

Folkloristik:

Prof. Dr.
Dursun Yıldırım
Armađanı

Pars Yılı
ANKARA 1998

**THE ROLE OF THE NEWSPAPER IN MOVEMENTS
FOR SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE IN TURKEY
(1800-1875)**

Ersin ÖZARSLAN*

During the eighteenth century, the daily paper evolved in Europe and America from irregularly-released newspapers and turned into one of the important elements of social life.

The coming of newspaper to Turkey was brought about by foreigners. The first newspaper to come out here, in 1795, was in French, the publishers' native tongue (language): the "**Bulletin des Nouvelles**"¹. Other newspapers by foreigners were to follow. But a Turkish-language newspaper had yet to appear.

Turkish first appeared as the medium of expression in a news organ on 26 November 1828 in Egypt with the publication of an Arabic-Turkish newspaper called "**Vekâyü'ül Mısriyye**" (The Egyptian Chronicler). However, the appearance of a regular publication in Turkish alone took place in Istanbul on 1 November 1831 under Government auspices.

The first newspaper to be published entirely in Turkish was the "**Takvim-i Vekâyi**" (Chronicle of Events) which was put out one 1 November 1831 in İstanbul. Nine years after the Takvim-i Vekâyi, the "**Ceride-i Havâdis**"² (Journal of News Items) and twenty years later, the "**Tercüman-ı Ahvâl**"³ (Interpreter of Facts) began publication; subsequently, newspapers from the provinces also took their first steps in the world of publishing⁴.

The following are other newspapers published in Istanbul up to and including the year 1875:

* Gazi Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Gazetecilik Bölümü

1 Korkmaz Alemdar, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Haberleşmenin Kökenleri* (The Origins of Modern Communication in Turkey), Ankara, 1981, p. 86.

2 Mustafa N. Özön, "Yüz Senelik Gazeteciliğimiz" (Journalism in Turkey: The First Hundred Years), *Aydın Tarihi* (History of the Mounth) Vol. XV, pp. 46-47, February 1928, Ankara.

3 Mustafa N. Özön, op. cit. *Aydın Tarihi* Vol. XVI, XVII, XVIII, XXV, May 1928, July 1928, August 1928, April 1931, Ankara.

4 Mustafa N. Özön, op. cit.

1. Vekâyi-i Tibbiyye (Medical Events) (1850)
2. Tasvîr-i Efkâr (Description of Ideas) (1862)
3. Mir'at (The Looking-Glass) (1861)
4. Tercüman-ı Şark (The Eastern Interpreter) (1863)
5. Muhbir (Reporter) (1867)
6. Âyine-i Vatan (The National Mirror) (14.01.1867)
7. İstanbul (1867)
8. Terakki (Progress) (1868)
9. Basiret (Insight) (1869)
10. Hakâyik'ul- Vekâyi (Truths of Events) (1870)
11. İbret (The Warning) (1871)
12. Bedir (The Full Moon) (1872)
13. Devir (Era) (1872)
14. Hadîka (The Garden) (1872)
15. Şafak (Dawn) (1873)
16. Sirâc (The Lamp) (1873)
17. Vakit (Time) (1875)

We may include the newspapers "Hürriyet" (Liberty) (1868), and "Ulûm" (The Sciences) (1870) which were published by some intellectuals in various European cities during this period⁵.

Of the papers under discussion, "**Vekâyi-i Tibbiye**" was a professional newspaper; it was among the publications concerned with medical science. Besides this paper, there were publications of a wide-ranging and superior calibre by those pursuing politics, culture, art, literature, current events and like subjects.

As we look at the newspaper editors of this period, we may recognize one man of culture after another; some politicians, some administrators (bureaucrats); still others men of letters and artists of the day.

The intellectual of this period, both in their relations with each other and with administration, advanced political, literary, social and cultural disputes and controversies and reached the public forum form by way of these newspapers.

⁵ Kenan Akyüz, *Modern Türk Edebiyatının Ana Çizgileri* (The Fundamental Lines of Modern Turkish Literature), 3rd Ed. Ankara, 1970, p. 70; Korkmaz Alemdar, *ibid.*

In this era, newspapers were a means, more exactly, a platform for the transmission and airing of every sort of controversy. Precisely because of this trait, newspapers were supposed to act as a "galvanizing force" in Turkish movements aimed at renovation, bringing up to date, becoming westernized, modernization, development, progress, etc.; and in fact they duly fulfilled this role.

In Turkey, newspapers published in foreign languages did not speak to the public at large; the direct influence of these papers was limited to those Turkish intellectuals who were in a position to know foreign languages. The influence of these papers and consequently the part they played in establishing development and change along certain lines is a subject for separate study.

It is common knowledge that, beginning with "**Takvim-i Vekâyi**" (Chronicle of Events), first directly with regard to intellectuals and later indirectly among the general public, newspapers put out in Turkish had political, social and cultural influence, and in due course these influences change of attitude (mentality) and direction consistently gained support besides⁶. From this point of view, the effect of the newspaper on change and development in nineteenth-century Turkish society constitutes one of the most important issues.

At this point, we can examine the various forms of influence of the newspaper on the evolution of Turkish society or its role therein from the standpoint of newspapers and journalists. Certainly the influence of "**Takvim-i Vekâyi**" (Chronicle of Events) and "**İbret**" (The Warning) or "**Tasvir**" (Description) and their role in the evolution of society would not run along identical lines. Thus every newspaper of that time, too, met the varied socio-cultural needs of society and carried out functions similar to those of newspapers today.

The role of newspaper in bringing change and development to Turkey can be divided into the following categories:

1. From the political standpoint:

The concepts of political constitution, of a code of laws- exclusively the secular laws, and of freedom in the modern sense have their roots in innovations which came to Turks with the newspaper and which were adapted by that vast general public outside politics. Thereafter, opinions

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu* (The Birth of Modern Turkey), 2nd Ed. Ankara, 1984, pp. 74, 135.

arrived at among the governed concerning the administration and state, "thorough consideration" and "the expounding ideas", were to find their expression and lay the groundwork for the first generation of the period of reforms (1839-1875). In consequence, this was to be the sole object considered: A parliamentary system, i. e., constitutional monarchy...

2. From the social and cultural standpoint:

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar gives an important place to the newspaper and to journalism "among the things involved in the establishment and development of change in the country", and he contends that "Turkish reader's interest in and concern with what is going on in the world" began with the start of the newspaper⁸. In this discussion of "**Ceride-i Havâdis**" (The Journal of News Items), Tanpınar includes its concept of "motherland" and cites its introduction into the Turkish body politic.

According to Tanpınar's view, in nowhere, the newspaper has ever played a role like it did in our lives. All the signs has come from it and reading activities has spread out general public at large by the newspaper⁹.

The newspaper in Turkey is one of the fundamental agents of renovation in the area of culture besides. When we consider that "where books are concerned, because printed monographic studies flourished in Turkey only after 1908, nearly all material of interest in one hundred years of Turkish cultural history is found in the pages of newspaper and magazines", the role and function of printing in the development of Turkish culture is properly understood¹⁰.

3. From the standpoint of language and literature:

The role of the press as a distinctive alternative in the realm of language and literature is the basis for our starting an investigation; it constitutes a very important part of the "language and literature" issues which make up the studies of this period, and this point, along with significant development and changes, and with a number of arguments on this subject, is the source of the suggestion and production of ever-new

⁷ İbrahim Şinâsi, *Tercüman-ı Ahvâl* (The Interpreter of Facts), "**Mukaddime**" (Vanguard), No. 9, 22 October, 1880; adaptors: M. Kaplan, İ. Enginün, B. Emil, *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi* (Anthology of Modern Turkish Literature), Istanbul, 1974, p. 511.

⁸ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (History of Nineteenth-Century Turkish Literature), 4th Ed. Istanbul, 1976, pp. 146-147.

⁹ Tanpınar, *ibid.* pp. 250.

¹⁰ Akyüz, *ibid.* pp. 71.

things¹¹.

In this area, let it be said that the newspaper itself- and therefore, journalism itself-is modern. With regard to this, everything that appears will either be modern or will involve innovation and change. This is the case even in it takes the form of opposition to the new.

The first period of the press of Turkey's two-way influence on "language and literature" is the subject under discussion. The press, which laid the groundwork for the shaping of a new prose language, played an important role in literature as well, causing Turkish cultural life to take on modern and western literary genres -textual theater, the novel and short story, literary criticism, the anecdote/short feature, the newspaper article, the feature story/series, the interview, etc.- and shaped the manifest conditions for the completion of this work.

Conclusion:

Here in Turkey, the principal dynamics of modernity, modernization or westernization come through the newspaper. This is because those of the first generation of the free press in Turkey were politicians, artists, and bureaucrats long before they were journalists. Then, many belonging to succeeding generations were in fact raised on newspapers. For this reason, it is impossible to hold opinions different to those in the papers regarding political, social, and cultural change in Turkey. With an opening outward, the change of perception, the nature of aesthetical values and of the limits of taste, and with the bold acquisition of wealth in the fine arts, newspaper shares are quite high. Because its roots lay in innovation and renovation, the newspaper itself overthrew the classic tradition of "info-gathering/dispensing" and in the formation of public opinion assumed its rightful place and became one of the essential elements in Turkish development and change¹².

¹¹ Among the first from the point of view of being an example on this subjects, between "Tasvir" ("Description") and "Ruznâme-i Ceride-i Havâdis" ("The Daily Intelligencer"), "Me'sele-i Mebhusetü anha" ("The Question under Discussion") is of the utmost significance. See A. H. Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, pp. 185, 208, 209, 214, 251, 298 and Agâh S. Levend, *Türk Dilinin Gelişme ve Sadeleşme Evreleri* (Phases of Development and Purification of the Turkish Language), Ankara, 1972, pp. 82 (İlk Gazete ve Dergiler) (The First Newspapers and Magazines), 84 (Tanzimat Devrindeki Edebî Dil) (Literary Language in the Reform Era), 85 (Nesir Dili ve Özellikleri) (Language and Characteristics of Prose)

¹² Tanpınar, *ibid.* pp. 149-150.