Articles (Theme)

A CHALLENGING TASK FOR JOURNALISM HISTORIANS: THE CULTURAL TURN AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE OTTOMAN/TURKISH PRESS[1]

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Abstract

This article critically evaluates the historiography of the Ottoman/Turkish press and seeks to shed light on the debates in journalism history triggered by James Carey's call for a "cultural history of journalism." It argues that participating in these debates is crucial at a time when the history of journalism is on the cusp of a 'digital turn'. For the first time since the early 20th century, the development of digital archives and the technologies that support them has significantly increased global interest in the history of journalism. The

widespread use of digital archives will gradually transform the narrative of scarcity into one of abundance. Nonetheless, transforming this interest into a productive process of historical knowledge production requires researchers to rethink their epistemic relationship with the Ottoman press. This article argues that the 'digital turn' offers a crucial opportunity to add new pieces to the history of Ottoman journalism. However, for these pieces to coalesce, journalism historians must take the previously neglected path of the 'cultural turn'.

Keywords: journalism studies; cultural studies; digital turn; transnational journalism history; Ottoman journalism

GAZETECİLİK TARİHÇİLERİ İÇİN ZORLU BİR GÖREV: KÜLTÜREL DÖNÜŞ VE OSMANLI/TÜRK BASIN TARİHYAZIMI

Öz

Bu makale, Osmanlı/Türk basın tarihiyazımını eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmekte ve James Carey'nin "gazeteciliğin kültürel tarihi" çağrısı ekseninde gelişen gazetecilik tarihi tartışmalarını gündeme taşımayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu tartışmalara dahil olmak, gazetecilik tarihinin 'dijital dönemeç'in eşiğinde olduğu bir dönemde hayati bir önem taşıyor. Dijital arşivler ve bu arşivlerin kullanımına yönelik geliştirilen teknolojiler, gazetecilik tarihine gösterilen küresel ilginin 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısından bu yana ilk kez bu kadar yoğunlaşmasına neden olmuştur. Buna bağlı olarak dijital arşivlerin kullanımının yaygınlık kazanması tarihi gazetelere ilişkin yoksunluk anlatısını en sonunda bir bolluk anlatısıyla değiştirecek. Ancak bu arşivsel bolluğun verimli bir tarihsel bilgi üretim sürecine dönüşmesi, araştırmacıların 19. yüzyıl Osmanlı basınıyla kurdukları epistemik ilişkinin revizyonuna ihtiyaç duyuyor. Bu makale, 'dijital dönemeç'in Osmanlı gazetecilik tarihine yeni parçalar kazandırmak adına oldukça önemli bir fırsat sunduğunu, ancak bu parçaların gerçekten bir araya gelebilmesi için gazetecilik tarihçilerinin daha önce ihmal edilen 'kültürel dönemeç' yolunu izlemeleri gerektiğini savunuyor.

Introduction

Digital archives developed through projects of public and private institutions in various countries have provided researchers with unprecedented access to hundreds of thousands of pages of newspapers and magazines published in the Ottoman Empire from the 19th through the early 20th centuries. Once hidden away in the private collections of libraries, newspapers printed in Turkish with Arabic, Armenian, Greek, and Hebrew scripts or various languages have now found their way to the online archives, easily accessible to anyone interested. Recent studies have, therefore, increasingly turned to the primary sources of the first mediatization experience of Ottoman society. It seems that the widespread use of digital archives will gradually transform the narrative of the scarcity of Ottoman newspaper collections formulated by pioneering historians of journalism such as Mustafa Nihat and Selim Nüzhet into one of abundance (Gerçek, 1931, p. 5; Özön, 1928, p. 2894). Nonetheless, transforming this abundance into a productive process of historical knowledge production requires researchers to rethink their epistemic relationship with the Ottoman press.

As John Hartley (1996, p. 35) points out, the essential component of journalism "is the creation of readers as publics, and the connection of these readerships to other systems, such as those of politics, economics, and social control." Since Ottoman journalists and their audiences were part of a multilingual and even multiscriptual cognitive sphere, researchers' ability to develop a profound bond with Ottoman press culture depends on their adaptability to the Ottoman Empire's multicultural media landscape. Alongside digital archives, translation engines and optical character recognition (OCR) technologies developed for Arabic, Greek, Armenian, and Hebrew can potentially transform how scholars read, evaluate, and analyze the Ottoman press. Although they are still in the early stages of development, such technologies, which are expected to reach a reliable level of accuracy in the near future, will soon challenge researchers, especially those who base the significance of their studies on Ottoman journalism in Turkey, through direct translation or transliteration of original texts, to question their research practices.

Advances in digital technology and its integration into newspaper archives are opening exciting fresh avenues for research, offering a modern alternative to the traditional labor-intensive exploration of physical archives. The impact of these opportunities is often compared to the 'cultural turn' of the 1970s, a transformative period in which historians developed new historical narratives. According to Bob Nicholson (2013, p. 63), researchers are "potentially on the cusp of a similar revolution - a 'digital turn' in humanities scholarship driven by the creative use of online archives and a willingness to imagine new kinds of

research". In journalism history, digital technologies' potential for scholarly creativity is promoted by two crucial developments: "massive digitization, which facilitates access to remote holdings and, more recently, improved search capabilities, which alleviate the tedious exploration of vast collections" (Ehrmann, Bunout, & Clavert, 2023, p. 1). These two developments enable researchers to explore a vast collection of materials that dwarfs most library holdings, search by topic of interest during flexible research hours, and easily incorporate the resulting data into their research. Digital newspapers also open up opportunities for techniques such as text mining and quantitative methods like automated content analysis that have been underutilized in the history of journalism (Birkner, Koenen, & Schwarzenegger, 2018).

For the first time since the early 20th century, the development of digital archives and the technologies that support them has significantly increased global interest in the history of journalism. At least the study of the history of journalism, "a remain of an embarrassment," as James Carey (1974, p. 3) famously put it, seems to have relieved this pejorative label. The change in the field is not just about digitizing historical newspapers and removing the dust and mold that covers them, but, as John Nerone (2010, p. 17) states, it is also related to the "unstoppable multiplication of communication theories" which has led journalism historians to re-examine their historiographical practices over the last forty years. Although various institutions in Turkey closely follow the global trend of digitization, unfortunately, most studies on the history of journalism evaluate these sources in the framework of an obsolete and overused historical narrative. Therefore, to "reimagine what we know about the 19th-century press" using the possibilities offered by digital archives and new technologies, "scholars must be able to engage critically with both the newspapers and periodicals they read and the digital resources in which they are found" (Mussell, 2012, p. 1). This article argues that the 'digital turn' offers a crucial opportunity to add new pieces to the history of Ottoman journalism. However, for these pieces to coalesce, journalism historians must take the previously neglected path of the 'cultural turn'. Expanding the scope of the field requires developing alternatives to the nation-state-centric teleological narrative that dominates research on Ottoman/Turkish journalism history, which can be achieved through critical engagement with the 'cultural turn'.

'Cultural turn' in journalism history

The reflection of the 'cultural turn' experienced by the social sciences and humanities in the 1970s finds its most influential source in journalism history in James Carey's (1974) article titled *The Problem of Journalism History*. Carey states that the field of journalism history is "dominated by one implicit paradigm of interpretation", which is "dull and unimaginative," "excessively trivial in the problems chosen for study," "oppressively chronological," "divorced from the major current of contemporary historiography," and "needlessly preoccupied with the production of biographies of editors and publishers." This paradigm, which

Carey calls "Whig interpretation", was later also referred to as "liberal narrative" (Curran, 2002), "grand narrative" (Broersma, 2010) or "traditional historiography" (Kızılca, 2016) by various historians of journalism. The liberal narrative of the history of journalism, "the oldest and best established of the competing interpretations", begins with the origins of the parliament, navigates through the defeat of absolutism and the establishment of the rule of law, paving the way for the rise of political parties, and culminates in the creation of mass democracy (Curran, 2002, p. 136). The central idea of this analytical framework, often explicitly or implicitly reflected in most studies of Ottoman/Turkish press history, is modernization, "mapping the linear progress towards an autonomous profession that empowers citizens and facilitates democracy" (Broersma, 2010, p. 13).

Oğuzhan Taş (2010, 2014), who has promoted the recognition of Carey in Turkish communication literature and presented his works as both a point of reference and an object of critique, highlights the challenges of developing alternative approaches to the progressive narrative that has dominated Anglo-American journalism historiography for nearly 150 years. According to Taş (2010, p. 49), the main reason for this is the ossification of the progressive narrative, which is deeply ingrained in history. Moreover, the profession of journalism has consistently reinforced the progressive narrative through its inherent discursive practices since its foundation. These discursive practices have significantly influenced the development of the field, especially since the late 19th-century, when journalism began to be institutionalized academically, with extensive research conducted mainly through journalists, editors, publishers and newspaper owners. Consequently, historical studies that seek to understand the emergence of the field of journalism solely in terms of processes of information transmission, objectivity, and factuality ignore the ideological struggles, class conflicts, and cultural shifts that gave rise to the field of journalism as well as one of Carey's most critical contributions, —the dimension of journalism as a platform for conversation of people themselves (Taş, 2014, p. 111). Therefore, approaching the history of journalism from a critical perspective requires disengagement from the dominant narrative and considering the broader historical and social contexts.

Carey's critique is based on the idea that the press is not just a legal privilege, a technological innovation, or an institution. At its core, it is "the expression of a certain ethos, temperament or imagination" that "should be viewed as the embodiment of consciousness." According to Carey, journalism is essentially "a state of experiencing the world," and the "idea of a report" is the key to journalism history. Therefore, the history of journalism "would attempt to capture that reflexive process wherein modern consciousness has been created by the symbolic form known as the report and how in turn modern consciousness finds institutionalized expression as journalism" (Carey, 1974, p. 27). Carey's recommendations for reviewing the study of journalism history, both as a textual and cultural form, have resonated with the scholars who have been thinking about journalism history and exploring new ways of doing it. Marion Marzolf (1975, p. 42), for instance, responds to Carey's call for a cultural history of journalism by pointing out the value of examining

"the cultural context of the society that produced the journalists and journalism", since, in her view, "the historical study of journalists as a professional group has been largely neglected." Marzolf encourages historians of journalism to look at things from the perspective of cultural history, which views the content of the press as a mirror of the cultural values of a period, explores the beliefs and values articulated by practitioners and critics, and examines the evolutionary nature of reporting. Other scholars also emphasize the idea of analyzing news reports as texts that reflect the values shared by journalists. Erickson (1975) notes that existing historical research on journalism, while deeply concerned with organizational and structural change, often neglects the values expressed in the content of the press, revealing a significant gap in our understanding. He emphasizes the pivotal role of reporting in the history of journalism and proposes to study reporting as a cultural product. Richard A. Schwarzlose (1975) challenges an academic discipline that lacks fundamental research in a vital area, namely, "the news report in journalism," to begin with the basics: a comprehensive history of news.

In sum, these studies advocate for moving beyond the traditional institutional, biographical, and chronological narratives of the development of the press. Instead, they suggest analyzing newspaper content as indicators that can reveal the cultural values of a given period, trace the historical evolution of news texts, and uncover the shared beliefs among journalists as a group. On a broader level, they call for a cultural history of journalism that focuses on "the historical significance of changes in communications systems for society and the role of media in circulating ideas to the general public" (Marzolf, 1978, p. 14).

Around the time these debates were taking place, Orhan Koloğlu (1981) developed similar reflections on the history of journalism in Turkey:

Surprisingly, this subject has not been adequately researched. Our research into the history of the press has either been from a legal point of view, not concerning our own society, but as a comparison of progress and regression with other societies. Or regarding the relationship between specific individuals and those in power. No account has been taken of how and to what extent the press has influenced the public in the short or long term, what kind of formations the seeds sown at a given time pave the way for the future, and how it shapes the public mentality, which is the most vital aspect to transform [...] This issue arises because our focus remains narrowly fixed on the chronological history of the press, rather than exploring broader themes like "the history of public opinion" and "the history of mentality."

Despite these insightful ideas, Koloğlu never fully developed them into a systematic critique. Indeed, these ideas were never thoroughly explored by the small community of journalism historians in Turkey. The history of mentalities owes its development to key figures from the Annales School, including Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, and Philippe Ariès. As Peter Burke (1986, p. 440) points out, the main program of

the history of mentalities is to bridge the conceptual gap between the history of ideas and social history "in order to avoid having to choose history with the society left out, and a social history with the thought left out." The concept of mentality, which "includes different thought patterns, norms, mores, and traditions," highlights the subconscious behavior of individuals or groups in everyday life (Kortti, 2011, pp. 74-75). The study of mentalities thus aims to broaden the scope of historical narratives by examining the everyday culture of ordinary people from the bottom up. In this context, Koloğlu's call to look at the history of journalism through the lenses of "the history of mentalities" can be interpreted as considering newspapers as mediums that allow researchers to study shifting processes of public opinion.

This demand is in line with the broader vision of media studies "as a field is almost inherently interested in discovering large patterns of opinion formation" (Eijnatten, Pieters, & Verheul, 2013, p. 58), and it still retains the potential to play a helpful role in the development of the field of journalism history in Turkey. Such a perspective might allow the well-worn but still fashionable question of "Why did the press arrive in the Ottoman Empire so late?" to give way to more rewarding questions like "What cultural myths did newspapers in the Ottoman Empire promote and challenge?", "How did they shape the languages and mentalities of their readers?" or, more broadly, "What was their relationship to the history of ideas and public thought?" and so on. However, one of the most critical points to recall in this context is to be wary of dichotomous formulations. Such formulations, which Joseph P. McKerns (1977, p. 88) views as "the characteristic of progressive interpretation", offer an oversimplified understanding of the historical processes based on the conflict of traditional/modern, old/new, east/west, good/bad, local/foreign, national/non-national, etc., ignoring the dialectical relationship in between. The main drawback of a dichotomous perspective is that it misses the gray areas between the two poles and devalues the opposite in the process of historical analysis. For this reason, when studying Ottoman journalism, it is crucial to examine the press both as an instrument of progress and as a medium that sustained specific conservative ideas throughout history.

"The turn to the 'cultural' in historical interpretation can, in many ways, be seen as a development of pioneering works of the Annales School and the British Cultural Studies." Both approaches led to the development of a perspective in which the emphasis shifted from material conditions to mentalities rather than the more Marxist-oriented social history of the 1960s (MacRaild & Taylor, 2004, p. 118). Carey's definition of cultural history in the context of the history of journalism also rests on such a foundation. According to him, cultural history, which "is not concerned merely with events but with the thought within them," starts from the assumption that consciousness has its own history. It suggests that people's perceptions of each other shape social realities and that beneath the apparent uniformity of social realities, there lies a rich diversity of thought. Accordingly, the "task of cultural history, then, is this recovery of past

forms of imagination, of historical consciousness" to answer the question, "How did it feel to live and act in a particular period of human history?" (Carey, 1974, p. 4).

Communication historian David Paul Nord raised one of the most significant critiques of Carey's approach to the cultural history of journalism. According to Nord (1988, p. 10), the cultural approach is specifically weak when it comes to the study of power: "This weakness may be a minor problem for some types of cultural history, but it is a major problem for the study of mass communication." This is because "the consciousness that is supposed to be embedded in the language of journalism is the product of large institutions." Therefore, "the study of mass media from the bottom up is enormously complicated by the fact that the messages arrive from the top down." Responding to Carey's call for the cultural history of journalism, Nord (2006, p. 125) proposes that the focus should shift from news reports to the readers: "Readers were not passive receptacles, filled up by the top-down flow of media messages from powerful elites. Tough readers did not ordinarily participate in writing the messages of commercial journalism, they did write the meanings of those messages, in their own peculiar ways, into their minds and hearts." Andie Tucher (2009, p. 290), on the other hand, finds Carey's use of the concept of "consciousness" rather vague and vast. Tucher suggests that "to wriggle free of the disquieting grip of 'consciousness,' to recast the question in a way that still explores journalism as a whole and reporting in particular as cultural products revelatory of the human relationship with reality but in a more specific way": "How did the relationship between local editors and their readers change?"; "How did conventions of and expectations about investigative reporting develop?"; "What were the effects of the telegraph on the language of journalism?"; "Under what circumstances and when did hoaxes, pranks, tall tales, and other quasi-truthful items generally fade out of the mainstream press?" Tucher thus emphasizes the need to explore the interaction between journalists and readers within the context of evolving strategies and technological advancements that shape journalistic practices.

The debates provoked by Carey's proposal for an alternative way to the progressive narrative of journalism history served as a call to action for journalism historians, encouraging researchers to reconsider their assumptions and aim for a more inclusive and multidimensional history of journalism. The cultural approach, which initially "regarded itself as marginalized," has gradually become "the default approach to journalism history" (Nerone, 2024, p. 417) and extends the history of journalism into broader social, cultural, and political contexts. Historical narratives now present a more holistic view of the journalistic culture, encompassing editors, reporters, printers, publishers, advertisers, distributors, readers, and consumers. The cultural approach also broadens the focus to include previously underrepresented groups like women, minorities, workers, and radicals and introduces new themes such as the history of news systems, the labor

history of news, and the relationship of journalism to identities (Nerone, 2024, p. 418; Shaw & Zack, 1987, p. 111).

The grand narrative of Ottoman-Turkish journalism history and its critiques

The study of Ottoman journalism adopted the liberal-progressive narrative relatively early on. Ahmet Emin Yalman (1914) pioneered this approach with his doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by Its Press,*" submitted to Columbia University in 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War. This seminal academic study of the Ottoman press history was published later by the School of Political Science at Columbia University in the same year. In his book, which was even reviewed by Robert E. Park, a distinguished scholar of the Chicago School, Yalman uses the press to illustrate the changes within the Ottoman Empire throughout the 19th-century. Yalman's final argument suggests that the new order replacing the *ancien régime* will be based on capital, which will result in "the press having to forfeit some of its idealism, and some of its virtues." But this devotion is essential if structural stability is to be achieved (Yalman, 1914, pp. 139-140). According to Park (1915), Yalman made "no special attempt to do more than to present the outstanding facts" and "no effort to draw any general conclusions in regard to the influence or function of the press in society general", but as a source book it offers "an opportunity to study the effect of publicity in regard to public affairs in a region of which it may be said that fifty years ago a public did not exist."

In Yalman's (1914, p. 16) historical narrative, the press begins "as has everything modern in Turkey, as a government institution, and maintained this character until 1860." It experiences a golden period between 1860 and 1876, "when an independent class of reformers and innovators rise." It was during this period that issues such as the role of government, types of regimes, human rights, and economic issues were first put on the public agenda. However, the golden age was disrupted when Sultan Abdul Hamid II "reduced the press to a mere tool of his will and a prop of his system." "As a result, the real press activity and free intellectual life of Turkey" had to migrate to different countries, "and from there, furnished the country, artificially isolated, with an underground life-stream." With the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Period, the press once again began "been able to play, on the general social field, a free part in leadership, and to act as an unrestricted intermediary of ideas between Turkey and the Western World."

This interpretive template became a central narrative in subsequent studies of press history in Turkey, particularly in the study of Ottoman journalism. Selim Nüzhet (1931), Server İskit (1943, 1964), Hasan Refik Ertuğ (1959), Enver Behnan Şapolyo (1971), Hülya Baykal (1990), M. Nuri İnuğur (1993), Alpay Kabacalı

(1994), Uğur Gündüz (2018), Belkıs Ulusoy (2021) have continued to interpret the development of the Ottoman press through the lens of the liberal-progressive paradigm. It is noteworthy that the statement "The Turkish press actively fought against the feudal-religious regime and, despite various difficulties and even serious intellectual-political shortcomings, managed to be the school and mouthpiece of the progressive forces that led Turkey to the first bourgeois revolution" belongs to A.D. Jeltyakov (1979, p. 153), who presents a Marxist interpretation of the history of the Ottoman press. All these studies analyze the evolution of the press from a state-controlled institution to a more dynamic force, reflecting and influencing the modernization and political transformation of the nation. During the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, the press has been highlighted for disseminating reformist ideas, supporting national movements and promoting the adoption of Republican ideals and principles. However, as McKerns (1977, p. 92) points out, the progressive narrative of the history of journalism is only one facet of the broader picture: "Journalism history is a mosaic, and it is imperative that journalism historians begin to provide the additional pieces." This is especially relevant in the context of Ottoman press history, where the progressive paradigm in journalism historiography has reached its saturation point.

Regrettably, there is a noticeable lack of detailed critical reflection on the historiography of the Ottoman press in Turkey today. This lack of self-reflexivity within the field can be directly attributed to the dominant influence of the progressivist paradigm (Atwood, 1978, p. 3). The conformism inherent in this paradigm has led only a small number of journalism historians to critically reflect on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of their work. As a notable exception, Gül Karagöz Kızılca's (2016) *A Critical Reevaluation of the Ottoman/Turkish Press Historiography* provides valuable insights into the historiography of the Ottoman press. The dominant historiography of the Ottoman press, characterized by its orientalist, modernist/westernizationist, and nation-state-centric tendencies, commonly overlooks social dynamics in its analyses. According to this perspective, the initial rise of the press in the Ottoman Empire is seen primarily as a result of the state's reform efforts during the Tanzimat Era, often failing to pay due attention to the local and global contexts. Within this framework, the press, which developed under the influence of the state elite, is portrayed as a tool that remained detached from society throughout its development, serving exclusively the intellectuals. Consequently, there is a shift away from understanding the Ottoman press as a forum in which the conflicting interests of different social groups become visible and in which changes in the social, legal, political and economic structures are manifested in various ways (Kızılca, 2016, pp. 80-83). Kızılca emphasizes the importance of developing more nuanced approaches to the study of the Ottoman press in the 19th and 20th centuries, which should take into account not only external influences but also internal social dynamics.

It is crucial not to overlook that the dynamics in the Ottoman Empire linked to state reforms, the rise of nationalist sentiments and imaginations, and print capitalism in the 19th-century unfolded in a multilingual

communication landscape (Kim & Bashkin, 2021). Despite this, much of the research on the history of the Ottoman press and journalism reduces the dialogical, multilingual and multicultural communication landscape of the empire to a monologue, centered on the teleological formation of the nation-state. According to Broersma, because of the limited horizon of the progressive paradigm of journalism history, "media, journalism and press historians still predominantly study events and developments in a nation-state framework, without structurally considering international developments and cross-border influences" (Broersma, 2010, p. 10). Echoing "James Carey's plea for a history of reporting," he proposes to focus on the transformation of journalistic routines, in terms of "transnational organizations and networks," "transnational public spheres," "transnational audiences," "the transfer of norms and ethical standards and national differences," and "technologies that facilitate transnational communication." In a recent article, Broersma and Frank Harbers (2021, p. 1) also offer a foundational manifesto on transnational journalism history, guiding new researchers who are eager to explore this path:

Transnational journalism history acknowledges that cultural forms are produced and exchanged across borders. It focuses on the interactions between agents, ideas, innovations, norms and social and cultural practices that extend beyond national boundaries. Moreover, it acknowledges the diversity and pluriformity of journalism within the national context, moving away from the idea that national journalistic cultures are coherent, discrete units of analysis. Transnational journalism history studies how interactions between these different levels impact the incorporation and adaptation of new ideas, concepts, and practices into local, national and transnational frameworks. By moving back and forth between these levels, the connective and dialectic nature of these movements is emphasized. Transnational journalism history thus treats the nation as only one level or context among a range of others, instead of being the primary frame for analysis.

Uygur Kocabaşoğlu and Metin Berge's (2006) study is crucial in revealing the transnational journalism history approach by examining the reflections of the Bolshevik Revolution and related knowledge and interest in the Ottoman press. They focus on the ways in which news coverage of the Bolshevik Revolution, mainly from European news agencies and newspapers, was reused in the various circles that made up the Ottoman press. In a similar vein, reconstructing the history of the Ottoman press and journalism in cultural terms, or "recovering past imaginations" as Carey calls it, requires transnational studies that recognize the multicultural and multilingual nature of the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, as an exceptional project, "*Kebikeç: Journal of Resource Studies for Humanities*" has devoted its issues, especially since 2020, to non-Turkish newspapers and periodicals in the Ottoman Period. As mentioned in the introduction to the theme of the journal's 50th issue, research on periodicals in the Ottoman Empire has concentrated mainly on those published in Ottoman Turkish. In the historiography of the Ottoman press, the publications in various languages are often considered as merely supplementary to the main narrative. However, these

sources should be considered as primary materials for the political, economic, social and cultural history of both the Ottoman and Republican periods within a more holistic approach that transcends the specific histories and issues of linguistic, religious or ethnic communities.

In addition to non-Turkish newspapers and periodicals, one of the most critical effects of adopting a transnational perspective in the context of Ottoman journalism would be an increased awareness of allographic journalistic traditions. The term allography is used to describe "the phenomenon of writing in one language, not in its usual script but in that of another language" (den Heijer & Schmidt, 2014, p. 1). In the 19th-century, Turkish served as a literary language not only for the Muslim/Turkish population but also for various religious and ethnic communities throughout the empire. In the Ottoman Empire, the wide circulation of newspapers in different allographies reveals one of the most distinctive results of Ottoman multilingualism in journalistic culture. Newspapers published in Karamanli (Turkish written in Greek script) or Armeno-Turkish (Turkish written in Armenian script) had a significant impact on the formal, functional, and discursive changes that emerged in the language of Turkish journalism from the 19th-century to the early years of the 20th century. In fact, Yalman's (1914, p. 59) work provided an early glimpse into how these newspapers at least were consumed by other journalists and influenced Ottoman public opinion:

> In August 1877, the Terjuman-i-Efkiar (Interpreter of Ideas), a paper printed in Armenian characters and in the Turkish language, published an article pointing out that the Turkish press had no prestige abroad, and no influence among its readers, that it was ridiculed by the press of other countries, never being taken seriously or quoted by them. The conclusion stated that the Ottoman press deserved such treatment, as it had no intrinsic value, and that it would have to raise its quality in order to become more effective. This article was quoted by all the papers, and all of them sadly acknowledged that the statements were correct.

However, this insight remained obscured for a long time as Yalman's liberal narrative was overshadowed by a more nationalist tone among post-empire journalism historians. The main reason for this oversight is that after the alphabet revolution of 1928, the majority public in Turkey could no longer read texts published in Arabic script without special training. As a result, only experts determined which texts were important enough to be translated into modern Turkish script (Mignon, 2008, p. 42). Metin Yüksel (2021a, p. 32) points that the interests and knowledge of scholars trained in the languages, dialects, and alphabets imposed by the centralized nation-states within the regions of the Ottoman legacy were often shaped by the epistemic political boundaries set by those same states. "Methodological nationalism," which sets these boundaries, manifests most clearly in historical narratives as "ideologically and methodologically pure imaginations of national identity and culture" (Yüksel, 2021b, p. 340). Therefore, due to their "hybrid character", allographic traditions, which "form a practical and mental barrier to the modern historian who unconsciously assumes,

most of the time, fixed and given national, religious, cultural and linguistic identities" (F. Benlisoy & Benlisoy, 2010, p. 93) are consequently excluded from the practice of the history. "At the same time, the old practice of leaving the Ottoman Empire to historians and the Turkish Republic to social scientists" has fueled this tendency for many years (Findley, 2010, p. 2).

Today, our renewed transnational understanding of Ottoman journalism owes much to the pioneering works of Andreas Tietze and Robert Anhegger and especially to the outstanding efforts of Evangelia Balta since the late 1980s. In addition, studies from the 2000s onwards have played a crucial role in highlighting the multiethnic and multilingual cosmopolitan nature of literate communities within the empire (Balta & Kappler, 2010; Balta & Ölmez, 2011; Cankara, 2015a, 2015b; Mignon, 2021; Şişmanoğlu Şimşek, 2010, 2017; Strauss, 1995, 2003; Uslu & Altuğ, 2014). Among these scholars, Johann Strauss stands out as one of the most influential critical thinkers who challenged the national literary paradigm by considering literary activity in the specific context of the cultural sphere of the Ottoman Empire. According to Strauss (2003, p. 39), a major problem in Ottoman/Turkish historiography is the tendency of modern historians to construct separate national literary identities, each limited to the production of a 'nation' in a single language, in line with the Western European concept of 'national' literature. Due to the multicultural landscape of the Ottoman Empire, an entirely new literary network emerged in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th-century, characterized by new intersections, convergences, and conflicts in which people of different nationalities, religions, and origins participated and in which processes of cosmopolitanization and localization coexisted (Uslu & Altuğ, 2014, pp. viii-ix). In this context, Mignon (2014) highlights the challenges of constructing a national literary canon within the multilingual and multicultural context of the Ottoman Empire:

> It is worth keeping in mind that nineteenth-century Istanbul was a cultural centre in which one language, such as Turkish, could be written and printed in four different alphabets, namely the Ottoman-Arabic script, the Armenian script, the Greek script and, more rarely, the Hebrew script, while a single alphabet, for instance, the Arabic script, could be used to print material in the various languages of the Muslim populations of the empire.

Mignon (2008, p. 43) challenges the idea that the literary history of the Ottoman Empire has been shaped exclusively by Muslim-Turkish authors and calls for a more inclusive approach based on the language that avoids religious or ethnic exclusions: "It is a fact that the time has already come to write the history of literature based on language, not religion." While the studies mentioned here are primarily concerned with literary history, they are equally crucial for a critical understanding of the history of Ottoman journalism since the contributions of non-Muslims to Ottoman journalistic culture are still largely neglected. Along with this, there is a gradually growing body of scholarship that aims to unearth the sources that the nation-state-centric progressivist narratives have excluded from the history of Ottoman journalism while

also revealing the transnational trajectories in journalistic history that have yet to be explored. Murat Cankara (2015a, p. 1) challenges traditional interpretations of the Ottoman *millet* system. According to him, cultural contact among Ottoman millets "has either been neglected on the grounds that the Ottoman millets lived in 'compartments' or has been romanticized through clichés that depict how 'happily' the millets lived together." In his study, which examines the transcultural relations of Ottoman *millet*s through the consumption of Armeno-Turkish texts by Muslim-Turkish intellectuals, Cankara demonstrates that language or script differences actually challenge current scholars more than they did 19th-century compatriots. In his later publications, Cankara emphasizes the incompatibility of national boundaries with the transnational Ottoman journalistic culture and illustrates the unique insights that the non-Muslim press offers for understanding the history of Ottoman journalism (2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020). Similarly, Şehnaz Şişmanoğlu-Şimşek, Foti Benlisoy and Stefo Benlisoy highlight how analyzing the transformations of the Karamanlidika newspaper *Anatoli*, can provide valuable insights into the Turkish Orthodox Greek community as well as the transcultural dimensions of Ottoman journalism (F. Benlisoy & Benlisoy, 2010; Şişmanoğlu Şimşek, 2010, 2019). Specifically, Stefo Benlisoy demonstrates that the polemical culture that emerged among Tanzimat period journalists, who published in various scripts and languages, provides a fertile ground for tracing these transitions (2013, 2014, 2020).

Conclusion

Today, communication and media studies in Turkey show little interest in historical research, which is crucial for the development of theoretical work. This is perhaps most evident in the field of journalism history. A clear indication of this deficiency is the limited contribution of communication scholars to the study of Ottoman journalism. As a result, journalism historiography in Turkey is stuck in a particular phase of history and has lost much of its potential productivity. This disinterest is so widespread that even cultural studies, a mainstream analytical framework in communication and media research, has remained largely detached from the history of Ottoman journalism. Over time, the digital turn in journalism history can provide much easier access to 19th-century newspapers, allow automated transliteration, or offer keyword search and text mining across thousands of newspaper pages. However, without the critical framework provided by the cultural turn, these technological advances will fail to provide a more nuanced understanding of the history of Ottoman journalism.

Ottoman press historiography requires a paradigm shift from a primarily institutional and descriptive national "press history" to an analytical and critical transnational "history of journalism." In order for this change to take place, however, more scholars from the field of communication and media studies will need to contribute to the field. Researchers wishing to explore the transnational cultural history of Ottoman

journalism will find a vast repository of primary sources, along with the guidance of a community of scholars, primarily literary historians, to help them navigate this bountiful field. As a prelude to exploring the multicultural media landscape of Ottoman journalism, considering a bibliographical trio—Evangelia Balta (2014), Hasmik Stepanyan (2005), and Hasan Duman (2000) —could be quite stimulating.

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