

## From Chaw to the Ministry of Publication

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### **Abstract:**

*The art of Printing and its related techniques have been of primary significance to Iranians since centuries ago. Although the art of printing has experienced many ups and downs during different eras in the history of Iran it seems that Safavi's were more concerned about it. However, this situation was not stable during Afsharieh and Zandieh. Qajar was but an important era regarding the development of Printing in Iran. In the same line, Abbas Mirza and Qaem Maqam, the Minister of Culture to his government, had important roles in developing the art of Printing. It is worth noticing the role of the West especially the European in this respect. Therefore, Iranians should not forget that, although people like Abbas Mirza, Mirza Saleh Shirazi, Qaem Maqam farahani, Amir Kabir and Mirza Hassan Khan Etemadolsaltaneh made remarkable efforts to establish and develop new organizations as regarded printing, this would not be possible without the help of the Europe. In fact, it should be noted that the Europe had a leading role in cultural development of Iran.*

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## 1. Introduction

Pi-ching was the first person who created moving letters in the eleventh century. These letters were carved in square tablets of soil and used after being baked. Pi-ching put these tablets in a special framework and used them in printing. This is the first recorded type of the print art (Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1976, p. 17).

It is believed that the Chinese people printed their books in this way since the fifth century. The first book, called “wood cut”, printed by the above-mentioned method, was Diamond Sotra. Another assumption is that the Chinese people created a method of print 1120 years before the Christ. At that time, the Emperor of China declared that it was a special ink which was used to enliven the letters and was never whitened (Tabatabaei, 1976, 7). However, this is to mention that the Chinese method could not have an important role in public instructions, because there were, on the one hand, not enough tablets for it, and on the other hand, the Chinese alphabet was composed of hundreds of letters and signs. Some scholars believe that the origin of print is not traced back to China. In fact, a certain kind of print-by ring stones in form of cylindrical seals used under the commands of Ackemenian, Sassanid and Satraps, was known in Iran before the letters were created in China. But, since the background of print is not clear enough, China is considered the source wherein the oldest types of the print art have been found.

The print art with available alphabet was brought, for the first time, to Europe in the fifteenth century. The first type of European print work was a Holy Book in 6371 pages. It was printed by a German goldsmith called Johan Gutenberg and his assistant Johann Faust, a famous merchant in Meins. Later, the two partners took apart for some disagreement; hence, Gutenberg had to sell all the printing stuff to Faust to pay his debts. Lauren Coster, a citizen of Harlem of Holand, was the other rival who claimed to be the pioneer of the print art (Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1976, p. 23). Coster was contemporary to Gutenberg. There is a rumor in Europe saying that Coster was the first European who discovered the method of transferring pictures

onto papers through carved wood. However, this claim does not seem to be true. On the contrary, many think of Gutenberg as the creator of the print art. In addition, simultaneous to Gutenberg, many had found out some branches of the print art all over the world. It is likely that Coster was at the early stages of the printing with pieces of wood when Gutenberg created the print art. Gutenberg did not become disappointed after the first failure, however. He, instead, decided to complete his invention. For this purpose, he worked hard for about eight years (1436-1444) in Strasbourg and tried to remove the defects of this new art. Invention of lithography was his final success which occurred in 1448 in Germany. This was considered the basis for modern printing. It is worth mentioning that Gutenberg used cast iron instead of wood for the first time (Tabatabaei, 1976, p. 8).

Some take the old Testament as Gutenberg's first print work. Yet, some others believe that it was an astrological almanach (Dehkhoda, 1998). In the meantime, Nichola Zhenon from France, Tomasofini Goora from Florence of Italy, the bishop of Toor of France, Antony Zaroot from Milan, and John Muller from Gutenberg were attracted to the print art and thus founded some printing houses. The first English imposter was William Caxton. Supported by his friend, Burgandy, sister of Edward the 2<sup>nd</sup>, king of England, he started the print job. He learned printing in Harlem. His first print was the history of Troy. When he died, his printing house was the biggest one in England. Towards the end of the 15th century, the value and the position of the publishers were increased in Europe. In this regard, Frederick the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the king of Germany, said, "the publishers' hands distribute silver words." (Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1976, p. 31). In the meantime, Gutenberg who had lived a very difficult life, became rich and accordingly owned a palace.

It should be noted that there was always disagreement between authors and publishers. In France about 6000 publishers were frightened with the authors' state of affairs. Then, the French Parliament got involved and voted to wind up the publishers. However, Louis the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the king of France, who was

very much interested in literature, saved the publishers (Babazadeh, 1999, p.14).

There was no serious change in print art till the eleventh century, when William Caxton invented the type face. In this method, printing took a long time; therefore, the British mathematician and physicist, Stanhob (Earl, the 3<sup>rd</sup>) invented a printing machine to solve the problem.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Walter, the concessionaire of Times, the famous newspaper, who was unhappy about the slow process of printing, witnessed an important revolution in print art; that is, his workman, Thomas Martin, invented the automatic print machine (Babazadeh, 1999, p. 22). In 1844, Fredrich Konig, a German, suggesting the use of steam-engine in print art, made the first big machine for John Water. Almost half a century later, a cute American, Richard Hoe, also called the colonel of New York, invented the Rotary machine which replaced the steam-engine. In 1864, the staff of Times newspaper, started a print machine called Walter machine which printed 1200 papers per hour. This was a basis for another phenomenon called Rotary machine invented by William Ballock from Philadelphia in 1886. Two machines, lino Type and Mono Type, came to the scene (Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1976, p. 17). Following all the above-mentioned inventions, the big print machine called "rotative" invented by Mary Noei from France, a member of La Press, emerged. This machine printed 200000, 300000, and finally 470000 copies. Following this revolution in print art, in mid-nineteenth century, the eight-page Petit Gornale was published in 40000 copies per hour (Ibid, p. 42).

Today, the power of rotative machines has so highly been increased that it prints 250000 copies of a 24- page eight colored newspaper in an hour.

## **2. Printing in Iran**

As mentioned earlier, a kind of print in form of ring seals and cylindrical seals was common at the time of Ackermanian and Sassanid. Then, Iranians used a certain kind of deep print for

their tablets and epigraphs. In fact, they made cuneiforms, inserted them in soft clay and used them after they were dried (Nafissi, 1946, p. 23).

There are also some seals belonging to the kings and commanders of that time which were quite artistically carved on precious stones. These seals were made in cylindrical forms with a hole inside and the kings' names and reputations on each. The seals were used after being rolled on melted wax. No doubt, Iranians had learned it from their ancestors, because there are some seals called "roll" in the ancient Iran museum (Ibid, p. 26). However, what is known today as the origin of the print art in Iran, was "Chaw", borrowed from the Chinese CAU, common in the eleventh century. The word Chaw entered the Persian language towards the end of the seventh century, at the time of one of the Moghol's kings called Gikhato Khan (690-694). According to a tradition, since the economical and financial conditions were unstable in Gikhato Khan's era, a person familiar with the status of China advised the minister of Moghol, Sadr-Jahan Zanjani that, following the Chinese system, paper money be prepared (Tarbiat, 1934, p. 659). Therefore, after the king's order, using gold and silver in trading was banned, and using paper money (chaw) became compulsory. After a while, some chaw machines were settled all over Iran. The people, too, unwillingly accepted the paper money called "chaw-mobarak". Later, because of dissatisfaction of people especially the residents of Tabriz, the "chaw-mobarak" order was cancelled.

The first book in Persian, "The Character of the Christ" was printed in Leiden of Holand in 1094 (Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1976, p. 42). The first Arabic and Persian printing house was settled, in 1629, by the Carmelit priests at their church in Isfahan. This place was soon called "Basma-khaneh" by people. The word "Basma" has been common since the time of Moghol in Iran (Floor, 1987, p. 161). According to Willem Floor a printing machine with both Persian and Arabic letters was presented by F.G. Tudious in Ghazvin in 1618. Then, Shah Abbas, the 1<sup>st</sup>. showed his great interest in that machine wishing that he had one in his country. Willem Floor states that a printing

machine was sent from Vatican but it reached to Isfahan in December 1628 or even possibly January 1629 because of unexpected conditions. In all, the printing house with both Persian and Arabic fonts was established in Isfahan in 1629. However, it is not clear yet whether or not the religious missionaries used this machine. Some believed that the opposition among the authors and the dryness of the weather was the basic reasons for not using the machine (Ibid, p. 161). After the fifth year of their migration to Jolfa and Isfahan, the Armenians established a printing house with Armenian fonts in Isfahan. The first book printed there was a Bible which is still available. According to Floor, one of the Armenians of Jolfa, called Yaghoob Jan, a skillful tool maker who had learned this skill in Europe, made a machine with Armenian fonts. He tried to print the Holy book, but since he was not only unfamiliar with preparing desirable ink but also unaware of the bad side-effects of this invention, he broke down the machine. The opposition of the typographers was also another factor in this regard (Floor, 1987, p. 161). According to Willem Floor and Tavenie and with reference to the printed Bible in 1050, it cannot be stated for sure how many printing houses were established by Armenians in Jolfa. However, the evidence shows that the very Bible was not printed by the printing machine made by Yaghoob Jan. In line with the above discussion, the fact is that there were two printing houses in Safavi era: one with both Persian and Arabic fonts in Isfahan and the other with Armenian fonts in Jolfa, but how long they have been used is not yet Known.

Unfortunately, the Moslems did not pay enough attention to the print job and printing houses. In Shardan's words, "it was only word with no action." (Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1976, p. 48). There is little information about printing of Afsharieh and Zandieh. Therefore, the printing art cannot be evaluated as regards these two periods of time in the history of Iran.

The first printing house with tipograft, supported by Abbas Mirza, the Prince of Ghajar, was founded in Tabriz. Then Agha Zein-ol-abedin Tabrizi, using Arabic fonts printed "Fathname",

the first Persian book, written by Mirza Abulghassem Ghaem-Magham in 1233 (Tarbiat, 1934, p. 660).

In 1245, Abbas Mirza sent Mirza Jaafar Tabrizi to Moscow to learn the print art and also buy a lithography machine for the Iranians. In the meantime, Fathali Shah ordered to transfer Aghazein-ol-Abedin's printing house to Tehran to print the Koran, under the supervision of Manoochehr Khan Mo'tamedoldoleh (Ibid). Simultaneously, an epistle entitled as "Hosseinieh" was printed in lithography of Isfahan. The Koran printed in lithography belongs to this era.

During 1244-1248, printing houses were established in Tabriz, Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Oroomyeh. At first, typography was used in Iran, but later, it was replaced with lithography. The first newspaper, with no title, run by Mirza Saleh Shirazi, was published in the early days of the kingdom of Mohammad Shah Ghajar. It is said that this monthly newspaper, also called "the news of dar-ol-khalafe" or "the paper of news," was first published in 1253 (Shamim, 1995, p.231). In 1267, under the order of Amir Kabir, the paper "Vaghaye etefaghie" was published. This weekly paper, printed in lithography, was probably the revised version of Mirza Saleh Shirazi's which was printed in the printing house of the court. After Amir Kabir was murdered, his paper was printed first under the title of "Government against Iran" and then it changed to "Iran newspaper". In his first journey back from Europe (1290), Nasser-al-din Shah bought a printing machine (with both Persian and Latin fonts) for 555 Othmani Sterlings in Istanbul and sent it to Tehran. This typography machine was not used for a while for lack of both a manager and a typesetter. Later, in 1292, the French Baron Louis De Nermanne got the copyright of La Pottery, a paper in French, from Nasser-al-din Shah and thus the printing machine was put to work (Shamim, 1995, p. 390). During those days, some other printing houses were established in Tabriz, Booshehr and Isfahan, printing some newspapers such as "Melati", "Scientific", and "Mars". In 1289, a half Arabic-half Persian newspaper was published in Shiraz by the private

physician of Zel-al-Soltan. This paper was later printed in Persian.

At the time of Nasser, the printing houses were limited, belonging only to the government. The only newspaper in that period was "The Government Herald". It is worth noting that during Nasser's era, there were some newspapers printed abroad and brought to Iran. For example, "Baakhtar", the first Persian newspaper was printed in Istanbul, and after a long time it was banned by the government of Ottoman. Other instances include "Habl-ol-matin" in Calcutta of India by Seyed Jamal-ol-din Kashani, the 3rd, "Sorraya" in Egypt supervised by Seyed Farajollah Kashani and edited by Ali Mohammad Khan Parvaresh (Dowlatabadi, 1983, p. 75), "Khalaafat" printed in London with one Persian page, and "Parvaresh" in Egypt by Ali Mohammad Khan Parvaresh.

### **3. The Ministry of Publications and Translation Office**

Earlier, in this paper, some brief information was given about the advancement of the print art in Iran and its development from Gajar to the kingdom of Nasseraddin Shah. However, the important change happening in Nasseraddin Shah's era was the establishment of the ministry of publications and the translation office. The domains and activities of the above-mentioned ministry will be reviewed below.

Mohammad Hassan Khan, the son of Haj Ali Khan Moghaddam Farashbashi Hajeboldowleh who had been involved in the conspiracy of Mirza Mohammad Taghi Khan Amir Kabir's assassination, was born in the early days of Mohammad Shah's government. As it was observed, Mohammad Hassan Khan's financial status was good. When he was very young, he went to France to study. Coming back to Iran in 1284, he was chosen the private translator to Nasseradin Shah. Being very much interested in Mohammad Hassan, Nasseradin Shah used to spend much of his daytime with him. Mohammad Hassan Khan became the manager of first official newspaper and then the translation office. He was then called "Sani-ol-dowleh". In the history of



magazines and newspapers (Brown, 1950, p. 98), Mohammad Sadr Hashemi states that Nasseradin Shah discharged Aligholi Mirza Etemadosaltaneh in 1288 from the office and replaced him with Mohammad Hassan Sani-ol-dowleh. Mohammad Hassan closed down the three newspapers, i.e. state, National and Scientific, and instead published three volumes of Iran newspaper per week (Sadr, 1984, p. 76).

In 1298, Mohammad Hassan Khan founded "Etela" (declaration) paper in order to inform Iranians of the world political conditions. It was the first paper in which articles on foreign events were published. According to Edward Brown, (Ibid) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was set free from the authority of the state press. The Ministry of Publication was then established. However, this is not true because according to Etemadosaltaneh, the Ministry of Publication was officially founded in 1300.

Abdollah Mostowfi also believes that before the Shah's journey abroad (1287-90), at the time of Moshiroldowleh's parliament, all the publication centers were under the control of the Ministry of Sciences (Mostowfi, 1945, p. 271). Afterwards, Mohammad Hassan Khan had the following positions: The Deputy to the Ministry of Justice (1290), The Director of the General Printing Office (1298), a member of the Government Council (1299), and the Minister of Publications (1300). Since Nasseraddin Shah was very much interested in the development of the publication office, he occasionally used to meet the members of this institution encouraging them to continue their work. According to Etemadosaltaneh, simultaneous with meeting the parliament members (1300), the Shah also met the members of the Translation Office emphasizing that an organized and expanded office of translation should be founded (Etemadolsaltaneh, 1977, p. 161).

On Tuesday, 20 Zihajeh 1300, the Translation Office was officially opened by Mirza Ali Khan Aminoldowleh, the Prime Minister. It is said that all translators, even those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, officially joined the Translation Office, attempting to make it more systematic. The main duty of the

office was to translate books from other languages into Persian. The members were mainly selected from both the students of Polytechnic Institution, and those proficient in foreign languages, graduated from overseas universities. From 1300 on, the scope and significance of translation became quite clear. In his diary, Etemadosaltaneh mentions the books he had translated and submitted to the Shah. There is little information about the General Printing office; however, it is said that its duty was to compile, organize and publish books written by the local authors. "Etemadosaltaneh", in his "Diary Newspaper", states that he was chosen to officially manage the Ministry of Publication in 1300. This is an important document about the establishment of the ministry (Ibid). Although Mohammad Hassan Khan was trained by the Ghajar, he paid much attention to the development of culture and knowledge. He could make big changes to compilation, translation and publication. Accordingly, "Yahya Dolatabadi" was called Etemadosaltaneh, the founder of Compilation and Translation office. Etemadosaltaneh claimed that he had paid more than 1000 tomans per year from his personal expenses for the translation office. He goes on saying that, during his ministership up to 1310, he had published and distributed more than a thousand books and booklets, which is impressive. These books are now available at the library of Astan-e-Ghods, National Library, and the Library of Parliament.

Being granted the title "Etemadosaltaneh" by the Shah in 1304, Mohammad Hassan Khan was given several responsibilities such as Mohtaseb of Tehran, the contractor of Royal Buildings, supervisor to the office of compilation laws of Nasserī lecturers, administrator to the Baghat buildings and canals (Ibid). Ali Asghar Shamim, in his writings, classifies the Ministry of Publications into three branches as follows:

1. Supervision of the Translation Office, Publications, the newspapers, especially "Culture of Isfahan"
2. Supervision of the Office of Compilation Laws of Nasserī lecturers
3. Administration of Baghat (gardens), buildings and

governmental canals

The office of compilation laws of Nasserī lecturers was established towards the end of Nasseraddin Shah's government. Its duty was to authorize a comprehensive encyclopedia and autobiography of outstanding scholars of Iran. Two volumes of this book were published in 1313, before Nasseraddin Shah was killed (The Authors' Letter was published in seven volumes.) After Etemadosaltaneh died, the Ministry of Publications went through serious stagnancy.

It was then used only as a means to the so called respect and making money.

At early days of Mozafaroddin Shah's government, Mohammad Bagher Khan Etemadosaltaneh, Mohammad Hassan's nephew, was in charge of the Ministry of Publications. Following Aminoldowleh's attempts in regards to the press and establishment of the society of the elites, the ministry stood on its feet. However, after a while, it fell down again and thus it was given to Molamohammad Tabrizi, also called "Monsieur" (Dowlatabadi, 1947, p. 263). He was the translator of special papers belonging to the Princess to Mozafaroddin Shah. Having good mastery over French, Monsieur was the first clergyman who became the minister. During his ministership, the press, the culture, and the educational system of the country bore serious losses.

The first daily newspaper and the first Iranian women magazine were published at the time of Mozafaroddin Shah. In his era, especially at the time of "Mashrooteh" revolution, the press developed so exclusively that some historians mentioned more than seventy magazines and newspapers printed and published then. The expansion of the print art and the fast development of the press created the public thought relations and also continuous contacts with the revolutionaries beyond the borders of Iran. Moreover, translation and publication of the works of the Western intellectuals especially those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Charles Montesquien enlightened the spirit of law and rebellion against the cruelty in people including

scholars and university students. It also made possible the extensive transfer of ideas and thoughts. Even today, the liberalism of the Iranian community could be well observed in the magazines and other publications of "Mashrooteh".

#### **4. Conclusion**

The art of Printing and its related techniques have been of primary significance to the Iranians since centuries ago. Although the art of printing has experienced many ups and downs during different eras in the history of Iran, it seems that Safavi's were more concerned about it. However, this situation was not stable during Afsharieh and Zandieh. Qajar was but an important era regarding the development of Printing in Iran. In the same line, Abbas Mirza and Qaem Maqam, the Minister of Culture to his government, had important roles in developing the art of printing. It is worth noticing the role of the West especially the European in this respect. Therefore, Iranians should not forget that, although people like Abbas Mirza, Mirza Saleh Shirazi, Qaem Maqam Farahani, Amir Kabir and Mirza Hassan Khan Etemadolsaltaneh made remarkable efforts to establish and develop new organizations as regarded printing, this would have not been possible without the help of the Europe. In fact, it should be noted that Europe had a leading role in cultural development of Iran.

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## از چاو تا وزارت انطباعات

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چکیده:

صنعت چاپ و حرفه‌های وابسته به آن از دیر باز از جایگاهی خاص برخوردار بوده است. با وجود تحولات این صنعت در طول تاریخ، در دوره‌ی صفویه دغدغه‌های بیشتری وجود داشته است. در دوران افشاریه و زندیه این صنعت بی‌ثبات بوده است. در دوران قاجاریه عباس میرزا و قائم مقام (وزیر معارف دوره‌ی عباس میرزا) نقش زیادی در گسترش و تحول چاپ در ایران داشته‌اند. با وجود تلاش‌های زیاد افرادی مانند عباس میرزا، میرزا صالح شیرازی، قائم مقام فراهانی، امیر کبیر و میرزا حسن خان اعتماد السلطنه در زمینه‌ی گسترش و ثبت سازمان‌های مرتبط با صنعت چاپ، بدون همکاری و کمک کشورهای غربی، امکان پیشرفت وجود نداشته است.

طبقه بندی: JEL: N0, N85

واژه‌های کلیدی: چاپ، چاو، صفویه، وزارت انطباعات

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