

## Printing Mushaf or Gaining Power and Authority over the Muslim World

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## Abstract

*In this article\*, Mushaf printings and their relation to international politics have been studied. Using historical materials like archive documents and newspapers, the article shows the role of Mushaf printings in the conflict among World powers, Europe and the Ottoman Empire. This study thereby focuses on three cases: The first case is the Mushaf-printings in Europe particularly in 1787 in Russia right after the Crimean War and in 1798 after the occupation of Egypt and in the 1830s during the invasions of Africa by France. Russia and France, as two European colonialist powers thereby tried to establish itself as the new patron for the colonised Muslims. The second case is the Mushaf-printing in Iran. Meanwhile printing of the Mushaf was printed by Iranians, Ottomans considers issue as that time must be defended the Qur'an from corruptions and changes by the hands of Non-Muslim and Non-Sunni communities. The most significant case is the third one: the British black propaganda against the Caliphate, Abdulhamid The Second, to trigger an uprising in British-colonised territories, like India. Ottomans made some policies against these printings by establishing print houses and control mechanism to make clear that they themselves are the real leaders of Muslims. As a conclusion, the article demonstrates how Mushaf printings were used to gain power and authority over Muslims during the clash among the Ottoman Empire, European powers and Iran.*

**Keywords:** *Mushaf Printing, Ottoman, Political Authority, Colonialism, Europe, Iran.*

## Öz

*Bu makalede Mushaf basımı ve uluslararası politika ile olan ilişkisi ele alınmaktadır. Arşiv belgeleri ve gazete haberleri gibi tarihi malzemeler kullanarak, bu makale Avrupa ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu gibi dünya güçleri arasında gerçekleşen çatışmada Mushaf Basımının rolünü ortaya koymaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma üç örnek üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Birincisi Avrupada basılan özellikle Kırım Savaşı sonrası 1787 yılında Rusya basılan Mushaf ile Fransızlar tarafından Mısır'ın işgali sonrası 1789 yılında ve Afrika'nın işgali sonrası da 1830 yılında basılan Mushaf örneğidir. Birer Avrupa Sömürgeci güçleri olarak Rusya ve Fransa kendilerini sömürgeleşmiş Müslümanlar üzerinde yeni liderler olarak kurgulamaya çalıştılar. İkinci örnek ise İranda basılan Mushaflardır. Mushaf basımı İranlılarca devam ederken, Osmanlılar da Mushaf basımında Gayri Müslim ve Sünni olmayanların elleriyle tahrif edilmesi ve değiştirilmesine yol açabileceği korkusuna karşı korunması gereken bir mesele olarak algılamışlardır. En önemli diğer örnek ise, İngilizlerin Hindistan gibi sömürge altına aldıkları İslam topraklarında Halife İkinci Abdulhamid'e karşı ayaklanma başlatmak için yaptıkları kara propagandadır. Osmanlılar mushaf basımına karşı matbaa kurma ve kontrol mekanizması inşa ederek Müslümanların gerçek liderlerinin kendileri olduğu konusunda bir açıklık getirmek için bazı politikalar geliştirdiler. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma Mushaf basımının Osmanlılar, Avrupa devletleri ve İran arasında gerçekleşen Müslümanların üzerinde bir güç ve otorite elde etme çabasını ortaya koymaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Mushaf Basımı, Osmanlılar, Siyasi Otorite, Sömürgecilik, Avrupa, İran.*

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about printed Mushaf editions in Islamic world see. Mahmut Gündüz, "Matbaanın Tarihçesi ve İlk Kur'an-ı Kerim Basmaları", *Vakıflar Dergisi* 12 (1978): 335-350.

## INTRODUCTION

The first Mushaf edition in the Islamic world was printed by Kazan Muslims in 1803.<sup>1</sup> Even this attempt corresponds to about three centuries after the attempted Mushaf printing in Europe. The Mushaf edition is not only a cultural and educational subject of Muslims. The Mushaf edition is also the subject of politics, diplomacy and bureaucracy. The Islamic world, which is reluctant to use the printing press in religious works, is too late to understand that knowledge is a power and authority. When they realized this, Muslim World lagged far behind the West and lost the ground to Western colonialist countries. The western politicians, who saw the information as the power, started to intervene in the distribution and control of the Islamic works by developing counter policies and also by distributing these works to the Muslim masses. Moreover, the colonial states, by giving diplomatic responses, to destroy the caliphate authority in particular and to form their policies towards the overthrow of their colonies in the context of Mushaf printing.

However, Muslim scholars have mostly looked at the issue of Mushaf-Printing from the legal perspective. It is commonly known that the printing of Islamic books in general encountered strong opposition within the Islamic world. The reason given for this resistance against the printing is mostly related to the religious sensitiveness dealing with textual corruption of Islamic sources, particularly the Mushaf. It is true that before printing, the Qur'an was transmitted in manuscripts written by calligraphers in a special artistic way that has certain rules aiming to protect the original form of the Mushaf, preventing the entrance of anything that does not belong to it and to present its words and letters in a most decorative shape. This reason cannot be ignored; however, there are also other arguments and the case seems to be more complicated. Some suggests that politicians wanted to protect the calligraphers' welfare and their economic status.<sup>2</sup> This seems to make sense as, at the time, well-equipped European-print-houses were publishing Arabic books and selling them to Muslims and hence Muslim calligraphers were economically affected. Another argument is that the technicality of printing before 1800 was not good enough to preserve all elements of Arabic writing forms. Whereas the number of scripts used in a Latin book is not more than thirty, there are more than 450 scripts for printing an Arabic book.<sup>3</sup> Because of this lack of equipment in printing technology for covering all characters, Arabic books were not allowed to be printed.<sup>4</sup> This sensitivity seems to have been overcome

<sup>2</sup> For further information about this reason see. Hüseyin Gazi Topdemir, *İbrahim Müteferrika ve Türk Matbaacılığı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Pub., 2002), 27-38.

<sup>3</sup> See for further information: Michael W. Albin, "Printing of the Qur'an" *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by McAuliffe (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 4: 268-269.

<sup>4</sup> For further information about late printings in Ottomans see Ahmet Uçar, "Osmanlıların Kur'an-ı Kerim'e Hürmeti 2: Osmanlı'da İlk Matbaa Neden Geç Kuruldu?", *Yedikita* 2 (2008): 28-31.

in 1803 with the publication of Imam Birgivi's famous work *Risala*, published by a printing house in Üsküdar. In fact, the printing of Islamic works had become necessary. It seemed that the movements of reform, especially when the modernisation came from the military level to the social level, brought this need to the surface.<sup>5</sup>

The Mushaf also was finally printed in the Islamic world in the Volga city of Kazan in 1803. It was reprinted in 1809, 1820, 1842 and afterwards annually by different print-houses. In the following years, the Mushaf was printed in specific Islamic centres such as in India in 1852, 1865, and 1875; in Iran in 1829, and in Egypt in 1864. However, the Mushaf was not printed in the Ottoman Empire yet. Still, it was condemned to print the Mushaf by non-Muslims living in Istanbul, as well as by Muslims according to a regulation given by Abdulmecid (1839-1861) in 25 Muharram 1269 / 8 October 1852.<sup>6</sup> It is worth to mention that most of the inspections were on Iran-originated Mushaf printings. According to the Ottoman authorities Iranians printed the Mushaf carelessly and insolently and brought it to the land by secret ways. Finally, Ottomans took measures against the entry of Persian Mushafs into the country. An archive document dated July 19, 1857, reveals the arrest of three Iranians who unauthorized imported Mushaf-printings to Istanbul. Persian printers and merchants continued to trade in spite of all these preventions.<sup>7</sup>

It is known that the Ottoman Empire first allowed to print nonreligious texts in 1729, and then Islamic religious books in 1803, and finally the Qur'an in 1874. The question is why Muslims – and particularly the Ottomans – changed their minds and allowed the printing of the Mushaf in 1874. While the named reasons (i.e. religious, economical and technical problems) were still being existing, it seems that they somehow changed their minds and printed the Mushaf. Were there any political reasons behind this shift that we should take into consideration? Drawing on archive documents and newspapers, this paper will give information about the history of the Mushaf-printing in Europe and connect it to international political relations and the conflict between two Emperor powers, Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>5</sup> For further information see. M. Brett Wilson, *The Qur'an After Babel: Translation and Printing the Qur'an in Late Ottoman and Modern Turkey* (PhD Thesis, Duke University, 2009); Christoph K. Neumann, "Book and Newspaper Printing in Turkish, 18th-20th Century", *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution*, edited by Eva Hanebutt - Benz; Dagmar Glass; Geoffrey Roper (Westhofen: WVA-Verlag Skulima, 2002), 227-248.

<sup>6</sup> See. Necmettin Gökür, *Tanzimattan Günümüze Osmanlıda Din-Devlet İlişkileri ve Siyaset Bağlamında Mushaf Basımı* (İstanbul: İFAV Pub., 2015), 23.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on Iranian Mushaf printings and their banning in the Ottoman Empire see. Gökür, *Tanzimattan Günümüze Osmanlıda Din-Devlet İlişkileri*, 40-45.

## 1. MUSHAF PRINTINGS IN EUROPE DURING COLONIAL TIME

### 1.1. The First Printings of the Mushafs in Europe

The Mushaf was printed in Europe before it was printed in the Muslim world. The first copies were printed in 1537 in Venice during the time of the clash of two civilisations – Islam and the West – caused by the Vienna War I (1529) and the collapsing of Muslim Andalusia in Spain (finalised in 1492). Aleksandro Paganini printed this Mushaf probably for the purpose of selling it to Muslim markets in Muslim lands like Sicilia. However, for some reasons including the lack of Muslim interest caused by lots of errors in practically every word and the phobia of Islam in Europe, it was finally recalled for the purpose of burning it by the Pope. It has been thought that this edition was totally destructed until Angela Nuovo discovered a copy in a library in Franciscan Friars.<sup>8</sup> This copy, which is now in the Vatican and called *Alcoranus Arabice* was reprinted by Brill in 2004 within the series of *Early Printed Korans* (see figure -1).

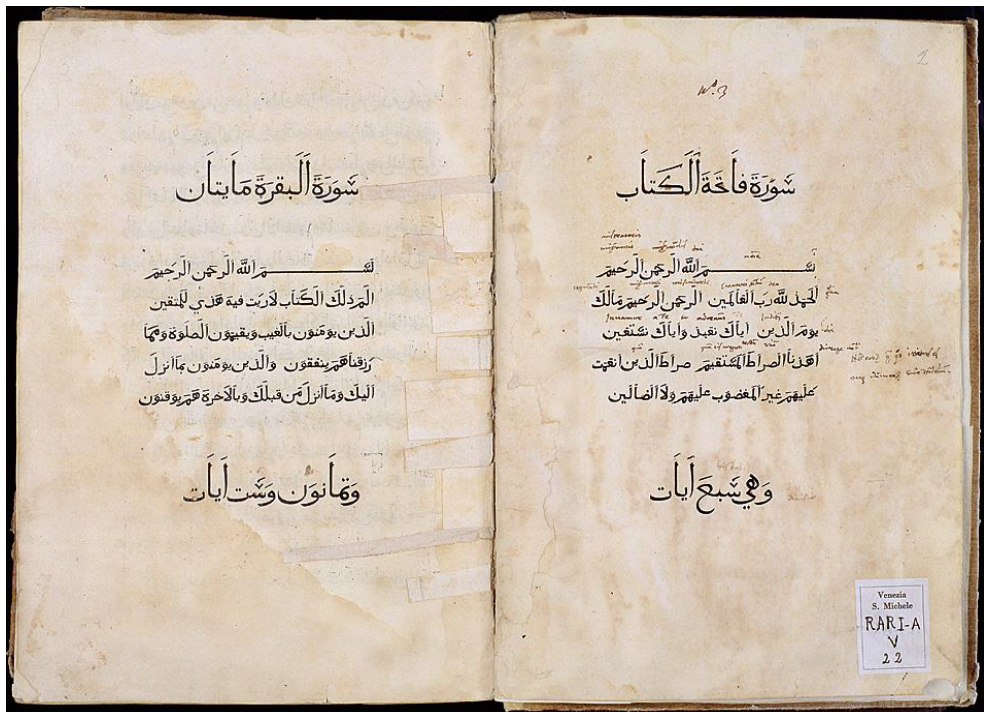


Figure-1: A Page from the Mushaf of Paganini (1537)

<sup>8</sup> For further information see. Angela Nuovo, “A Lost Arabic Koran Rediscovered”, *The Library* 12/4 (1990): 273-292.

After the Venice edition, the Mushaf went on to be printed in Germany, Hamburg, in 1694. This Mushaf was printed by the archpriest Abraham Hinckelmann under the title of *al-Corannus Lex Islamitica Muhammedis Filii Abdallae Pseudoprophetae, Ad Optimorum Codicum Fidem editia* (see Figure-2). The reason for printing was declared like this: to cope with Islam by knowing it through its book, the Qur'an. This Mushaf was printed (with a Latin introduction) according to the orthography used in the Muslim world but without fine calligraphy. It has also provided new forms to the Mushaf like the numbers of verses, indexes, etc. Adding numbers for every verse was a new arrangement and continued in later printings, like the Mushaf of Ludovico Marraci<sup>9</sup> and Gustav Flügel<sup>10</sup>. Scholars have been using this Mushaf more than Paganini's one that was recalled to be burned.

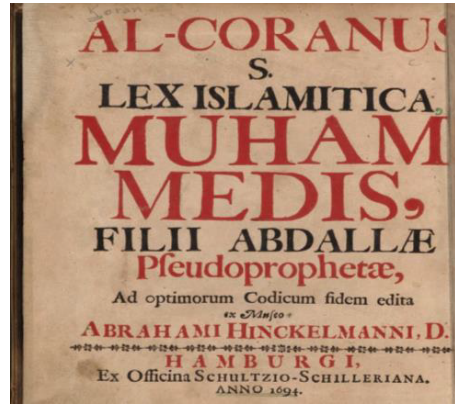


Figure-2: The cover page of the Mushaf printed in Hamburg (1694) Württembergische Landesbibliothek-Stuttgart, Germany.

The Mushaf was printed in various European countries such as Leipzig in 1768; in Dublin in 1785; in St. Petersburg in 1787 and finally in Paris in 1789. Nevertheless, in the Muslim world the Mushaf was not printed yet. The question why these printings started in various European countries in the 18th and 19th century come to mind. The main motivation behind the printing of Mushaf in Europe was certainly the economic relation to the Muslim market. However, the first printings in Europe had no any aesthetic concerns and hence could not compete in the market with a Mushaf that was illustrated with fine calligraphy. For this reason, the motivation behind the persistent printings in Europe is not understandable. There should other motivations to push up these activities.

France also printed the Mushaf in 1798 after the invasion of Egypt and in the 1830s, while colonising Africa and distributed it freely to Muslims for the same motivation as Russia, namely to present itself as the new patron for African Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This Mushaf is well known as *Alcorani Textus Universus* printed in an Arabic edition and in a Latin translation. For further information see. Michael W. Albin, "Printing of the Qur'an", *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by McAuliffe (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 4: 265.

<sup>10</sup> This Mushaf is appeared in 1834 and was widely used by western scholars of the time until the Egyptian Mushaf, Amiriyya, was available in 1924. For further information see. Albin, "Printing of the Qur'an", 4: 265.

<sup>11</sup> For more information about printing of the Mushaf in France and political motivations behind it see. Mahmut Gündüz, "İlk Kur'an-ı Kerim Basmaları", *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 7/1 (1974): 10.

## 1.2. Mushaf of Catherina II (1787)

Is it possible to claim that political motivations and concerns affected the printing in Europe? The answer of this question will be affirmative when we consider the time of the printing activities, as it is the period of invasion and colonising the Muslim lands. This is definitely visible in the process of printing the Mushaf in 1787 in Russia right after the Crimean War by that Russia invaded the land of Tatar Muslims where before under Ottoman protectorate.<sup>12</sup> Catherina II printed for the first time in St. Petersburg (figure 3), writing her name on the Mushaf expecting to be accepted as the “new patron” for the Muslims in the region and also to imply that Russia has taken over the responsibility of religious affairs for Muslims from the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>13</sup> By doing so, Russia wanted to show that the Ottoman caliphate had no more power over the Muslims in its territory both in religious and political affairs.<sup>14</sup> The political expectation of disseminating the Mushaf to Muslims was not only to connect Muslims to the own country, but also to cut the link between Muslims citizens and the caliphate. It was meant to state the authority over Muslims that was taken over by Russia, presenting itself as the new protector and patron of Muslims.<sup>15</sup>



Figure-3: A page from *Mushaf of Catherina*, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich

These activities of Catherina II met with reactions from Christian missionaries. They accused Catherina of strengthening Islam. However, Catherina has not reduced the support of Muslims against this accusation, but has increased it. On December 15th, 1800, the restriction of the printing of Muslim religious books was abolished and in 1802 the first printing house was established in Kazan. In this printing press, the name “Mushaf of Kazan” was first published by Muslims. Thereafter, Mushafs printed in Kazan were spread not only in Russia but also in many Islamic countries and Europe. Our research, that has been conducted in Istanbul, Edirne and Bursa

<sup>12</sup> Albin, “Printing of the Qur’an”, 4: 265.

<sup>13</sup> For further information see. E. A. Rezwani, “Qur’an and its World: VIII/2. West-Östlichen Divans (The Qur’an in Russia)”, *Manuscripta Orientalia* 5/1 (1999): 36.

<sup>14</sup> Rezwani, “Qur’an and its World”, 36.

<sup>15</sup> See. Ahmet Uçar, “Osmanlıların Kur’an-ı Kerim’e Hürmeti 5: Kur’an-ı Kerim’i Tahrif Etmek İsteyenler”, *Yedikota* 5 (2009): 42-44.



Figure-4: A page from *Mushaf of Kazan*, Selimiye Library, Edirne

libraries, shows that the most common publication we have come across is this *Mushaf* (see: figure-4). This means that the *Mushaf of Kazan* is privileged when it is evaluated in the context of the Ottoman's prohibition of printing.

However, the Russian *Mushaf* policy changed in the following years under the influence of Orthodox Russian missionaries. In 1849, we see that the publication of the *Mushaf* gets prohibited. As a result of the publication of the *Mushaf*, Islam raised rapidly in Russia and many people who converted in the Russification and Christianization process now preferred to be Muslim again. From the beginning of the 1900's, Russia seemed to accept the Ottoman authorities to be in charge to give permission for *Mushaf*-printing in Russia. In 1904, for instance, the Russian ambassador informed the Ottoman Ministry of Higher Education that a Russian printing house asked for permission to print the *Mushaf*. In response to this, the Ministry of Education refused to answer affirmatively, saying that the right of printing and representation of the *Mushaf* was under the control of the Ottoman government, the Caliphate of Islam.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For further information see. Gökür, *Tanzimattan Günümüze Osmanlıda Din-Devlet İlişkileri*, 55.



### 1.3. St. Petersburg Mushaf (1905)

In 1905 Russia published old version of the Mushaf in St. Petersburg at Archaeological Institute by V. I. Uspensky and S.I Pisaver as a traced facsimile in the form of a gigantic, full-size folio with containing a number of inaccuracies (see figure 5). The number of the printed Mushaf was 50 copies and distributed to Muslim political leaders as a diplomatic gift by Russian government.<sup>17</sup> The Mushaf was in Kufic, which was previously belonged to the Khwaja Akhrrar Mosque in Samarqand. According to Efim Rezwan, “it is no doubt one of the most outstanding copies of the Qur’an in the world”.<sup>18</sup>

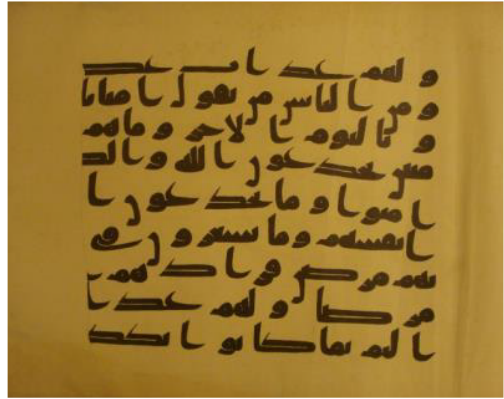


Figure 5: The first page (Surah al-Bakara 2: 7-10) of the Mushaf printed in St. Petersburg in 1905. Berlin Staatsbibliothek

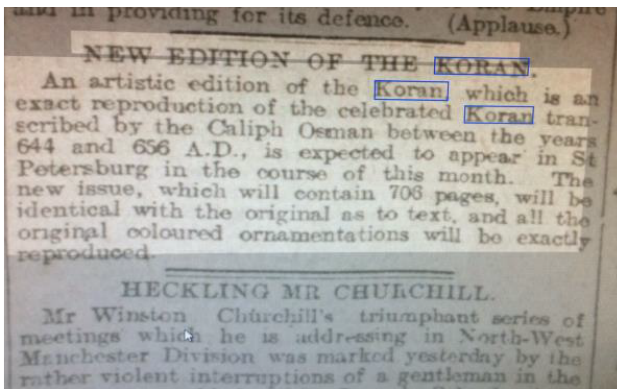


Figure 6: Edinburg Evening News- Friday 02 December 1904.

NEW EDITION OF THE KORAN: An Artistic edition of the Koran which is an exact reproduction of the celebrated Koran transcribed by the Caliph Osman between the years 644 and 656 AD. , is expected to appear in St. Petersburg in the course of this month. The new issue, which will contain 706 pages, will be identical with the original as to text and all the original coloured ornamentations will be exactly reproduced.

Interestingly, an English newspaper *Edinburg Evening News* predicted this printing in December 1904 before it’s printing and explained its feature before printed (see figure 6).

<sup>17</sup> Rezwan, “The Qur’an and Its World”, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Rezwan, “The Qur’an and Its World”, 41.

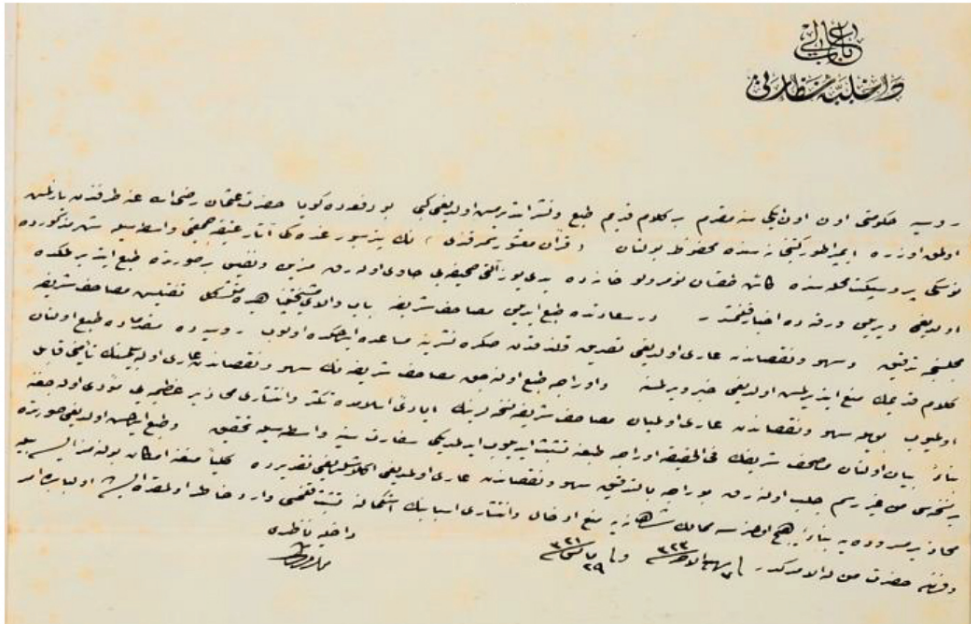


Figure 7: Ottoman document dealing with Russian publication of the Qur'an in 1905.

Ottomans learned the news six months later in 11 June 1905 and immediately asked Turkish consular in Russia to unofficially bring one copy to investigate its originality and authenticate in the Council for Investigation of Mushafs (see figure 7). Ottomans also confirm that the Qur'an has been published in St. Petersburg and its pages are 706. According to the documents in figure, officials say to publish the Mushaf in correct way needs to be investigated and approved by Ottoman Council for Investigation of Mushafs, if some mistakes can be found, it needs to be banned, if it is impossible to ban it, it should then be forbidden to enter the Muslim World not to be distributed in the hands of Muslims.

## 2. MUSHAF-PRINTING IN IRAN AND OTTOMAN COUNTER-POLICIES

Ottoman political relations with Iran were historically based on the Shiite expansion from the time of Safavid state and the Ottomans taking strict measures against it. The Sunni-Shiite conflict has always affected the politics of the Ottomans and Iran, indeed. Especially during the Shah Ismail (1501-1524), period of Safavids was considered as a great threat to the Ottoman Empire. The influence of the Safavids during the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim became the target of the Ottoman Empire, especially the Anatolian Kızılbaşes. In this period, *Risala fi Bayan al-Firaq al-Dalla*<sup>19</sup>, *Risala fi Takfir-Rawafiz*<sup>20</sup> and *al-Sayf al-Mashul fi Sabb al-Rasul*<sup>21</sup>, written against Shia

<sup>19</sup> Kılıç Ali Paşa Libr., 1028, vr. 296<sup>a</sup>-297<sup>b</sup>.  
<sup>20</sup> Süleymaniye Libr., Pertevpaşa, 621, vr. 31<sup>a</sup>-32<sup>b</sup>.  
<sup>21</sup> See. Süleymaniye Libr., Süleyman Sırrı, 710, vr. 31<sup>a</sup>- 37<sup>b</sup>.

and its subordinate sects, the official sect of Safavids, are rejected by Kemalpashazade who tried to defend aqida of ahl Sunnah. In these works Kemalpashazade also wrote the ideas and rejections against Shia and at the same time he gave to Yavuz Sultan Selim a fatwa of Capital Punishment<sup>22</sup> for the Kizilbashes.<sup>23</sup> The Ottoman Sunni identity and the protection of the Aqidah of Ahl-i Sunnah have not only been shown in the military field, but also in training activities to defend this movement in the madrasas they have established. Especially, *Sharhu Aqidah Ahl al-Sunnah* of Sadeddin Taftazani (797/1395) and *Sharh al Mawaqif* of Jurjani (816/1413) and *Anwar al-Tanzil* and *Sharhu Aqad Ahl al-Sunnah* of Kadi Baydawi (691/1291) has become the most important books of the Madrasa.

The mutual relations between Ottomans and Iran had progressed at various stages in the history; the Sunni-Shiite conflict in the relations between the two countries finally left its place to the tolerance and understandings in the time of Mahmud the First (1730-1754) and Nadir Shah (1688-1747). Talks between the Ottoman scholars (Ulama) and Iranian Shiite scholars (Mollahs) were held at a meeting known as the Najaf Conference. As a result, in 1156/1743, a Sunni-Shiite alliance document was signed by two side delegations. This will result in a peace treaty in 1159/1746 and the Ottoman government appoints Ambassador to Iran. However, although the Sunnis living in Iran were happy with this situation, the Shiites reacted and they killed Nadir Shah. These positive political relations that started with Iran will then continue in a negative way again between the Ottoman and Iran will show itself in every field.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.1. First Policy against Iranian Mushafs: Forbiding and Banning

It can be said that these sectarian-centred political relations with Iran have led Ottomans to be cautious about Iranian-originated and even printed-Mushafs by hand of Iranians. When the documents belonging to that time, are examined, it will be clearly observed that Mushafs, which have been constantly, “carelessly” and “disrespectfully” printed in Iran and brought to the Ottoman lands by secret ways. Against this, Bab-i Ali, the Government has taken measures against

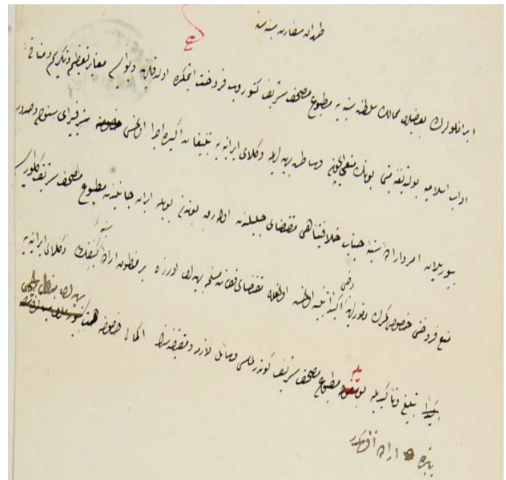


Figure-8

<sup>22</sup> See. Süleymaniye Libr., Esad Efendi, 3545, vr. 45<sup>a</sup>-45<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> For Further information about beign of Kamalpashazade against Shiite see. Sayın Dalkıran, *İbn-i Kemal ve Düşünce Tarihimiz* (İstanbul: OSAV Pub., 1997).

<sup>24</sup> For further information about sectarian dialogues between Ottomans and Iran see. Saim Arı, *1. Mahmut-Nadir Şah Dönemlerinde Osmanlı-İran İlişkilerinde Sünni-Şii Diyalogu* (PhD Thesis, Harran University, 1999).

the entry of Persian Mushafs into the country. For this initiation, Iranian diplomats, for instance, had been first time warned on March 13, 1853.<sup>25</sup> An archive document dated July 19, 1857 reveals that the arrest of three Iranians who have been unauthorized to print the Qur’an had been arrested. With the interception of Iranian diplomats, they released with bail. This proves that not only are Iranian Mushafs forbidden to enter the country but also it was accepted to be a criminal offense for the Persians in Istanbul to print Mushafs. The fact that it was published in Iran and tried to get into the country illegally, especially in 1861-1862 years, seems to be bringing the bans in this area very often on the agenda. The following document (Figure-8 and figure 9) clearly show this situation:

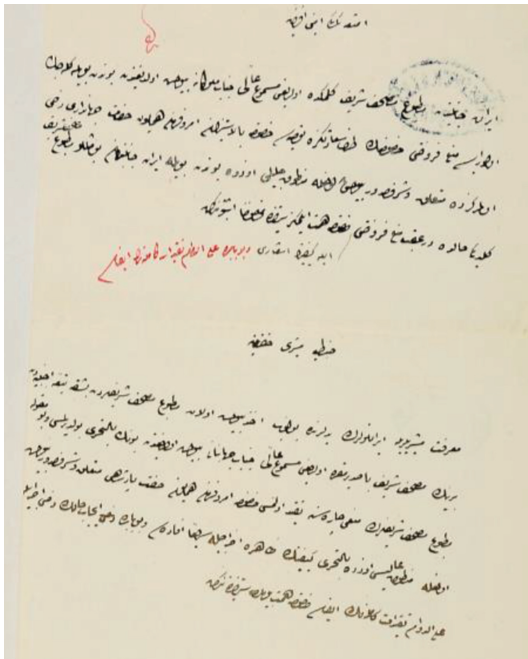


Figure 9: A diplomatic letter to the consulate of Iran and to the officials in Customs. Briefly says:

Some Iranians are bringing Printed Mushaf Sharif to the Great Sultanate from Iran and distributed. This is not suit for the respects and honour (of the Qur’an) and even for the observances of Islam. So, a strong note on banning this will be given to the representatives of Iran through consulate. This order is from his honoured the Caliph and needs to be obeyed. Therefore, when it happens again and any Mushaf Sharif comes from Iran, the staffs in Customs have been strongly ordered not to accept and not to allow distributing. The Iranian representatives will be responsible for not sending printed Mushafs anymore.

The document indicates that the director of Customs has been ordered to refuse Mushafs from Iran and the Police department has been ordered to detain and ban to distribute. Persian printers and merchants continued to trade in spite of all these measures. Finally, on May 2, 1873, due to the large number of mistakes in the Mushafs brought by Iranian merchants, the state decided to distribute five hundred thousand mushafs after printing himself. This decision was implemented in 1874, and it is now prevented from coming from abroad, especially from Iran. An agreement was also made with the Iranian state and a decision was made to prevent the Mushafs. However,

<sup>25</sup> See. BOA, A.AMD, 42/61.

it is very difficult to prevent the sales of the Iranian printing houses and traders. Leaked and unsealed Mushaf were retained, the prints were locked. It has been reported that Ministry of Education, Zabtiye and Meshihat cannot prevent Iranians from selling mushafs despite their internal efforts.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2. Second Policy: Taking over the Printing from the hand of Iranians

However, there were more and more Mushaf-printings from Europe and Iran and eventually Ottomans changed their strategy from being only controller to be publishers themselves. An official printing of the Mushaf first occurred in 1874 in Istanbul, following the founding of lithography, a new technology in printing at the Ottoman royal print-house, Matbaa-i Amire. The Ottoman scholar, historian, and statesman

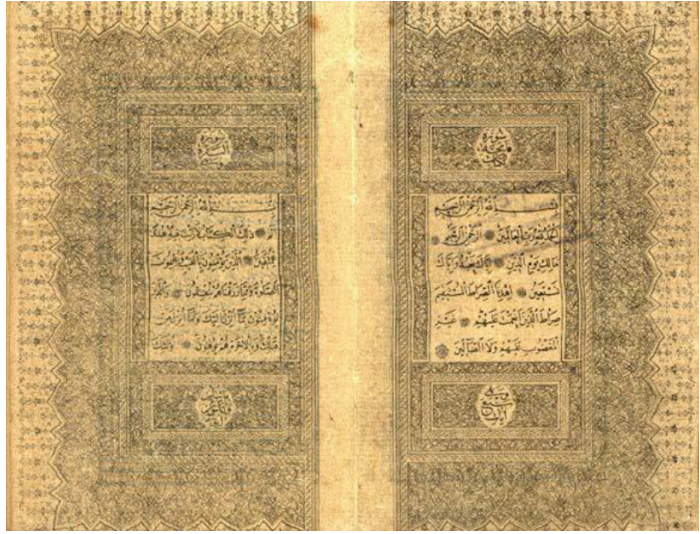


Figure-10: The first printed Mushaf in Istanbul, Mushaf of Şekerzade. Atatürk Kitaplığı- İstanbul.

Ahmet Cevdet Pasha had a huge account of this first legal Mushaf-printing in Istanbul. Ahmet Cevdet underlined the illegal publishing and selling of printed Mushafs in Istanbul by foreigners, especially Iranians, and argued that the Ottoman governmental organizational structure should print the Qur'an in order to prevent such illegal actions.<sup>27</sup> When the time for the first legal printing of the Mushaf in Istanbul came, the Ottoman authorities emphasized the link between print culture and the long-established calligraphic tradition. The Qur'anic manuscript of the famous calligrapher Şekerzade Mehmed Efendi (see: figure-10) was used in the first lithographic Mushaf-print.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the Mushafs printed in Europe, the Ottoman edition was well-illustrated with a fine calligraphy and orthography. Yet, also, religious

<sup>26</sup> For further information about Ottoman attitude towards Iranian-printed Mushafs see. Ahmet Uçar, "Osmanlıların Kur'an-ı Kerim Hürmeti 4: Kur'an-ı Kerim Basımında Dikkatsiz Olanlara Karşı Alınan Tedbirler", *Yedikata* 4 (2008): 40-43.

<sup>27</sup> Ahmet Cevdet Pasha explains the procedure himself in his record: "Vak'ânüvis Cevdet Paşa'nın Evrakı", *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* 46 (1333): 228.

<sup>28</sup> See. Muhammet Abay, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Mushaf Basımı", *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Hüsn-i Hat Sempozyumu* (unpublished paper) (Ankara: DİB, 2017). And also see. Wilson, "The Qur'an after Babel", 68.

authorities noted that the errors found in that manuscript were to be corrected before printing.<sup>29</sup> The ulama played a role by approving the proof-read copy before they went into circulation and reached the hands of many people.<sup>30</sup>

Almost 337 years after the European attempt (in 1537) and 147 years after the establishment of a printing house in the Ottoman Empire (in 1727), a printing of the Mushaf was finally realized in Istanbul in 1874. The publication of Mushaf was considered to be a serious issue and for this reason it was carried out under the control of the state authority.

Afterwards, the printings of the Mushaf became widespread. With the release of the publications of the Mushaf, Abdulhamid the Second ordered the control of the printing of Mushaf. A new assembly was formed in the name of Tedkik-i Mesahif-i Şerif ve Müellefat Şer'iyye (Inspection of Mushafs and Islamic Books), which consisted of a chairman, seven members and two clerks. For printing and distributing a Mushaf, approval from this council was required. In 1892, the Assembly of Inspectors of Mushaf printing, consisting of a president, eight members and a clerk (it was called *Teftiş-i Mesahif-i Şerife Meclisi* / Council of the Inspection of the Glorious Mushafs), was set up independently from the assembly regarding general book-printing. The control over houses printing the Mushaf has been continued up to day under the same regulation.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. BRITISH PROPAGANDA: THE SULTAN PRINTED A CORRUPTED MUSHAF. SO, RISE UP MUSLIMS!

During the establishment of the council in 1892, some interesting things happened. Some British journals issued a black propaganda against the Ottoman Sultan, Abdulhamid Han II, accusing him of printing a false/corrupted Mushaf for the sake of his personal political desires. Britannia actually intended by this kind of blackmail and propaganda to break the power of the Caliphate and finally to trigger an uprising among Arabs and Indians against the Sultan.

Part of this black propaganda was in a column written in *Illustrated London News* on 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1892. The article was corresponded by James Payn under title of "Our Note Book" on page number 258. The relevant part is as follows:

The Sultan of Turkey has just done a stroke of business in the autocratic line decidedly original. He has issued a revised edition of the Koran adapted to his own

<sup>29</sup> For further information see. Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, "Va'anusis Cevdet Paşa'nın Evraki", 228. For further also see. Ahmet Uçar, "Osmanlıların Kur'an-ı Kerim'e Hürmeti 3: Osmanlı'da Kur'an-ı Kerim İlk Kez Ne Zaman ve Nasıl Basılmıştır?", *Yedikita* 3 (2008): 24-25; Wilson, "The Qur'an after Babel", 67-68.

<sup>30</sup> For further information see. Muhammed Abay, *Osmanlı Döneminde Mushaf İmlası Tartışmaları* (İstanbul: İFAV Pub., 2016).

<sup>31</sup> For further information about control system of Ottomans over printings see. Gökür, *Tanzimattan Günümüze Osmanlı'da Din-Devlet İlişkileri*, 19-48.

views. This is the most “high-handed outrage in Utica” that has yet been attempted by “the authorities.” It used to be forbidden to read the Bible, but no body, save that unlucky printer who was burnt to death for it, ever thought of altering the text to suit his little weaknesses. The Mollahs are naturally very angry; more furious than even our classical head masters would be if the Queen in council should decree “longs” to be henceforth “shorts,” and “shorts” to be longs, for it is the quality and not the quantity of the Koran that has been altered. Certain “vital passages of the original text” have been expunged, such as “God doth not leave oppressors”, a remark which the Father of the Faithful no doubt considers as too personal. Whether the exact century is asserted in its place is not stated; perhaps it will “appear in a later edition

According to this news, Sultan Abdulhamid The Second, reprinted “the revised edition of the Mushaf” according to his political advantages, and therefore the Muslim scholars revolted against Turkish authorities. But, in fact, this did not happen at all. There was no printing of a new edition or a corrupted version of the Qur’an, neither any uprising in any Muslim land for this reason. However, Britannia intended to trigger an uprising against Istanbul, particularly in the occupied lands India and Egypt.



**THE KORAN**

*Constantinople, Monday (Reuter)- An official contradiction is given to the statement recently made by the Armenian correspondent of a London newspaper that by order of the Sultan, a modified or mutilated version of the Koran had been printed. It is declared that it is absolutely impossible that the text of the sacred book, should be altered, especially by him who in his capacity of Khalifa, is called upon to be solicitous for the scrupulous observance of its tenets.*

The Government in Istanbul immediately gave an official contradiction to Illustrated London News, saying that the correspondent is an Armenian and the news are false. The contradiction was published in *Leeds Mercury* in 7th of September 1892 (see figure 11) and *Lichfield Mercury* in 9th of September 1892:

In a Newspaper namely *London Evening Standard*, Indian Muslims also wrote a declaration (see figure 12) to proclaim their position against to the propaganda in 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1892:



Figure 12: The page of London Evening News, Friday 09 September 1892

## THE KORAN TEXT

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STANDARD: Reuter's telegram from Constantinople of the 6th gives contradiction to the statement made a few weeks ago, that by order of the Sultan, the Koran had been printed with a mutilated version and that it had created great discontent in Arabia.

Those who are aware that the Koran has never yet been mutilated in any way, and could not, therefore, be mutilated to-day, can easily come to a conclusion that the object of the "Armenian Correspondent" in inventing such monstrous calumnies is to discredit before the eyes of the Mohammedans in India, where the London papers are widely circulated, the high qualities which characterise the virtuous and the most just "Caliph of Islam".

As soon as that false statement was made, we received from different co-religionists in Turkey, Egypt, and elsewhere letters requesting us to contradict those statements, which were entirely false and we were on the point of addressing you this letter when Reuter's telegram was published.

We feel it our duty, nevertheless, as Indian Mohammedans, to say a few more words on this subject, which we hope that you will kindly permit us to do.

In Turkey, as in every other country, malcontents exist, and some Armenians tired of attacking the Turkish Government have changed their tactics by attacking his



Majesty the Sultan on religious grounds; but when these attacks pass the limit of all respect due to the high supreme spiritual Chief of Islam by inventing against his Majesty most outrageous calumnies and falsehood, we feel it our duty to give them in the British Press, the most formal denial.

From every Mohammedan Indian who has visited Constantinople we hear that his Majesty the Sultan is devoting all his time to the prosperity of his empire and happiness of his subjects, which has made him gain their love and their respect.

The so-called “Constitutional Reform Party” in Turkey -in the existence of which a small French monthly paper, published in London is endeavouring to make people believe- is composed of Levantines and Armenians who fled from Constantinople and took refuge in Paris, to establish an organ of the most vile language and to abuse Turks. The French authorities expelled the editor from that city in fear that the publication of such a paper might create bad feelings in Turkey.

If the liberal institutions of the Press in England is based on different principles from those of France, it is nevertheless, to be hoped that the British Press will not be influenced by Levantines, who are no authority whatsoever in expressing an opinion on religious or political affairs of Turkey and whose sole object is to create bad feeling in England against Turkey and bad feeling in Turkey against England.

As Indian Mohammedans, most faithful and loyal subject of our most gracious Majesty The Queen, we have at hearth to see the relations between Turkey and England based on the most discontented Armenians and Levantine refugees will have no influence over the English Press.

Thanking you in advance for the hospitality, you are affording this letter,

We are Sir, your obedient servants,

MOULIR MOHAMED BARKATULLAH, Chairman.

S. HAHIM -AL-MOOSAWI, Secretary.

M. KABIRUDDIN, Mb. Managing.

M. IRADETULLAH.

A.M.K. DEHLAIR,

The Committee of Indian Mohamedans in London.

September 8.



...As it is presented in the report dated in 5th of this month with the number of 217, I gave a denial to several British journals with your permission against the allegation on so-called "altering of the Qur'an" which is pressed by evil-intentioned. I also gave the denial to Reuters and through Reuters to other journals. Muslims in London including merchants and students also refused the event sending a letter to the journal of Standard explaining all allegations and lies from some Armenians with no power against to foundations of Islam Religion (tasisat al-diniyya) and Great State (Dawla aliyya)...

And finally, Turkish Ambassador in London gave a report (see figure 13) to Istanbul in 10th of September summarising every steps as follow:

## CONCLUSION

This article has aimed to find out what kind of Ottoman policies against the print applications especially in the face of European colonialism and Iranian expansion ideology. Ottoman statesmen seem to be sensitive in controlling the prints. The study has given basic information about the first printings of the Mushaf in Europe and the Muslim world. According to the study, the Mushaf was first printed in Europe (in 1537 in Venice and in 1694 in Hamburg) before it was printed in the Muslim world. The main motivations behind the European initiatives were the economic relations with the Muslim world, theological concerns and finally the political relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe. The world of Islam began to print the Mushaf quite lately compared to Europe. It is commonly known that the printing of Islamic books in general encountered strong opposition by Muslims. The resistance against printing is mostly explained by religious sensitiveness towards textual corruption of Islamic sources. But political and economical reasons should also be taken into the consideration according to the study. It is true that before printing, the Qur'an was transmitted in manuscripts written by calligraphers in a special artistic way that has certain rules to protect the original form of the Qur'an, preventing the entrance of anything that does not belong to it and to present the words of the Qur'an in the most decorative shape. Furthermore, the calligraphers' economic status was protected by the prohibition to print the Mushaf. In addition, the printing technology has not been fully developed yet and the printing of Arabic letters was difficult and complex.

However, the printing of Mushaf rapidly spread in the 19th century after introducing new technology in printing, namely lithography. This technology allowed to print the Mushaf with fine calligraphy and also with less error. Yet, the Ottoman Empire also had political reasons to start printing the Mushaf.

Indeed, the article has tried to reveal political dimension of Mushaf-printing by giving three cases. The first case was the 1787 Mushaf-printing in Europe particularly in Russia right after the Crimean War, when Russia invaded the Muslim part of the Ukraine in 1783. Catherina II, for the first time, printed the Mushaf in St. Petersburg, writing her name on it. By that, she tried to present herself as the new patron of the Muslims in the region and to show that Russia has taken over the responsibility over religious affairs of Muslims from the Ottoman caliphate. By doing so, Russia wanted to show that the Ottoman Empire had no more religious and political power over Muslims. France also printed the Mushaf in 1798 after the occupation of Egypt and in the 1830s during the invasions of Africa, having the same motivation. Ottomans defended themselves against these colonial activities by establishing control mechanism and later own print houses to state that they are the real leaders of Muslims. They controlled and banned the transportation of Mushafs printed not only in Europe, but also in the Muslim world. As the second case of the study, The Ottoman–Iranian political opposition and its associated with Sunni–Shia religious contention was crucial in the Ottoman regime’s suspicion of Iranian-printed Mushafs. The reason would be that Sultan could pose as the defender of Islam in contrast to his eastern rival, the Shah. Ottomans kept the monopoly for printing the Mushaf on the one hand and tried to control the publications all over the world on the other hand. The two cases show that during the clash among Ottomans, Iranians and European powers, Mushaf printings were used to gain authority over Muslims by all sides.

The article has found that the first Mushaf edition in the Islamic world was realized by Kazan Muslims in 1803. Even this attempt corresponds to about three centuries after the attempted Mushaf printing in Europe. The Mushaf edition is not only a cultural and educational subject of Muslims. The Mushaf edition is also the subject of politics, diplomacy and bureaucracy. Catherine II, who had stepped down before the Muslims in Russia, should have seen this as an opportunity to dominate Muslims. The Islamic world, which is reluctant to use the printing press in religious works, is too late to understand that knowledge is a power and authority. When he realized this, he lagged far behind the West and lost the area to Western colonialist countries. It is not useful in facilitating the dissemination of information to large audiences only; it also directs the masses and thus controls them. Hence, the Islamic world has come to grasp that the control of the printings is more wiser than prohibiting it. The western politicians, who saw the information as the power, started to intervene in the

distribution and control of the Islamic works by developing counter policies and also by distributing these works to the Muslim masses and interfering with the distribution and even printing of the uncontrolled works outside the Islamic lands. On the other hand, the colonial states, by giving diplomatic responses, to destroy the caliphate authority in particular and to form their policies towards the overthrow of their colonies in the context of Mushaf printing.

The printings of Mushaf by non-Muslims and non-Sunnis and their distribution to its territory led the Ottomans develop counter-politics. The first policy taken by the Ottoman Empire was to detain all Islamic books printed in Europe and in Iran in customs. The Ottoman Empire, at this time, not only banned the printing of the Mushaf but also outlawed the distribution of the Mushaf printed in other lands within its domain. This position was not only to Europeans but also even more strictly to a non-Sunni country, to Iran. The reason is that the Ottoman Empire tried to pose itself as the defender of the Qur'an and of Islam in contrast to his eastern rival, the Shia' and the western enemy, the European colonial powers. The issue of prohibiting the circulation of the European-printed and Iranian-printed Mushafs would be considered in this context. The Ottoman Empire defended itself against colonial activities of Europe and against sectarian expansion of Iran by controlling the transportation of the Mushaf printed in Europe and Iran into its territory.

In terms of the connection between Mushaf-printings and the political relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, the most significant case is the third one: the English black propaganda against the Ottomans. British journals accused Ottoman Sultan, Abdulhamid II to print false/corrupted Mushafs for the sake of his own political desires. They intended by this kind of misinformation to trigger an uprising among Arabs and Indians against the caliphate. The three cases show that during the clash among Ottomans, Iranians and European powers, Mushaf printings were used to gain authority over Muslims by all sides.

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