundzāde was willing to send his project to European governments and orientalists in both Russia and Europe (Akhundov, 1963, p.22; 2005, p.45-46). He thus aimed to raise the issue to the public in countries with influential orientalist schools, as well as colonies with Muslim populations.

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<sup>19</sup> For all his thoughts, see Akhundov (1963, pp.14-16); (*Dokladnaia Zapiska Kapitana Mirzy Fet-Ali Akhundova*) ; Akhundzade (2005, pp. 15-19; 30-38). He developed all these arguments deriving from his life experience. See "Arabca, Farsca ve Türkceden İbaret Olan İslam Dillerinin Yazısı Üçün Yeni Elifba"

<sup>20</sup> He requested this sum of money transferred to him via the Russian Embassy in Istanbul (Akhundov, 1963, p.17, 21) (*V vıysokiy divan blistatelnoi party ot kapitana Mirzy Feth-Ali Akhundova*, 12 Novembre 1857); (Akhundzade, *Mektublar*, 2005, p.37-38).

Akhundzāde's correspondences demonstrate that he tried to carry out the reform project with the Russian administration's approval and knowledge. However, his intention to present the project to the British, French, Austrian, and Prussian administrations shows that he believed that his reform project could be actualized globally – namely in the entire Muslim world with the help of European powers and Muslim states. Briefly stated, he imagined the use of a single alphabet in the entire Muslim World. Though he wanted to present the proposal to Istanbul in person in 1857, it was not possible for him to do so until 1863. However, it is likely that he was able to communicate his proposal to Istanbul in advance of this date, as Mūnif Efendi had opened a discussion on the issue to the Community by 1863. Akhundzāde believed that it was only the Caliphate who could resolve the alphabet issue and that Istanbul was the only city appropriate to be the center of such a historic reform.<sup>21</sup>

The primary arguments of *Elifbā-i Jadīd* (New Alphabet), in which Akhundzāde formulated his views on the alphabet and spelling, were the elimination of the *elifba*'s shortcomings, paired with the need for intellectual innovation and educational reform in the East. This argument converged on the scientific narrative of Russian imperial policy toward Caucasia. Akhundzāde emphasized that the alphabet firstly needed to be simplified in order to increase literacy rates. Many letters in the alphabet were similar to each other, and they could only be distinguished with a series of dots; therefore, when a dot is misplaced or mistakenly skipped, the word's letters became difficult for the children to understand and consequently, the texts were misread by the reader. Hence, dots were needed to write the words, but it was impossible to do this without lifting the pen. Second, except for three tense/lax vowels, other vowels were not scripted but were spoken when read. Third, there was a specific problem with the letter *kaf*. The "kaf" in Arabic was spoken often as "nun" and "n" in Turkish; however, it was spoken as both "k" and "g" in Persian. Akhundzāde pointed out such shortcomings of the Arabic alphabet and presented his alphabet with two fundamental changes. First, all dots would be discarded, and specific signs and lines would be added, which would aid fluent writing by enabling the writer not to lift the pen. Second, to facilitate and ensure accurate pronunciation, short and long *harekes* would be added to the end of each letter (Kia, 1995, p.429-430; Algar, *op. cit.*, 117-118. Also, Ahundzāde, 2005, pp.15-19). The idea of a standard alphabet and script

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<sup>21</sup> (Ahundzāde, 2005, p.17). Although this letter was dated back to 1857 by Azerbaijani historians, its date is supposed to be 1860 since he wrote that he presented his project to the Science Society and it "was not taken notice of." For details see Akpınar (1980, pp.35-37).

based on establishing a common cultural platform across the Muslim world came to Istanbul with his project.

Akhundzāde travelled to Istanbul in May 1863 (Ahundov, 1963, pp.24-25; Akpınar, pp. 38-39). It was reported that his suggestion on the alphabet was transmitted to Grand Vizier Āli Pasha through the Russian Embassy. The proposal was submitted to the Ottoman Society for Science. As a result of its review, the Society disapproved of Akhundzāde's proposal as it could cause ancient Islamic works to fade away and it did not allow for a gradual transition due to its difficulty to print.<sup>22</sup> Rather than an immediate and total change in the Arabic alphabet, he thought that the old elifba should be kept in the curriculum for a transition; nevertheless, the objection stemmed from the Society's potentially perceiving Akhundzāde's proposal as a total alphabet change, instead of a reform (Akpınar, p.126). Meanwhile, Mirza Malkum Khan, who was corresponding with Akhundzāde, had just visited Istanbul (Memedov, pp.133-134).

### **Malkum Khan's Reform Project in the Arabic Alphabet**

Malkum Khan (Hovsep Melkuments), who had passed away in Switzerland on July 13, 1908, ten days before the promulgation of the Second Constitutional Era (*İkinci Meşrûtiyet*) in the Ottoman Empire, during which the debates on the alphabet and script reform resumed in Istanbul, was from an Armenian Catholic family, who later converted to Islam. In his last years, he could see that his views on parliamentary government and constitutionalism in the Islamic world were realized both in Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Whether the notions of citizenship and representative government can reconcile with Islamic political precepts had been discussed among the Muslim intellectuals, one of whom is Malkum, throughout the 19th century (Balaghi, 328). Malkum Khan's influence in the history of Iranian modernization is comparable to Namık Kemal's influence in the Ottoman modernization in terms of their ideals of constitutionalism and representative government. Both of them were in search of reconciliation between classical Islāmic political thought and modern liberal political ideals.<sup>23</sup> Malkum, who got acquainted with Freemasonry during his studies in *École Polytechnique*, became a follower of positivism, liberalism

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<sup>22</sup> (Lewis, p.45; Ülkütaşır, pp.18-19; Algar, 1969, p.118). Indeed, Akhundzāde was aware that his task was challenging from its beginning because when his alphabet would be fully implemented, the existing printing scheme would go under the risk of losing all its function. See Ahundov (1963, pp.23-24).

<sup>23</sup> For Malkum's impact to the Iranian intellectual history see Karabulut (2020, pp.7-27).

and Saint-Simonian proto-socialism (Siedel, 2018, p.329). Since the years he had been living in Paris, he was influenced by positivism, particularly concerning the principles of separation of powers, the domain of individual activity, and the belief in the need for progress. Having been influenced by the course of Westernization of Ottoman Empire in *Tanzīmāt*, Malkum believed to have a lot in common with Iran and saw Turkey as a model for Western-oriented progress. Afterward, he proposed that the Tehran government implement similar reforms. He also held the view that Muslims could progress under the leadership of enlightened monarchs, similar to Russian tsars. He also held the view that Muslims could progress under the leadership of enlightened monarchs, similar to Russian tsars.<sup>24</sup> Qajar Iran and the Ottoman Empire had similar experiences within the context of westernization from the point of political notions in the 19th century. The concepts of *Nizām-i jadīd* and *Tanzīmāt* not only reflected a particular reform period but also became the crucial discourses for westernization in both Muslim countries. Malkum's intellectual evolution into cosmopolitanism can be traced throughout his lifetime in Julfa, Paris, Teheran, Istanbul, and London in the second half of the 19th century (see Hamid Algar, 2005, pp.164-166). The views that religious influence hindered historical progress in the entire Muslim world were in line with his positivist approach of the 19th century (Algar, 1969, p.118; Seidel, pp.329-331). However, he explains this influence in a letter addressed to General Ignatiev, Russian Minister (1864-1867) and Ambassador (1867-1877) in Istanbul. In his opinion, the Quran is perfectly compatible with modern civilization, but the Muslim clergy precludes harmony between Islam and civilization.<sup>25</sup>

Following his education in the Samuel Moorat College in Paris, Malkum worked under Mirza Farrukh Khan as a counselor and dragoman in the Iranian diplomatic representations in Europe. He was the second counselor in the Iranian mission when Sultan Abdulmecid received Mirza Farrukh Khan during the mission's visit to Istanbul in October-November 1856 (*Journal de Constantinople*, 3 Novembre 1856). Moreover, during his times in Paris, Malkum established intimate relations with the Orientalist circles in Europe.<sup>26</sup> Returning to Iran, he affiliated with the *Dār al-Funūn* and also founded a

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<sup>24</sup> (Kamrane, 1990, pp.79-80). He was recruited in *Dār al-Funūn* (Polytechnic) after his return to Teheran.

<sup>25</sup> *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (GARF), fond 730, opis 1, delo 3367, list 3 (2 February 1868).

<sup>26</sup> He was affiliated with the *Société Orientale de France* (*Revue de l'Orient de l'Algérie et des Colonies*, 1860, p.459).

Masonic lodge, the House of Oblivion (*Farāmūshkhānahā*).<sup>27</sup> Because of the reform proposals that he presented to Shah shortly after the lodge's inauguration, Malkum Khan aroused suspicion around himself and he was sent into exile in Baghdad after the lodge was disbanded in 1861.<sup>28</sup> He was among the Iranian opponents seeking asylum in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzīmāt Era. As a result of Malkum's request and the reaction of the Iranian government, the Sublime Porte considered the regional situation and decided to invite him to Istanbul in the summer of 1862.<sup>29</sup>

Malkum Khan, arrived in Istanbul via Diyarbakir and Trabzon after a challenging journey, and lived there until 1872.<sup>30</sup> The Sublime Porte treated him generously and met all his requirements since his entry to "the well-protected domains."<sup>31</sup> Even though he claimed that he had left his country through legal procedures and continued his relations with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malkum Khan was accepted to "the well-protected domains" as a political exile.<sup>32</sup> He formed close relationships with Akhundzāde, as well as with Ottoman reformist bureaucrats of the Tanzīmāt Era, such as Münif and Fuad Pashas, thanks to the pro-Western bureaucratic elite who protected enlightened and pro-Westernization Muslim intellectuals in Istanbul (Karabulut, 2017, p.59). There was concern that Malkum Khan could be involved in anti-Iranian activities, and therefore, to put him on probation, the Iranian government employed him as a counselor in the Embassy for a limited-time in 1864. Malkum Khan attended the *Conférence Sanitaire Internationale*,

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<sup>27</sup> (Ekhtiar, 2001, pp.156-157). The *Dār al-Funūn* was established in 1851 in Iran, five years later than the Ottoman *Dār ul-Fünūn* was founded. The freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire it started to develop after 1850 in the *Tanzīmāt* period (Dumont, 1989, p.151).

<sup>28</sup> On his coming to Baghdad; BOA.I.HR.194/10954. The lodge and its founder Malkum Khan were charged with spreading Republican ideas in Iran and were suspected of plotting a *coup d'état* (Anarkulova, p.70-71) See also Algar (1970, 276-296). In some sources, the Lodge is stated to have been influenced by Carbonari Lodge in Istanbul (Nategh, p.50). The Carbonari lodge was also active in Istanbul during the post-Crimean War period (Musardo 2015).

<sup>29</sup> BOA.İ.HR.194/10954. HR.MKT.412/84 (*Hijri* 22 Safer 1279/ 19 August 1862/); 405/19 (*Hijri* 6 Safer 1279/ 3 August 1862). The Sublime Porte funded his travel expenses. It was understood that Malkum had an intimate relation with Haydar Efendi, Ottoman minister in Teheran. Haydar Efendi conveyed Malkum's requests to the Sublime Porte (Mismer, 1892, p.137). As stated by Charles Mismer, Iranian religious exiles and reformists had gathered in Bagdad around Malkum Khan. His father Mirza Yā'qūb Khan was also in Istanbul in the meantime.

<sup>30</sup> BOA.HR.SYS.4/18.Malkum got ill in Mardin and requested money from the Sublime Porte and his treatment. His requests were all satisfied. BOA.HR.MKT.401/19 (*Hijri* 5 Muharrem 1279/ 3 July 1862).

<sup>31</sup> BOA.HR.MKT.403/36 (*Hijri* 19 Muharrem 1279/ 17 July 1862/).

<sup>32</sup> For his exile, see BOA.İ.HR.194/10954, leaf 1.

organized in Istanbul to discuss epidemic cholera in 1866 as the representative of Iran. To prevent the cholera epidemic that had spread from Southeastern Asia to Near East in 1865, Malkum Khan proposed temporary prohibition on Muslim *Hajj* at the Conference, but his proposal caused negative reactions of the Ottoman delegation.<sup>33</sup> Although he had to leave his post in 1868, he maintained a close relationship with Mirza Huseyin Khan, who was the Iranian Minister in Istanbul. When Mirza Huseyin Khan returned to Iran as *Sadrzam* after 1871, he assigned Malkum as the Iranian representative to London for a duration of sixteen years (Fereshten, 1970, p.39).

During his time in Istanbul, Kececizāde Fuad Pasha supported Malkum's attempt to acquire Ottoman citizenship and to serve the Sublime Porte. Fuad Pasha also put Malkum on salary and provided him a mansion in Rumelihisari.<sup>34</sup> Malkum's neighbors were composed of prominent intellectuals and bureaucrats of the Tanzimāt Era, such as Ahmed Vefik Pasha. While Fuad Pasha was willing to recruit Malkum Khan in the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mehmed Emin Āli Pasha doubted the exiled Iranian and Freemason and objected to his involvement into Ottoman service.<sup>35</sup> The existing studies hitherto have not clearly revealed Malkum Khan's activities and connections in Istanbul, yet it is clear that he developed close relations with influential circles. It can be seen from some of his letters that Nicolas Prosper Bourée, then French Ambassador in Istanbul, and Malkum Khan had been friends since Bourée's tenure in Teheran. Furthermore, when all circles in Tehran were ready for war with the Ottomans during the Crimean War, he was a proponent of a shift in Iran's foreign policy and conveyed the proposal for an alliance

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<sup>33</sup> For considerations which were presented by Malkum Khan and Dr.Savas Bey, see Koloğlu (2005, pp.144-146); Huber (2006, p.463). The Sublime Porte rewarded him with the *Mejidiyye* order in the second degree for his service at the Conference. BOA.İ.HR.231/13618 (26 Safer 1285/ 18 June 1868).

<sup>34</sup> BOA.HR.MKT.659/81 (*Hijri* 18 Rebiü'l-āhir 1286/ 28 July 1869); İ.HR.334/21466 (*Hijri* 12 Rebiü'l-āhir 1286/ 22 July 1869). His salary was 5000 *guruh*. Akhundzāde, *Mektublar*, 256-257.

<sup>35</sup> Malkum's relation with the elite circles of Istanbul was close, and in particular, he was akin to Armenian elites in Istanbul. Algar writes that Malkum married Henriette in 1864, Arakel Bey Topchubahi's daughter from the renowned Armenian families of Istanbul. Nevertheless, he should be Arakel *Barutchubashi* and his daughter, Herika, Mirza Malkum's wife (Tuğlacı, 1993, 227-228). Malkum Khan would be acquainted with the Dadian family during his times in Paris. Hamid Algar also mentions that Malkum was awarded the rank of *Pasha*. There is not such a record in the Ottoman archives however, Malkum was rewarded with the imperial order in the second degree and second rank of officialdom. BOA.İ.HR.231/1632 (*Hijri* 27 Muharrem 1285/ 20 May 1868;); HR.MKT.615/42 (*Hijri* 8 Safer 1285/ 31 May 1868;). Sultan Abdülhamid II will grant the Ottoman order in the first degree to Malkum Khan, Iranian Ambassador in London. BOA.İ.DH. 1016/ 80164 (22 Rebi'l-āhir 1304/ 18 January 1887).

between the Ottoman Empire and Iran to Bourée in person, who in turn dictated the terms of the alliance. Malkum admitted that he pursued Iran's interests rather than those of the Ottoman Empire in his subsequent personal diplomatic initiatives. Subsequently, he also recommended Iranian officials several times to abandon their traditional understanding of a rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>36</sup> Much as Malkum advocated for this alliance, it never occurred because of diplomatic discontinuities between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. His intimate relations with Bourée continued throughout their time in Istanbul. It is understood that Malkum desired to revive the diminishing French influence in the Near East after the 1870s. He even criticized Bourée's successor in Istanbul, who pursued policies against France's progressive ideas. In his letter to Bourée, he stressed that France could have no friends in the Near East other than the educated and enlightened class. Moreover, he reported that, contrary to France's more progressive stance, Bourée's successor pursued Catholic-oriented policies and had even stated that they could not talk about anything except Catholicism. Malkum expressed his desire to preserve the French influence and to counter the increasing Russian influence in the Near East. Malkum and Bourée continued to exchange letters even after Bourée left Istanbul, and he kept sending informative letters to Bourée on Istanbul's policies.<sup>37</sup>

It is understood that Malkum had a positive attitude towards reformist bureaucrats such as Āli and Fuad Pashas; however, by the end of 1871, he sounded as though he had lost hope for the future of the Ottoman Empire. In one of his letters to Bourée, Malkum acknowledged that Āli and Fuad Pashas were the only hopes for realizing his ideas, and it was impossible to think of radical reforms without them.<sup>38</sup> According to some resources, Āli and Fuad Pasha's political testaments, which are still suspicious in authenticity, were written originally by Malkum Khan.<sup>39</sup> While Malkum does not provide much

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<sup>36</sup> *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BNF), Département des Manuscrits, N.A.F. 22920 (Nicolas Prosper Bourée), folio 294, (Malcom à Bourée, no date). I am grateful to Sinan Kunalp for sharing Malkum's letters to Bourée in his possession.

<sup>37</sup> BNF, folio 237-238; 247-248. (Malcom to Bourée, Hissar, 7 December 1870; 16 August 1871).

<sup>38</sup> BNF, folio 296. (From Malcom to Bourée).

<sup>39</sup> As referred in a study on this subject Malkum Khan, not much appreciated by Āli Pasha, knowingly wrote a testament after the death of Fuad Pasha, who showed more courtesy to him. However, Āli Pasha's attitude towards him remained unchanged. Therefore, he wrote a separate testament to defame Āli Pasha after his death. Ebuzziya Tevfik inarguably expresses that it was Fuad Pasha rather than Āli Pasha who was more appreciative of Malkum Khan and that was why he wrote the famous testament of Fuad Pasha that appeared in *Levand Herald* (Aydoğdu, p.196-197). Even though the diplomatic missions of the era stressed that this so-called testament was



detail on this brochure, many witnesses – including Reshad Fuad Bey, Fuad Pasha’s grandson – claim that the aforementioned political testament was written by Malkum Khan, as though it had been Fuad Pasha’s. However, the narrative “despotic state” on Iran, firm beliefs on progressivism, and many similar ideas raise doubts as to whether that the real author of this testament was Malkum himself.<sup>40</sup> His last letter to Bourée reflects his pessimism for the future of reforms in Turkey, which was probably due to his disappointment from many years of unsuccessful attempts on such reforms.

Malkum Khan’s alphabet reform project was his most prominent venture during his time in Istanbul, but he was also known to have prepared three reform pamphlets: *Mebde-yi Terakki*, *Sheyh ve Vezir*, and *Dastgāh-ı Dīvān*.<sup>41</sup> Malkum’s source of inspiration for alphabet reform is not clearly known, but it is possible that he was inspired by his father, Mīrzā Yā’qūb Khan who had worked as a dragoman for the Iranian embassy, Akhundzāde, Münif Pasha or all three. Malkum’s leading role in the introduction and foundation of the telegraph, which could have encouraged him on forming a new alphabet, is also well-known (Algar, 1973, 40). The introduction of telegraphic communication to Iran sparked a debate for the Arabic alphabet as it did in the Ottoman Empire.

However, it should be firstly noted that scholars did not examine Malkum’s petitions and his first alphabet prototype, which was proposed to the Sublime Porte (Algar, 1969, 119). Since Malkum was in close ties with Akhundzāde, he was likely to be influenced by him. After Malkum presented his project on the alphabet reform to the Sublime Porte in the year 1868,<sup>42</sup> he renounced Iranian

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not authentic and probably written by someone else, many ideas in the text mostly converge with Fuad Pasha’s vision. *The National Archives, Foreign Office* (TNA), 78/2078, No 423 (From Henry Elliot to Lord Clarendo, 4 October 1869). However, claims which asserted that the author of pretended testaments was Malkum Khan are still controversial. At least it is more reasonable that the author of Āli Pasha’s political testament was French journalist and turcophile Charles Mismar who was Malkum’s ideological fellow in Istanbul. See BOA.Y.A.HUS.278/10 (2 Muharrem 1311/ 16 July 1893).

<sup>40</sup> Türkeldi, *op. cit.*, 139. On the other hand, for the content of the testaments, see Engin D. Akarlı, *Belgelerle Tanzimat: Osmanlı Sadrazamlarından Āli ve Fuad Paşaların Siyasî Vasiyetnâmeleri*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları), 1978. The issue of to whom the testaments of Pashas belong is an old debate. Davison (1959, pp.119-136). For an analysis collecting different allegations on the testament, also see Algar (1973, pp.73-77).

<sup>41</sup> In *Şeyh ve Vezir*, he discussed the need for an alphabet reform (Algar, pp.67-68).

<sup>42</sup> BOA. A.MKT.MHM.427/45 ( Hijri 2 Şaban 1285/ 23 November 1868). *Hurûf-ı müstemelenin tebdil-i şekli ve hey’eti hakkında bâzı ifâdeyi ve imtiyâz i’tâsı istidâsını hâvi Mikail Malkum Han tarafından verilen varakanın tercümesi manzâr-ı vâlâları buyurulmak üzere leffen irsâl kılınması...”*

subjecthood and acquired the Ottoman's with the second grade of civil officialdom. His admission to the Ottoman subjecthood was to facilitate his initiative, and the Sublime Porte, who appreciated his knowledge and wisdom at the moment, put Malkum Khan on the salary.<sup>43</sup> The following year, in a letter to Khalil Bey, Counsellor of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Sublime Porte, Malkum wrote that he could bring his desire and request for a new alphabet system to the attention of the Grand Vizier Āli Pasha.<sup>44</sup> In addition, after Fuad Pasha's death, Malkum Khan sought the support of Khalil Sherif Pasha, who was then the Counsellor of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a significant figure in the Ottoman bureaucracy.

Malkum Khan admitted that he regretted submitting his previous plan to the Council of State (*Shūrā-i Devlet*) because he argued that the officials failed to understand this new alphabet system. They must have thought that Malkum Khan was seeking to impose this system, which could have been manipulated as a heretical innovation. However, according to Malkum Khan, it would be sufficient to remind these persons the fact that there was a Turkish press but printed in Greek or Armenian alphabets. He also added that an exclusive privilege is demanded as result of a condition in which the expenses of a necessary innovation could not be supported.

It looks as if his primary aim was to acquire a kind of copyright of his alphabet and script designs rather than get the Ottoman bureaucracy to adopt them. As reported by Mirza Malkum, they had engraved a dozen of new alphabets, some of which were known by the Sultan. Malkum attached the first phase of his reform and the final form of his proposal to his letter by adding the first modification could gradually excel within a specific system and the first phase would start with the independent use of letters within the system of isolated letters (*hurūf-ı munfasıla*). The most conspicuous point in his project was the last phase, where the dots in separate letters system were preserved, while the shapes of some letters were being changed. However, not all vowels were included in the word structure.<sup>45</sup>

Malkum had already defended the project in the presence of the Council of State and the Assembly of Education and stated that he would gladly elaborate on the details of this gradual transition in person if requested. From his perspective, this was a great reform project without any inconveniences he

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<sup>43</sup> BOA.HR.238/14144 (Rebiü'l-âhir/ 21 July 1869).

<sup>44</sup> Khalil Bey was also the founding president of the Ottoman Society for Science. BOA.İ.DH.472/31671, leaf 2. (Hijri 8 Shevval 1277/ 19 April 1861).

<sup>45</sup> His prototype included samples of both the first and last phase. See Appendices 3-4.

offered to the Sublime Porte. Even if this proposal were to be rejected, the patent of special privilege (*imtiyāz berāti*) would pave the way for more fortunate initiatives in the future. He expected that the Sublime Porte would not discourage a person whose efforts would undoubtedly be appreciated by patriotic intellectuals.<sup>46</sup>

In his long report to the Grand Vizier, it becomes clear that behind his initiatives lay the fact that he saw the backwardness of the Muslims as a problem generated by the writing system. His report features these introductory lines: "Sir, after our long analysis in which we compared our Asian institutions with their European equivalents, I was convinced that Muslim communities, with their current script systems, cannot attain the level of European civilization and education." He said that "it is no use reviving herewith the countless facts flowing from various sources that would support this big truth."<sup>47</sup> In light of existing realities, he believed that the script and alphabet systems were the primary reasons why Muslim communities lagged behind in Europe. According to him, if Muslims were to attain European civilization, they should first start by changing their script systems and alphabets. Malkum, emphasizing the role of script in the backwardness of the East, argued that he had spent almost two decades in search of a new system of script and alphabet. He modified all the characters with all the shapes, found out all possible types of new forms, and get them engraved and formed many alphabets. Afterwards, he wrote to Sultan Abdulaziz indicating that after his long experience, he believed that the issue was finally resolved. Having found the theory, all remained to be done was to apply it. He had no doubt that the Sublime Porte would provide the funds needed to offer the advantages of such a new script system, which could be smoothly implemented in all Muslim countries. Based on his discourse with Sultan, he would have to bear this cost with his own insufficient resources if the Sublime Porte chose not to fund him. To cover such a cost with minimal loss, Malkum hoped that the Sublime Porte would issue him the patent of privilege. In line with this purpose, he felt compelled to summarize the new system to the Sultan briefly. In his system, instead of joining, connecting, and thus printing the letters, separate lines of characters would be used as it was in Europe. Vowels would be included gradually, and the modifications required to have the entire alphabet were envisaged. In other words, a complete and specific alphabet would be primarily obtained through an isolated letter system and

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<sup>46</sup> BOA.HR.SYS.1869-C/4, leaf 3 (4 January 1869)

<sup>47</sup> BOA.HR.SYS.1869-C/5, leaf 4.

the introduction of vowels. The concessions which Malkom demanded were: 1) Whomever the inventor or the patent owner was, he would enjoy the right to use this system to his own benefit across the Empire, as well as the right to use it to print books or periodicals of Arabic, Persian, or Turkish origin, based on the system he invented, under the existing law. 2) The copyright owner would enjoy publishing one or more newspapers in the languages mentioned above, based on his system, under the existing law. 3) The duration for the patent of special privilege and the copyright would be 50 years, and during this period, the inventor or the copyright owner (or the legal heirs thereof) would be eligible to transfer this concession to whomsoever they contracted with. Malkum believed that in case he had been successful, he would have provided the most outstanding service to Muslim peoples hitherto.<sup>48</sup>

Malkum Khan, while submitting these applications to the Sublime Porte, also looked to exchange letters and ideas with Akhundzāde. However, as Hamid Algar noted, his views differed from Akhundzāde in some respects: he envisioned that the reduction of all letters to a single form (the existing isolated form) would be implemented without the junction and elimination of the varying shapes of letters.<sup>49</sup> In one of his letters, Akhundzāde stated that he liked the shapes of letters and the isolated letter system in the sample presented by Malkum to the Sublime Porte. However, he complained that the dots would persist, for *ī'rābs* the signs would equal the position of words, and not all nine vowels would be added to the letters. Even though reducing the same voices to a single letter was appreciated, Akhundzāde also disapproved of preserving the old and ugly letter shapes instead of creating new ones. Moreover, Akhundzāde was against a gradual transition to a new alphabet and objected to gradually joining the vowels with consonants because in his opinion Malkum's isolated letter system would cause difficulties, hindering fluent and easy writing, which have to be fundamentals of an alphabet reform. According to Akhundzāde, if writing still were to be from right to the leftward and rotating the pen could not help complete a word at once, or even half of it, the speed would be impaired. Since using the isolated letter system would require lifting the pen, one hour would be needed to write a one-page script. Therefore, Akhundzāde presented his reform proposal to the Iranian government, including his objections to Malkum's alphabet. In the last draft, one of the major disagreements between Malkum and Akhundzāde was the adjacent writing of vowels and consonants. That is to say, Akhundzāde was

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<sup>48</sup> BOA.HR.SYS.1869-C/5, leaf 4; HR.TO 451/11 ((30 October 1868).

<sup>49</sup> For the differences between them on grammar, see Algar (1963, pp.119-120).

now a vocal critic of an absolute isolated script system. Akhundzāde proposed his own system for writing manuscripts and Malkum's for printing, on the condition that the dots would be totally scrapped and newly created shapes for vowels would be added to the row of consonants. Akhundzāde believed that they could still design a new alphabet within the framework of their principles, even if Iran rejected his proposal. His way of thinking that the printing letters of Malkum were very beautiful and appropriate, and they should be used in printing, provided that his points mentioned above were applied. He told Malkum that he should enlighten the Ottomans, and regarded this as a mission because they would achieve their goal if the Sublime Porte approved their project, and reiterated that an isolated letter system would create difficulties for writing from right to left. Believing that his fellow's proposal was certain to be perceived as radical by Muslim statesmen, Akhundzāde wondered whether Malkum had considered a script system written from left to right, like those used in Europe (See Akhundzāde, 2005, pp.87-89). Malkum's idea of changing the text line's direction was undoubtedly revolutionary for the Muslim script system. The Ottomans were also doubtful of such an intention, just as Akhundzade was.

In the same period, Malkum Khan and Akhundzāde were also striving to persuade Iran to adopt alphabet reform. However, their failure to convince the Ottomans to approve the reform would fit for nothing due to the Iranian imitation of the Ottoman reforms in the recent past. On the other hand, in a letter he sent to Akhundzāde after Āli Pasha's death in 1871, by emphasizing that he was a good friend of the late Āli Pasha, Malkum claimed that he wrote a brochure in French for one of the Pasha's far-sighted French assistants. Malkum had printed it on behalf of the deceased Grand Vizier, and stated that it was read across Europe, and also claimed that the brochure consisted entirely of their own ideas and that he had collected the best evidence needed for Akhundzāde's purpose.<sup>50</sup> This brochure which was mentioned to Bourée had been written by Charles Mismar, a French journalist for *La Turquie*

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<sup>50</sup> (Akhundzāde, p.239). A letter is dated 16 September 1870 Āli Pasha died on 7 September 1871. Meanwhile, Malkum mentioned a French who lived in İstanbul and a British gentleman who spent some time in Mumbai. They were now favoring a change in the Muslim alphabet, and the British one supported him from London. This man who devoted himself to this task without seeking any personal benefit published some propaganda articles in İstanbul's various newspapers. Malkum also stated that this British man wrote a book on this issue and printed it while dedicating the book to Mirza Malkum without his knowledge. Namely, in Malkum's own words, there were too many persons around striving for reform or change in the Arabic alphabet and Turkish script. Charles Mismar, a French journalist and private advisor of Grand Vizier, also proposed in a mémoire to him a reform of the Arabic alphabet. See Strauss (1999, p.288).

(Strauss, 2008, p.137). Mismar, the pioneer figure of Western origin on the alphabet reform in the Muslim world, addressed a *mémoire* in which he pleaded and propagated Malkum's ideas to Grand Vizier.<sup>51</sup> The French adventurer also believed that the alphabet and language questions were the primary cause of Muslim backwardness.<sup>52</sup> The assertion that "the cause of oriental immobility" arises from the Arabic "syllabic" alphabet gained support among positivists in Istanbul.<sup>53</sup> Malkum Khan, while referring to a group supporting his project, also mentioned two influential and hostile ministers who were waging continuous anti-reform propaganda through religion in Istanbul. He also wrote that Āli Pasha was leaning towards alphabet reform in his last years; however, his health conditions and the rumors that were spreading around prevented him from providing direct support (Akhundzāde, p.240). He wrote the letter in the days when his reform efforts remained inconclusive due to lack of public opinion in Istanbul.

In 1870, when Malkum was propagating Akhundzāde's ideas in Istanbul, Ottoman journalists and intellectuals joined the debate. Both Ali Suavi and Namik Kemal published two critiques on Malkum's reform project in their journals (Algar, 1969, p.120-121). Namik Kemal's article, aligning with the Ottoman bureaucratic views and criticizing the idea of transitioning to a new alphabet for various reasons, was a response to a Persian letter sent to him. First, he was concerned that the new alphabet could cause a cultural shift; secondly, it would make all previous written cultural legacies irrelevant, and third that it would force all current written literature to be rewritten. Contrary to Malkum Khan, Namik Kemal argued that the question of education could not be reduced to the alphabet issue. Kemal refuted Malkum's arguments adducing the European languages, primary education in Europe, and highlighting Islam's glorious days. He entirely deprecated the cause-and-effect relations between the Arabic alphabet and Muslim backwardness inferred by Akhundzāde and Malkum. Therefore, he was firmly against changing the shapes of letters and reforming the alphabet. On the other hand, referring to

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<sup>51</sup> (Mismar, pp.136-137). "*Pendant plusieurs années, je vis le pere et le fils presque journellement. Tous deux étaient les plus grands générateurs d'idées que j'ai connus.*" Mismar wrote about Malkum and his father Yā'qūb Khan in his reminiscences as intimate friends and admired to Yā'qūb Khan.

<sup>52</sup> (Georgeon, 1992, pp.93-121). Malkum and Mismar had similar approaches toward positivism, and it appears that both played a crucial role in the introduction of positivism to the Ottoman Empire in the Tanzimāt era.

<sup>53</sup> (Mismar, 1870, pp.346-348). In his *mémoire* which was addressed to Āli Pasha on 2 March 1869 and entitled as "Cause de l'immobilité Orientale", Mismar propagated Malkum's ideals.

his progressive stance, Namık Kemal stressed that he favored a minor script project, involving partial but coherent reform instead of changing the alphabet. The reform designed by Kemal would be possible by using dots to add new letters to Turkish instead of changing the Arabic letters or their shapes.<sup>54</sup> Namık Kemal found Malkum's proposal "extreme," and thought it would challenge the Ottoman cultural reformation limits. Therefore, he believed that this alphabet issue should be addressed with limited intervention and without crossing cultural boundaries.

Fuad Pasha passed away on February 12, 1969, while Malkum's alphabet reform efforts were underway. Meanwhile, his appeal was being assessed by the Council of State, Public Works Department (*Nāfia Dāiresi*). It was reiterated that the Sublime Porte had some objections regarding Malkum's proposal on reforming the script and alphabet. However, Malkum "overstepped his limits" by using "inappropriate wording" and attempted to question and challenge the Council of Education and the Council of State's decisions, so his actions angered members of the Commission. According to the members of the Commission, his petition even included some humiliating expressions and as an inevitable result of all, the Sublime Porte ultimately notified Malkum that his requests were declined.<sup>55</sup> In the minutes of the Council of State, it was reaffirmed that Malkum's thesis, advocating the current script and alphabet was inhibiting progress, was disapproved after it was discussed at the Interior Department of the Council. The document also reiterated that abandoning the current script and alphabet would risk understanding and interpreting the written culture of the past. Still, another commission was charged to discuss his patent request. The Sublime Porte considered that once this privilege demanded by Malkum was issued, it would bind the government to hinder printing books using this alphabet without the consent of the patent of special privilege owner (*sahib-i imtiyāz*). The Ottoman government was aware that even though they could stop illicit publishing of this alphabet and script within the Empire's borders, it would be impossible to prevent publishing with this alphabet in Iran or India. It was concluded that the Sublime Porte would sacrifice too much and face difficulties in surveilling and controlling the inflow of these illicit works to the Empire. Moreover, if they took responsibility, they would be the object of the beforementioned problems. It was decided that a

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<sup>54</sup> (*Hürriyet*, 23 August 1869, No. 14). Namık Kemal's proposal was not to design a new alphabet, but to use the *harekes* by addressing their shortcomings, placing them within the words, to cut the letters (*taktî*) and omitting the letters with no Turkish pronunciation and create a special shape for forms such as *kâf-ı yâyi* that cannot be written.

<sup>55</sup> BOA.ŞD.205/19, leaf 1 (19 Muharrem 1287/21 April 1870).

request for such a concession would not even be taken into consideration. On the other hand, Malkum Khan was informed to be able to use the letters without any concession or special privilege, besides with no terms and conditions (*bilā-kayd u şurūt*).<sup>56</sup>

The issue was discussed and assessed at the Education Department of Council of State as well. From the council minutes, it is understood that Malkum requested some amount of capital for printing new books in his alphabet and proposed reprinting books in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian with newly designed letters, with a fifty-year patent issued to him. The department members stated that the claim that the current letters hindered progress was refuted with reference to the glorious past of the Islamic civilization (*hutūt-ı müstemelenin māni-yi terakki olması iddiāsı mecruh olduğu...*). Moreover, adopting a new script system would make it impossible to understand the Islamic civilization's centuries-old literature (*kütüb ve te'lifütin ve senedāt ve sicillātın miiftāh-ı istihrācını izāya çalışmak...*). This response was also the main point emphasized by all institutions of the Sublime Porte. It was also deemed unacceptable for the government to provide financial aid to a 'hazardous practice camouflaged as reform.' However, a special privilege could be issued to print alphabet fascicles using various calligraphies unless decided otherwise, and further permission was needed to publish newspapers under the current circumstances. In other words, the Sublime Porte avoided any legal and financial responsibility regarding this case. In their response to Malkum Khan's application, Ottoman bureaucrats acknowledged the fact that the use and array of Arabic letters were, to some extent, challenging. However, as they argued that learning and practice gradually led to habit and talent and they thought reading and interpreting the phrases created natural or spontaneous rules. Along with the abovementioned concerns, it was unclear whether the effort in introducing new letters and a new system to the people would be appreciated by the public or not. Furthermore, the Sublime Porte opposed the reform proposal arguing that should the new alphabet come into force, then the government would be obliged to rewrite and reprint all the educational material and literature, including books and booklets in new letters and current literature would be out of use. Regarding copyright concessions, as per Malkum's statements and examples, he planned gradually transforming the current script to a final form resembling Latin and Armenian letters. To his plan, first of all, current letters would be isolated and combined with *harekes* in word compositions, keeping their original shapes. Afterward, they would be

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<sup>56</sup> BOA.ŞD.205/19, leaf 3.



cut into pieces of syllables or clusters. This cutting method (*usūl-i taktī*) could not be regarded as a new invention (*ihtirā*), considering it was also used in Turkish telegraphic communication. Therefore, although the copyright would be limited only to mentioned letters, the owners of consecutive innovations could make a claim on the same copyright, as it was not hard to change and modify the shapes of the letters. The main problem here was the possibility of the circulation and spreading of documents composed with these letters across the Ottoman land, meaning difficulty for the government to control. Even though the Assembly of Education acknowledged in their minutes that the conflict caused by other alphabets was not significant, it was concluded that a precedent could not be set, and therefore, the demand for a privilege for such initiatives was disapproved by a majority vote. In other words, Tanzimat's bureaucrats were concerned that issuing copyright to this alphabet would set a precedent for other alphabet types in the future. Looking into Malkum's applications and drafts for alphabet reform, it was understood that he was inspired by Armenian and Latin letters when restructuring the Muslim alphabet. Such interpretations must have formed the basis of the Sublime Porte's unfavorable reply. Malkum often claims in his letters that his proposal was denied as it was seen as "infidelity" (Algar, 1969, 122). However, in the documents notifying him of the negative response, such a pretext was not clearly mentioned.

Malkum Khan, in a letter he wrote to Grand Vizier after his applications were rejected, raised objections against the decision of the Sublime Porte.<sup>57</sup> In his letter titled "On Reforming the Letters of Syllables," (*Hurūf-ı Hecā-yı İslahāta Dāir*) he described his proposal as an "invention" that contained many details he felt obliged to explain this to the Ottoman government. As previously emphasized by Akhundzāde on multiple occasions, Malkum Khan insisted upon his previous view that it was the Muslims' destiny to be overtaken by non-Muslim people if they kept using the existing letter system. He claimed that he had spent two decades thinking on the issue, and finally made up his mind in the last two years. He also admitted that he needed at least twenty thousand *liras* to apply this new method, and proposed that either this cost would be covered directly by the government or granted to him through a subsidy. To this end, he lodged his application to both the Council of State and the Assembly of Education. However, both institutions declined him, stating that the Ottoman government did not need such a method but that Mirza Malkum was free to apply his method for his purposes through his resources.

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<sup>57</sup> BOA.HR.SYS.1869-C/5, leaf 2.

By stating that he was free to apply the method, the government left him in an impossible position. He insisted on being granted a copyright ownership to prevent his new method from being plagiarized; otherwise, it would be impossible to cover and compensate for the amount needed. Oddly enough, introducing similar new projects could cost five hundred *liras*, while another entrepreneur could achieve it for only forty cents. If no prerogative or concession had been issued to such inventions, the twenty thousand *liras* would have been squandered even if the project had succeeded. Therefore, no capital owner would attempt such a project without such a copyright concession, no matter how useful it was for society. In fact, Malkum advocated intellectual property rights and privileges be officially granted to the inventors by the government. To him, the Assembly of Education and the Council of State, by rejecting his proposals and refraining from issuing the copyright concession, scrapped this new method before it was introduced. Mirza Malkum, in questioning whether his new method threatened the interests of some circles, was aware that this method posed no threat to any person or state, as evidenced by the fact that they permitted him to apply this method for personal use. It is apparent that these institutions were confused with the certificates of *berāt* and *imtiyāznâme*; therefore, Malkum was treated as though he had requested for the concession to use the railways and forests. They thought Malkum had requested the right to use this alphabet and script method. Indeed, Malkum claimed that what he requested was just an imperial patent of invention, an ordinary document just to register it.

It can be also observed that Mirza Malkum further elaborated on this issue and supported it with examples from Europe. The patents (*berāt*) were being issued for all types of inventions by the European governments, ranging from matchboxes to the most advanced machines. It is understood that the patent of the invention he requested was a type of intellectual property right. Malkum also added that he did not ask for final approval of his system; at that moment, his only point was to obtain the patent. However, the term patent had negative connotations in the minds of the Ottoman bureaucrats so that these bodies rejected his request without even officially negotiating it, instead, stating “your method is not fit for the need” (*usūlünüz matlubā muvāfık değildir*). In developed countries, the Government was not interested in the value of a method or innovation however worthless it was. The patents were unexceptionally issued to innovations and inventions, regardless of whether they were good or bad, feasible or unfeasible. Once an imperial patent of invention had been issued, it was incumbent on the third person to defend his own interests. When investigating Malkum’s example, fifty patents were

issued for a balloon rudder, and a total of fourteen thousand patents were issued in the United States that year, with a further ten thousand in Europe. While this was the case in the advanced nations of the West, there was just a single patent request in the Ottoman Empire that year, and it was rejected by two grand institutions, claiming that the method did not comply with the character and disposition (*tabīat ve mizāc*) of the Empire. "One day this case will be shown statistically" saying Malkum Khan now claimed that he spent more than three thousand liras to inscribe a set of letters and to test the basics of this new method. He demanded the Ottoman Empire approve the inscribed letters and his other works; he was not asking for additional money in return, but just a permission to finalize what he had started. Although all Muslim nations had only one type of inscribed syllable letters, he was ready to inscribe eleven types of letters and proposed this to the Ottoman government to prove that he sought no personal benefit in return. He questioned why such a work, which would put no cost on the Government and serve Muslim nations, was being hindered. From his point of view, it was understood that the absence of a scheme in which the Government legally guarantees the intellectual property rights of inventions was one of the major barriers to produce new ideas and innovations. On the other hand, if this method was to be adopted, his success would be evident, and he was ready to present this new alphabet and script to the Sublime Porte for free. Malkum contended that the Sublime Porte could have just issued a simple patent even if it had assessed the method useless or even harmful. He saw this alternative as the best path both for himself and the Sublime Porte. When future Muslim generations read his letter, he concluded that their opinion on these two institutions, which procrastinated on this proposal for two years and then finally rejected it, could be more or less anticipated (Algar, 122).

It was inferred that Malkum, who specially requested his petitions not be submitted to those who were not open to new ideas, failed to gain anything from all these attempts. The assessments of the Sublime Porte and the Council of State on Malkum's plea, which is dated February 16, 1870, clearly reflected that the Ottoman officials did not accept the argument that the transition to a new alphabet would remove one of the major barriers to progress. According to those running the institutions of culture and education, abandoning the old rules of alphabet and script would mean losing the key to understanding the current books, works, documents, and records and would result in many difficulties and problems in cultural and educational life. In essence, the Tanzimat Era bureaucracy, citing various concerns, disapproved of the

adoption and use of such a reform, as it believed that the Arabic alphabet and Ottoman script were historical links to Islamic civilization.<sup>58</sup>

In a letter addressed to the office of Grand Vizier, dated 7 May 1870, Malkum renewed his request as such “kindly appealing to the patent of privilege (*berât-ı imtiyâz*) for my humble personage.” In his petition to the Ministry of Education, he asserted that the new method was not only for the Ottoman-Turkish but also for other eastern languages (Albanian, Afghan, and Mongolian languages), which have no specific alphabet. This method allowed writing in Turkish, French, Greek, Persian, and all other known languages. He even printed a sample pamphlet attached to his letter, as he was trying to convince the Sublime Porte. He nevertheless felt the need to explain this new method: merely writing and printing the primary letters in an isolated and orderly fashion while inserting and removing the *harekes* to and from the word structure. To prevent any wrongdoings, he sought no approval or appreciation by the Sublime Porte regarding his method; instead, he sought a sixty-year patent. Malkum Khan believed that issuing a patent for the new script style he had invented would bring no harm to any other third party.<sup>59</sup>

In a document from the Council of State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was stated that Malkum Khan had requested a patent of concession for sixty-years, and the matter had been referred to the Public Works Department of the Council (Nafiâ Dâiresi) for assessment. In the document it is stressed that he just needed the imperial patent to register his invention, rather than the approval of this method by the government. However, as per the Ottoman legislation that was in effect at that time, the application of patent was rejected due to the fact that the method was “not aimed for industrial development.”<sup>60</sup> It was clear that Malkum’s request was related to scientific property rights, which would be introduced in the years to come, yet the current legislation of the time had no provisions on this matter. Therefore, the Sublime Porte notified Malkum of its final decision.<sup>61</sup>

Although existing laws on concessions and privileges were in effect, in the Ottoman Empire, inventions and innovations were rewarded in the form of medals, ranks, and salary. Until the Law on Patent of Inventions came on the scene, the Ottoman Empire took the issue within the context of concessions

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<sup>58</sup> BOA.ŞD.205/19, leaf 4. (15 Zilkâde 1286/ 16 February 1870).

<sup>59</sup> BOA.HR.TO. 452/78. (7 May 1870).

<sup>60</sup> BOA.ŞD.2392/31. (29 Safer 1287/24 Mayıs 1870). “*berâ-ı imtiyâz îtâsını istilzâm eden muhterât-ı sanayiye i’dâdına dâhil olmadığı...*”

<sup>61</sup> BOA.A.MKT.MHM.439/7.

(*imtiyāz*). For the concession, the top criterion was an obvious benefit and contribution to the economy; the other was the certainty or substantial likelihood of its applicability and the last one was that the concession would not be issued at the expense of public loss, and it would not create a monopoly. The application process was as follows: the application was to be filed with the Ministry of Trade and Public Works (*Ticāret ve Nafiā Nezāreti*), and the inventor would introduce his invention in person with its drawings or plan and would prove its benefit, working principles, and applicability for the following three months.<sup>62</sup> The Ottoman government rewarded even foreign inventions as long as they were beneficial to humanity. In a move similar to European governments, the most famous example of which was rewarding Samuel Mors, an American who invented the machine used in all telegraph offices, for his outstanding service to humankind.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, it was out of the question that the Ottoman Empire would not reward inventions. In light of this, Malkum Khan's problem was probably related to a patent of the invention (*brévet d'invention*). The real issue that challenged Malkum (which he was unable to tackle) was no legislation on intellectual property rights until 1879, even though concessions had been issued for some inventions (Akay, pp.34-36). Another problem was that as the Sublime Porte did not view the alphabet as an invention, they did not take the issue within the context of industrial property rights. Even though the Sublime Porte acknowledged that there existed no decree regarding inventions related to the industrial property rights, it issued patents of innovation or patent of special privilege to prevent potential grievances from applicants.<sup>64</sup> Malkum's applications were all rejected by the Sublime Porte, and as he failed to convince the Sublime Porte, he sought to appeal to public opinion during his one-year stay in Istanbul. When his efforts did not come out well, he returned to Iran and continued his work on reforming the alphabet for the rest of his life.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> This usually resulted in the issuance of a 15-year concession (Akay, 2015, pp.31-32).

<sup>63</sup> BOA.İ.HR.153/8120 29 Receb1274/ 15 March 1858); Mors's letter of gratitude dated 15 September 1858; BOA.İ.HR.161.161/8587. (03 Rebüyyülahir 1275/ 10 November 1858).

<sup>64</sup> Indeed, almost in the same years, a person named Schneider, who requested a patent of invention like Malkum, was issued a certificate of concession, for "the agricultural tools and equipment he invented". BOA.ŞD.1173/10, leaf 1,8.

<sup>65</sup> For his initiatives on alphabet reform after leaving Istanbul, see Algar (1969, pp.123-128).

## Conclusion

Malkum Khan, one of the representatives of the ideologic adherence to liberal reformism in the Muslim world, failed to convince the Sublime Porte to promote the alphabet reform based on the method and letters he designed. Furthermore, he was disappointed that he could not acquire a patent of the alleged invention despite his private connections at the Sublime Porte; however, principles of his method, shapes, and sample of typefaces inspired those interested in the issue after his death in 1908. Some letters in the alphabet were published by *Yeni Yazı*, and the method accepted by the Association of Letters' Amendment's were inspired by those of Akhundzāde and Malkum Khan. In other words, the debate launched and propagated by Malkum Khan lasted until the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Both intellectuals believed that such a comprehensive reform could have spread across the Muslim World from Istanbul and Tehran. Malkum Khan and Akhunzāde assumed that a possible approval of their reform proposal by the Sublime Porte would positively affect Iran and even other Muslim countries in this regard because Qajar Iran closely observed the Ottoman reformists from the beginning of the 19th century in terms of political and social reformism.<sup>66</sup>

Turkish historiography in the 20th century tackles the issue from a perspective that causes the differences between "letter reform" (*ıslah-ı hurūf*) and "letter revolution" (*inkılāb-ı hurūf*) to seem vague. Liberal reformism also had limits both in the Ottoman and Qājār *Tanzīmāts*. The Ottoman experience of the *Nizām-i Jadīd* and the *Tanzīmāt* provided a model for Iran during the Qājār period, both of the Muslim states reacted likewise to the alphabet reform. Reformist Young Ottomans and conservative Ottomans reached a compromise on the boundaries of the cultural modernism of Ottoman *Tanzīmāt*. As was the case in Iran, even though the motivation of the Sublime Porte was ideological, *Tanzīmāt* bureaucrats relied on existing laws and regulations to legitimize the rejection of the reform proposal. From one's point of view, the *Tanzīmāt* bureaucracy could not dare to attempt a comprehensive cultural reform of the alphabet and saw this as a radical deviation from the Islamic civilization. The Ottoman elites primarily approached the issue from the point of technical matter and as a cultural and educational problem. While Malkum Khan sought to convince the Sublime Porte to get it to adopt his project, Münif Pasha, another Ottoman intellectual-bureaucrat who worked on the matter for many years, chaired the Ottoman Community of Science where Akhundzāde's project was discussed in 1863 and the Grand Council of

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<sup>66</sup> See Zarinebaf, *op.cit.*, 157.

Education where Malkum Khan's proposal was addressed in 1869. Although the members acknowledged that the proposal did not aim to change the alphabet abruptly, the Council's top concern was the danger of losing touch with the cultural heritage of the antecedents. The letters and methods proposed by Malkum were regarded as a radical solution by the relevant bureaucratic and academic institutions which advised and participated with Münif Pasha.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, the Ottomans saw Malkum's proposal as being practically inapplicable and viewed the basis of his philosophical-pedagogical arguments as weak; therefore, a patent of the invention that would legalize the project was not issued to Malkum Khan by the Sublime Porte. The Ottomans likely anticipated a future financial burden on the treasury had this patent been issued. Nevertheless, the issue of alphabet reform was not shelved completely later in the Ottoman Empire. Following the Hamidian autocracy, as the discussions were resumed during the Second Constitutional Era (1908-1914), the issue was mooted by the Association of Letters' Amendment, and various aspects were touched upon. It can be concluded that the aforementioned proposals and the letter design of the Association of Letters' Amendment were surprisingly similar but not identical, and the principals were almost the same as those of Malkum, whom himself followed Akhundzāde's method. The conclusion of all these discussions is that the bureaucratic needs of the reformers of the Tanzimāt, and the way that opposing intellectuals comprehend modernization, provided an insufficient pretext for a comprehensive alphabet reform, which might cause the Ottoman Empire to be alienated from the Islamic heritage. The fact that the pace of bureaucratic modernization and westernization in the daily life of elites was different from that of modernization in the cultural and educational sphere is also likely an influencing factor in preventing the Tanzimāt Era from being seen as a 'super-westernization.'

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<sup>67</sup> After 1872, Münif Pasha was appointed ambassador to Teheran in 1872 and then will be Minister of Education (Mordtmann, 1999 p.125).

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APPENDIX

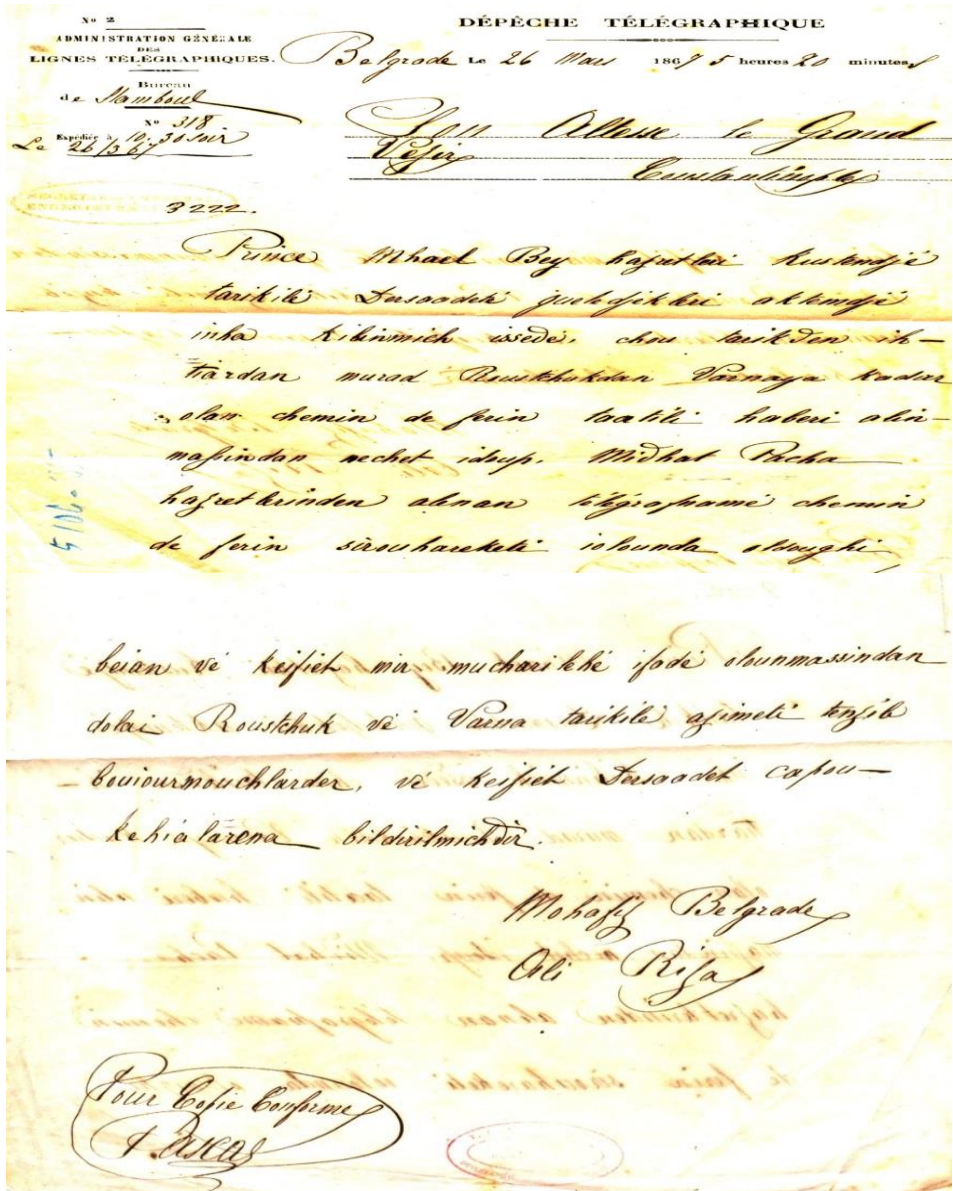
1- The New Script presented by *Islāh-ı Hurūf Cemiyeti*, 1909.

اصلاح حروف جمعیتی انجمن علمیسنجہ  
قبول اولنآن اشکال حروف

ف	ب	ی	ت	ج	ح
خ	د	ذ	س	ز	ر
س	ش	ه	ه	ط	ظ
ع	غ	ف	ق	ک	ک
ل	م	ن	و	ه	ی
ا	ا	ا	ا	ی	و
ر	و	ر			

خطاط مصطفی راقم بک طرفندن ترسیم ایدلمش و قالبری اعمال ایدلمکده بولمشد.

2- An Official Ottoman-Turkish which was romanized (the copy conformed by Monsieur Pascal)



### 3- The first stage of proposed script method by Malkum Khan to the Sublime Porte

*Plan to propose by me*

## حوادث خلیفه

فرانسه دولت خراجی ناظری ایله دول  
ساره سفارتنك بیو كونلرده بک چوق  
ملاقات ایلدلرلی و اکثری صورت خفیسه  
اولوب نهیه دایر اولدیغی نوز  
اکلایشیله دیغی اوراق حوادثده کورلم شد.

---

انکلتزه دولت عساکر موجوده سنیه  
تکنقیح ایلمک افکارنده بولندیغنی  
و کزک لوندرده و کزک سار محللرده  
اوله رق ترحت و تکر فنده بولنان  
یرلرده کئی نفراتک دخی ثقلیل  
قلند سنه دایر قرالیچه جان بندن  
امور حربیه ناظریه اخطار و تنبیه  
وقوع بولدیغنی تاسیس غزته سی دوج  
ایتم شد.

---

پارسدن الزان آخباره نظرا خدیو مصر  
فخامتلو دولتلو پاشا حضرتلری نك  
مخدوم عالی لری سعادتلو حسین وحسن  
پاشالر حضرتنك دونکلی کون پارسه  
مواصلت ایلدلرلی اکللم شد.

---

روسیه ایمپراطورینک ایلول افرنجینک  
یکرمی طقوزنجی کونیه اخشامی وارشاوه  
شهرینه مواصلت ایلمش اولدیغی واسطه  
تلغراف ایله الزان خبرلردن در.

---

پروسیانک فرانسه حکومتی نزدنده بولنان  
سفیری موسوی غولز بو کزه عزل و تبدیلی  
اولنده رق یرینه بارون دورتر نصاب  
وان تخاب قلنده غی غزته لدرده کورلم شد.

## حوادث خلیفه

ذات فخامتسمات جناب صدارت پناه ایله  
ولکالی فخام حضرتلردن بیعضی لری  
بنج شنبه کونیه طوبخانده عامره  
عزیمتله طوب اعمالنه مخصوصمکنلرله  
سار الات وادواتی سیر ومغاینه ایدرک  
واعمالات حربیه ناظری دولتلو پاشا  
حضرتلری طرفندن او اختام ترتیبی  
اولنان ضیافتده بولنده رق بعده عودت  
بیومش اولدقلری مسموممز اولم شد.

---

دیوان احکام عدلیه ریسى دولتلو  
چودت پاشا حضرتلری نه نشان عالی  
عشمانینک بدنجی رتبه سندن بدر قطع سی  
احسان بیوردی غی مسموممز اولم شد.

---

انکلتزه دولت نك درسعات سفیری اولوب  
برای کشت و کزار کچنده بحر سفید  
چان بنه عزیمت ایتمش اولان موسوی  
(ازیوت) اق دلاز اظه لردن بیعضی لری نی  
سیر وسیاحتله بو دفعه درسعاته عودت  
ایلم شد.

---

خدیو مصر فخامتلو دولتلو پاشا  
حضرتلری نك کچن صالی کونیه اسکندریه  
مواصلت بیومش اولدقلری تلغراف  
واسطه سیله خبر انم شد.

---

(توجهات)

باب عالی اوراق مدیری سعادتلو رضا بک  
افندی رتبه اولی صنف ثانیه سی  
توجه بیورلم شد.

#12 - 245 1869-9/5 2

4- The last stage of proposed script method and alphabet by Malkum Khan to the Sublime Porte

*C'est le deuxième degré*

تدريجي طور تي ٻن مرحلن جي ذريعي لکڻ جو طريقو بيان ڪيو ويو آهي. پهريون مرحلو اهو آهي ته لکڻ جو طريقو سڌو ۽ آسان ڪيو وڃي ۽ ٻيو مرحلو اهو آهي ته لکڻ جو طريقو ڪمزورن جي فائدو ڏيکاريو وڃي. هن ڪري هن وقت لکڻ جو طريقو سڌو ۽ آسان ڪيو وڃي ۽ ٻيو مرحلو اهو آهي ته لکڻ جو طريقو ڪمزورن جي فائدو ڏيکاريو وڃي.

HR-545 1869-C/5

*Kudemā-yı Mısriin usūl-i idāre-yi memleketin neticesi ammenin husūl-i emn ü asāyiş-i hālleri kaziyesinden ibāret olduđunu cümleden evvel fehmi ettiklerinden emr-i hükümeti mümkün mertebe derece-yi kemāl isāl itmişler idi.*  
*Zimām-ı hükümet verāset tārikiyle mülükleri hanedanı yedinde olub cālis-i mesned-i hükümrānī olan zevāt dahi hevā ve heveslerine tebāiyyet itmeyerek ef'āl ve hareketlerini kavānin-i mevzūāya tevfiķ itmeđe mecbūr edilir. Ve bunlar hizmetlerinde userā ve ecānib istihdām edemeyerek bu imtiyāz yalnız millet asīl-zāde-gānından ashāb-ı haysiyyet ve ma'lūmāta mahtūt idi (transcribed by the author).*