

French Ambassador Marquis de Villeneuve and the Beginnings of Ottoman Print in Istanbul

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Going along the lines of trans-communal relations in early-18th century Istanbul, this paper will highlight the connection of French ambassador Louis-Saveur, Marquis de Villeneuve (in office between 1728 and 1741) with the intellectual network of Ibrahim Müteferrika and his contribution to the development of print in the Ottoman Empire. Villeneuve is probably most famous for being the mediator of the peace concluded between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs in 1739 at Belgrade, favourable to the Porte, thanks to which France was awarded new and extended capitulations (ahdname) a year later. However, Villeneuve is also known to have acquired many copies of Holderman's *Grammaire Turque*, printed by the Müteferrika press in late 1730. As this paper will demonstrate, this was no random act of the French ambassador: not only was he well acquainted with İbrahim Efendi, but he also had strong ties with the elites that supported the printing press. By exploring Villeneuve's rich diplomatic correspondence, this paper will showcase his involvement in Müteferrika's printing enterprise and some of his intellectual networks in Istanbul, which even included top-ranking members of the ulema, such as Arabzade Bahir Abdurrahman Efendi, the imperial preacher (imam-ı şehriyar) of Sultan Ahmed III and one of the endorsers of the Müteferrika press. By doing so, this paper will broaden our current understanding of the beginnings of Ottoman print in Istanbul and expose the bidirectional cultural transfer between East and West in the early 18th century.