Who connects: İbrâhîm Müteferrika – international conference organised by the NSZL in Ankara

2024/05/21



Under the auspices of the Hungarian-Turkish Cultural Year, the NSZL organised a symposium in cooperation with the Presidential National Library in Ankara. The focus of the event on 21 May 2024 was the oeuvre of the Transylvanian-born diplomat and founder of printing press, İbrâhîm Müteferrika.



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The Hungarian-Turkish Cultural Year celebrates the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. As part of this series of events, an international conference entitled *Who connects: İbrâhîm Müteferrika*, focused on the work of Müteferrika, a Hungarian-born writer publishing in Ottoman Turkish, who connected the two countries. The

products of the first Turkish printing press he created were both Turkish incunabula and personal Hungarikas. His life's work offered an ideal multi- and interdisciplinary approach as the basis for a conference, as it can be analysed from the perspectives of history, geography, language and literature, but also from the history of diplomacy, books and printing.



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AKI ÖSSZEKÖT: İBRÂHÎM MÜTEFERRIKA
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WHO CONNECTS: IBRÂHIM MUTEFERRIKA

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The symposium, held at the Presidential National Library in Ankara, was opened by Judit Gerencsér, Deputy Director General of the NSZL. In her speech she stressed:
“Turkish and Hungarian cultures are able to understand each other, and the cultural capital that is formed has an energy that calls for constant encounters, so it is a great pleasure for the National Széchényi Library to organize today’s symposium together with the Presidential National Library of Ankara. By being here, we are not only giving voice to İbrâhîm Müteferrika, but also to our culture and our common history. It adds to the Hungarian-Turkish Cultural Year and aligns our cultural identity. I am sure that the speakers at the conference will be able to inspire each other during the discussions. We need to keep the language that brings us together alive so that future generations can talk about the values and stories that we all share, because our culture is the sum of our encounters.”



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The academic lectures were opened by Bernadett Varga, Head of the Early Printed Book Collection of the NSZL, with her lecture entitled *Provenance and Reception: Müteferrikas in the National Széchényi Library.*
She explained that the Turkish printing industry, which started in the first third of the 18th century, occupies a special place in the web of Hungarian–Turkish cultural relations: it is a positive element of the common history of the two nations that the cultural achievement of printing was naturalized in the Ottoman Empire by a person of Transylvanian origin. The lecture was related to the conference theme from a book history point of view, as it analysed the extent to which the clarification of the exact provenance and origin of our copies could nuance the history of the reception of Müteferrika in Hungary, which was a by-product of the research related to Rákóczi's emigration and which then expanded. The expert said that Müteferrika's publishing activities were characterised by the fact that he himself wrote a foreword to the printed works, in which he identified the readers who could benefit from reading them, and regularly added new information to the content of the books. Fifteen of these publications, which were originally published in between five hundred and a thousand copies and are now extremely rare, are preserved in the NSZL. The first müteferrikas were added to the National Library with the collection of our founder, Ferenc Széchényi, and the collection gradually grew over the next two hundred years or so.

Other Hungarian speakers at the conference included Anna Stumpf, curator of Turkish manuscripts, staff member of the Oriental Collection of the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Emese Szonja Schmidt, turcologist and literary translator, student of the Doctoral School of Linguistics at the University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities, and Ferenc Tóth, historian and Romance scholar, research advisor of the Institute of History at the Hungarian Research Network (HUN-REN).

On behalf of the National Library, Zoltán Lewalt-Jezierski, Head of Cabinet, and Péter Tóth, Communications Associate, also participated in the conference.

The enigmatic diplomat and printer known as İbrâhim Müteferrika produced seventeen publications between 1729 and 1742. The choice of subject matter of the works published by the Müteferrika printing house was determined by the printer's scientific interests, as religious works were banned, in particular geographical, historical and linguistic works, but also travelogues, political-philosophical treatises and books on magnetism.



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