The Legacy of Printing and its Impact on Modern News Journalism: Examining the Non-Linear Development of Printing Across World Cultures

Abstract
The history of print has always been considered quite straightforward, and, most notably, it is not often that its influence is explored in relation to the news media. This article examines the influence print technologies had on three different social institutions of the past: Ancient China, the Islamic Golden Age, and the European Renaissance period – with a particular focus on the Protestant Reformation. The focus is to explore how the relationship these cultures had with print technologies affected the modern news media and journalism culture, with a look into how culture affects the reception of the news media. This has been done through acquiring research from books which focus on particular subjects this article draws mention to, as well as peer reviewed articles. The article finds that whilst Ancient China, the Islamic Golden Age, and the European Renaissance had different relationships with print, each relationship provides a basis for how we should view the relationship of the news media with the general public today, and that the history of print is not as straightforward as what is commercially understood.

Introduction
Printing, by its very nature, is both an ancient phenomenon, and a prerequisite of modern communication. It has shaped the basis of culture and the dissemination of information, and has become an integral piece to, if not the root of, journalism and the news media. Cultures do not exist in a vacuum, and the effect of printing will be explored in three different cultures; Ancient China, the Islamic Golden Age, and the European Renaissance period – with a particular focus on the Protestant Reformation. These three cultures all developed printing at different stages of history, and this development complemented one another and helped inspire developments for later cultures. They also show the uses printing had, and how printing gave birth to a new wave of communication, in which news and current affairs in particular thrived, and forged our modern relationship with news today

To trace the trend of printing towards modern journalism, it is important to explore what the word *modern* means. Modern, within the scope of this article, is the particular collection of traits, ideas, and institutions that have emerged out of nineteenth century Europe that have become commonly recognisable to contemporary audiences whom have been socialised, and, as such, are familiar of the extensive globalisation of the last 50 years (Anderson, 1983; Stephens, 2007). It is also important to examine the merits and definition of culture, as, whilst an integral part of society, is often given generalised and vague descriptions. Therefore, for the purpose of this article it 'is used to refer to all the activities of life whether these are social, physical, external or internal,' and marks a society based on shared ethnicity, values, ethos, and civilisation (Rahim Khan, 2012, p. 198). This article will also avoid giving voice to the concept; 'The West', as it is a notion that is difficult to define, and is one that is different according to the perspectives of the different cultures examined in this article. There are academics who many argue that it is easy to define, that The West exists as an exception to, or, rather as an example of exceptionalism to what Niall Ferguson would refer to as 'The Rest'. However, as this article will uncover, this is a quite negligent view of the incredibly complex structures, cultures, and advancements that have been made in other cultures (Ferguson, 2004; Rahim Khan, 2012).

Traditionally, advancements made in printing in non-European cultures, particularly in East-Asian countries, were assumed to have been made stagnate due to the prevalence of wood block printing, and, as such, did not have much impact on Europe's advancement into printing. It was assumed that due to the immense traction European print technology had, in conjunction with the spread of European ideas and thought, that European advancement was at the forefront of print technology and how it is used today (Dewar, 2000; Woodward, 1980). This then dismissed other forms of print technology from other cultures, as it was

assumed that printing with moveable type was more efficient, ergo, the European model was better (Burke, 2016, p. 15). However, in the last 20 years, due to advancements in research by scholars such as T. H. Barrett and Jixing Pan, it is now generally accepted that not only did East Asian nations such as China and Korea first develop printing, but their unique style posed different benefits that were not recognised by Europe (Kirkland, 2008). One key thinker; Richard W. Bulliet, convincingly argues that block printing holds a history in the Islamic Golden Age, and that this history directly influenced the Islamic World's later aversion to printing when it became normalised in Europe (Larsson, 2016, p. 34). His journal article *Medieval Arabic Ṭarsh: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of Printing (1987),* is one of the most ground-breaking pieces of research in this area, as it was one of the first to attempt to explore the link the Islamic World during the eight to fourteenth centuries relationship with print technology (Larsson, 2016). It is the basis of his research that helps aid and shape the basis of some of the analysis within this article.

By arguing that the advent of printing is not the sole design of European achievement, this article is not dismissing global scholarship on the history or printing, rather, it is challenging the Eurocentric narrative of modernity by providing other examples to examine. This will then explain printing's impact on journalism of the current day, in which, towards news journalism, there exists a normalised and often demonstrated radical opposition to in society (Anderson, 1983; Gunaratne, 2001). This is seen most prominently due to two [2] developments in the nineteenth century: the rise of nationalism and the industrial revolution (Anderson, 1983; Ferguson, 2004).

News, Both Modern and Ancient (Why the News Media is Important)
Culture and the news are symbiotic, one cannot exist without the other as they use one another to grow and thrive. This is because cultures impact what is deemed valuable to the news (or, what is newsworthy), and the news media records this information and shares it further, establishing a essential pattern of the distribution of information. Leading Australian journalist, Annika Smethurst describes the news media as a fundamental part of a nation and its culture, that it provides transparency to the public and in doing so is integral to democracy, stating "reporters […] must expose secrets and tell the truth. We are here to scrutinise the Government and hold the powerful accountable' (Smethurst, 2020, p. 31-32). This is a fundamental idea that has been the bedrock of many European and European inspired countries such as Australia and America, and it is through this lens in which the news media and modern journalism will be analysed in relation to the development of printing (Stephens, 2007).

Prior to print technologies, the early history of news is difficult to track, as, by definition, there are little to no print records of this period. News, as a concept, has, for as long as records can inform, been present in society, and 'it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a society that does not exchange news and that does not build into its rituals and customs means for facilitating that exchange,' and anthropologists have well documented many cultures in which news was considered a priority (Stephens, 2007, p. 15). Among those beyond the scope of this article include; Polynesian, South Americans, and Zulu cultures. These peoples valued storytelling as a means of communication, and it is this that is believed to have formed the basis of what we now consider the news. This represented an opportunity to tell stories based in truth, as were deemed important to the listener and narrator alike (Stephens, 2007, p. 15). Today this remains little changed, with news media still primarily aspiring to provide truth and information to its audience. This continuity illustrates the everlasting notion of what the news is, and it is this distinction that will serve to provide contrast on how the printing press enabled the news media's growth into the juggernaut it is today (Rahim Khan, 2020; Smethurst, 2020).

Preconceived Notions

The history of print – as with many other advancements, has an historical bias within European history (Elverskog, 2016). The English philosopher Francis Bacon, who is credited with developing one of the most common forms of the scientific method, wrote in 1620 that there were three European inventions that forever changed the world. These inventions were: gunpowder, the nautical compass, and the printing press. He cited the printing press due to its ability to aid the spread of information, which was integral to the enlightenment of the European age (Scherrer-Schaub, 2016). However, printing technologies were not unique to Europe, and so to credit Europe with this invention therefore disregards the advancements of other cultures.

There is a preconceived perception that the European printing press, developed by Johannes Gutenberg, was the first example of a mass producing device for printed text. This notion disregards how other cultures developed printing, and, indeed, how they used it to share their own news and information (Akman, 2017). Therefore, before examining the development and use of print technologies in Ancient China, the Islamic Golden Age, and the European Renaissance period, it is important to first counter the preconceived notions of the history of print. Scientific advancement develops as a society needs it to, and each society develops and adapts based on the access they have around them.

Development of Printing Outside Europe
To begin with, the history of printing, as with many things, is not an easy thing to discover, recount, or record. In European cultures of the past, as well as current cultures who are influenced by Europe; such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, there is a tendency to value history as a linear narrative, a methodology of *who came first*, and defining all technology on its merits toward advancing society to a perceived modernity (Dewar, 2000). This narrative, however, is not universal, and this perception is quite misguided as 'the narrative elevation of printing and technology writ large is a purely European phenomenon' Elverskog, 2016, p. 23). As such, in other cultures like the Middle East and East Asia, there is no substantive recorded history of printing, as there was no conception of it being important or transformative as printing was a normalised element of society (Elverskog, 2016, p. 23). Therefore, there is much information on printing that is either missing, or speculative, since many of the answers are simply not there.

Printing, as we have come to recognise it today – that is, making multiple copies of a document by transferring it from one raised surface to another surface [paper], can trace its routes to the similar technologies that are believed to have been produced during the Islamic Golden Age. During the period between the tenth century and fourteenth centuries CE, there were two common technologies used; traditional woodblock printing – which was inspired by earlier Chinese print technologies, and the invention of tin plate printing (Bulliet, 1987, p. 427). These techniques, however, were predominantly used by merchants who lived in lower socioeconomic environments, and thus the reputation of printing was intricately connected to them (Bulliet, 1987, p. 430). Print technology is said to have been used by unethical amulet peddlers who were members of the Banu Sasan – or, the Islamic underworld of beggars and tricksters, who printed amulets to sell to unsuspecting and naïve buyers who believed they were purchasing handwritten pieces (Bulliet, 1987, p. 428). Amulets were incredibly important; as long, thin strips of paper presenting quotations from the Qur'an, one such use of them was to protect the wearer from danger and ward off evil (Bulliet, 1987, p. 428; Savage-Smith and Canaan, 2004, p. 94). Their traditionally handwritten component was incredibly important, as the calligraphy reflected the upmost respect and reverence for the Qur'an, which meant anything less than handwritten – such as printed words, were seen as unspiritual, therefore to be scammed out of handwritten amulets was seen as insulting (Aqeel, 2009, p. 11; Bulliet, 1987, p. 429). This is evident through a poem by Abu Dulaf al-Khazraji, who is said to have been a member of the Banu Sasan. It remains one of the only remaining descriptions of the 'tarsh,' which, due to the nature of its description, is assumed to mean print blocks;

> 'Among us [the Banii Sasan], without publicity (jahr) or boasting (khart), is the engraver of tarsh [variant in two manuscripts tars].' The engraver of tarsh is he who engraves (yafhfiru) molds (qawdlib, sing. qalib) for amulets (tacdwidh, sing. tacwTdh). People who are illiterate and cannot write buy them from him. The seller keeps back (hafiza) the design (naqsh) which is on it [the tarsh] so that he exhausts his supply of amulets on the common people (nds) and makes them believe that he wrote them. The mold is called the tarsh [variant in two manuscripts tars]'. (al-Khazraji as quoted by Bulliet, 1987, p. 430).

The link of printing to the Islamic underworlds seems to have given it a reputation that not only was it an inferior technology for recording important information, writing, and holy texts, but that it was a dirty technology, and could tarnish the words from holy texts such as the Qu'ran and the Hadith (Canan, 2004, p. 82; Larsson, 2016, p. 35). However, it is important to note that these prints have not been reliably dated, which can throw doubt into the true impact printing had during the Islamic Golden Age (Bulliet, 1987; Larsson, 2016). It can therefore be concluded that whilst printing remained in the Islamic world for quite some time, it was of so little consequence to the grand scheme of the era that it now remains largely forgotten (Larsson, 2016, p. 35).

Determining the first example of substantive printed material is hotly contested, however, the earliest example that is generally agreed upon is that from China (Larsson, 2016; Woodward, D., 1980). Chinese print technology up until the seventeenth century is wholly absent in most historical records, despite there being evidence that woodblock printing did exist before this period of time (Elverskog, 2016, p. 24). Because of this, there is little consensus on when print was developed in China, however it is believed to have been normalised into Chinese culture between 600 CE and 750 CE under the Tang Dynasty (Gunaratne, 2001, p. 459; Pan, 1997, p. 977). The technology was woodblock printing, a technique in which words or pictures are carved onto a large block of wood, then, once carved, ink is spread across the block and sheets of paper are pressed against it (Reed, 2008). This example is incredibly important to the history of printing, as, being the first known example we currently have on printing, it lays the groundwork for the kinds of uses it had, and the kind of information that was developed [in China] because of it.

The earliest printed objects that have been found from the Tang Dynasty date from around the sixth century. They are silk charms printed with passages from Buddhist texts, and believed to be the result of Buddhist monks experimenting with different ways to preserve holy texts (Gunaratne, 2001, p. 466). It has been speculated that these amulets were what later inspired early printing during the Islamic Golden Age (Gunaratne, 2001, p. 465). Printing in China then quickly evolved, producing *dharani charm* – or, the *Diamond Sutra*. Colloquially known as the oldest book in the world, it is believed to have been printed between 650 to 670 CE in Sanskrit, was found in 1974 from a Tang tomb in Xi'an, and is the earliest printed item in the form of a page (Pan, 1997, p. 980). The Diamond Sutra's prevalence has been used to explain why printing was developed, as is quite reflective of the culture of the time. It is part of a collection of sutras that make up the sacred texts of Mahayana Buddhism and it is likely that monks would have rolled and unrolled the documents and chanted the sutra aloud regularly, and so creating multiple copies and disseminating the word of Buddha would have helped send it out into the world, and allow more Buddhists to engages in the text (Burke, 2016, p. 18; Nhất Hạnh and Nguyen, 2006). Often sighted as teaching impermanence, The Diamond Sutra is far deeper and holds a far more varied meaning, which, to go into, would take a far more experienced scholar, and the rest of this article. However, it can be said that it is an incredibly important document, as the beliefs and teachings presented in the book are still just as relevant, and just as practised today, demonstrating the longevity of the teachings (Nhất Hạnh and Nguyen, 2006). This example demonstrates the prevalence and importance

printing had [and still has] in China. It is a stark example of the versatility of printing, as well as the significance it had in shaping information, and sharing said information.

Europe, Printing, and Why it Didn't Catch On Earlier
There is much debate as to what ended the Islamic Golden Age. Some credit it to the weakened social infrastructure of the society after the Mongol's destruction of Bagdahd in 1258, some credit it to later caliphs who were apathetic towards intellectual curiosity, and were either fearful of it or lacked the foresight to see its continued benefits (Aqeel, 2009). Regardless of the reason, it is reductionist to assume it was due to a perceived European exceptionalism, as 'the alleged European "exceptionalism" disregards historical continuity and implicitly towards the printing press,' especially since the design that helped achieve the European Renaissance, is the direct result of the Islamic worlds influence (Burke, 2016, p. 13). The European printing press, as it is recognised today, was developed by Johannes Gutenberg from 1440 to 1450 CE whilst in exile from Mainz, Germany in Strasbourg, France. It is believed that, due to trade from Iran to France more than a century before, Gutenberg may have found some influence from the printing press' used during the Islamic Golden Age, due to their similar described designs (Aqeel, 2009; Gunaratne, 2001). Of course, there is no recorded evidence as to how Gutenberg's printing press worked or was used, beyond the understanding that he used metal cast plates instead of wooden blocks like the Chinese, and developed individual type-faces to create a form of moveable type (Elverskog, 2016, p. 23). In 1452 CE, he published 180 copies of what is known as the Gutenberg bible, however it did quite not succeed. Due to a amalgamation of the text varying in degrees of legibility, and the advent of many people in Gutenberg's target market unable to read, it did quite poorly, and Gutenberg died poor, penniless, and unable to create any tangible change (Dewar, 2016).

The emergence of the European Renaissance revitalised print technology, and the technology became quite common place among the rich and elite, who could afford as such, which made it steadily influential (Dewar, 2016). This was also a time of mass corruption within the Catholic Church, combining to form and create one of the most divisive happenings of the era; the Protestant Reformation. Angered and appalled with the Catholic Churches use of indulgences to pay off sin, in 1517, Martin Luther, wrote one of the most compelling and cultural significant pieces of writing in European history, and famously pinned it to Wittenberg Castle Churches front door. However, it's real impact was through the spread and dissemination of his criticisms of the Catholic Church, which came through the printing press' ability to mass produce Luther's text. It was through the use of the printing press that these unorthodox and, arguably, radical ideas were far more difficult to suppress, sparking a new Christian Denomination (Burke, 2016, p. 14). This was a ground-breaking event that was incredibly important to European history, as well as the influence print has now had on shaping cultures. Luther's thesis was one of the major materials that helped promote reading during throughout Europe and it has been suggested that it helped birth the idea for newspapers, which would fully come into development centuries later, as the mass spread of his work had never been seen in Europe before (Burke, 2016).

However, it is important to discuss that, whilst there was is clear importance in Europe's use of the printing press towards normalising print, this does not mean that they are solely responsible for the use of print. It must be acknowledged that, comparatively, it took a fair amount of time for Europe to embrace print. For example, some scholars highlight that since China was arguably the first to develop print technologies, that the lack of print's spread earlier was due to some sort of technological limits that stopped it spreading globally (Gunaratne, 2001). This notion applies a Eurocentric intention on the uses of printing in China – that the ultimate goal was mass production. However, mass production of print was not the intention of Chinese printing, rather;

> 'In both [East and West] printing promoted culture, widened the scope of subjects that interested scholars, helped shift the bias from religious to classical learning, [...]

popularised education, spread literacy, and enriched art and literature; though it did so to a different degree in each... [In China, printing] facilitated the continuity and universality of the written language and thus became an important vehicle for sustaining the cultural tradition [as evident] in the printing of the Confucian classics and similar material for the civil service examinations' (Tsien, as quoted by Gunaratne, 2001, p. 475)

There is also the question as to why the Islamic world, after semi-embracing print during the Islamic Golden Age, would then be adverse to print technologies later. Quite simply, it is unlikely to be due to the currently argued perceived ignorance that the Middle East held towards printing, as if they were naïve of the effects print could have. Mentioned previously, it cannot be understated that in Islam, the word of Allah [God] is of the upmost importance, and the reverence and respect practising Muslims have for the Qur'an is crucial in understanding the Islamic world's response to print (Aqeel, 2009, p. 11). By the 1500's, the Islamic world valued calligraphy and hand scribed scripture above all else, and it was seen as the most superior form of recording Allah's word. As such, any other technology, such as print technologies, were seen as inferior to what Inham's were already entirely capable of doing – transcribing and sharing the Qur'an. This opinion was not unique to Muslims alone, Orthodox Christians as well as Catholics also held an aversion to printing when it became mainstream in Europe, and believed hand scribed text was superior in preserving the word of God (Aqeel, 2009). Furthermore, as it is today, there is an emphasis in memorising the Qur'an, and is a form of worship believed will be rewarded hereafter, and this is a practise that is not as normalised in Christian religions (Akham, 2017). This meant that there was not the same need for mass production, as most of the population already knew the text. It is believed that these reasons are the more likely answer as to why the Islamic world took some time to embrace printing, and, as such, it is inherently orientalist to assume any different (Akham, 2017).

Printing and Modern Journalism
Before delving further into this, it must be noted that history is not linear and does not exist as a singular thread of cause and effect. Without exploring well beyond the focus of this article, it is difficult to link the advent of printing to the progression and cultural relationships of news media. However this limits our understanding of the possibilities that print represented for those the various cultures which developed it. 'People usually read histories to know the unique facts or events, which are not, or cannot be, neatly fitted into the rise and fall of a culture,' however just like culture, science does not exist in a vacuum (Richardson, 1966, p. 5). Academic study, by its very design, is supposed to enhance another's work, nothing exists on its own, and this is true also of how printing evolved.

So too as to how the printing press is credited with heralding the reformation and the renaissance, as well as preserving immense scientific information in Ancient China, the described 'information age' of today will have a similar impact (Dewar, 1998). Print has moulded the culture and shape of mind of the journalism industry, even though today's technology has moved beyond the tangible as we reach the digital age. One such example is in the way articles are written and published. Back when print was the primary medium to share and spread news and information, via newspapers and magazines, the space for stories was understandably limited, and as such it was vital for journalists to get the main point across. This developed the inverted triangle complex, where the most important information is presented first in what is called the lede, and less important information precedes it until the end of the article holds, presumably, the least important information of the story or a gateway for a follow-up (Stephens, 2007). This form of storytelling and reporting has shaped every aspect of journalism, and, as such, has shaped how audiences digest the news. Furthermore, the rise of newspapers in the seventeenth century challenged the preconceived perceptions readers had on the world around them, as it was the first tangible example of news and information being both accessible and mainstream in Europe

(Woodward, 1980). This has led to the sudden and varied access to different perspectives, with an "increase in the awareness of alternative versions of a given story" (Burke, 2016, p. 17).

This gave way to a rise to scepticism, which has expanded significantly in the last century. In Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities, Anderson attempts to explain the rise of nationalism and identity over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He highlights the mass media as one of the main driving influences in establishing, what he argues, is the modern nation; a 'volatile phenomenon, framed by cultural and social dynamics and something that is far from over' (Castelló, 2016, p. 60). He argued that the mass daily circulation of the popular press – or, 'Print Capitalism,' meant that people were exposed to the same messages at the same time, which created a new community and a new way of thinking. This came predominantly by defining one group (the audience, who were the community), by 'othering' or, defining another group, and establishing those characteristics against the audiences (Anderson, 1983; Castelló, 2016). Print News, therefore, can be heralded as influencing and aiding the creation the modern nation state.

Additionally, even the most simple aspects of print news has impacted every culture it has touched, even beyond the nation state. This, predominately, is seen through the rise in identity, and the construction and maintenance of communities through print and the news. Print news has normalised language and different vernaculars, which is a key component of identification for different groups in society, as it is both a pinnacle of communication, and a representation of the shared aspects and qualities a culture has, thus reflecting the current perception a society has of oneself, and defining it (Anderson, 1983).

Today and Beyond
The main takeaway from the advent of print technology is this: what is modern may not be new, and what is new may not be modern. Due to its revolutionary ability to share, spread, and preserve information, print technologies set the precursor for modern journalism and the news media. Print has the extraordinary ability to preserve tangible material that both reflects society, and defines it, by presenting the most valuable information and beliefs within its pages, and sharing it with the masses. This has been shown in how each culture examined within this article, created and adapted their relationship with print technologies. A positive relationship with print helped foster the dissemination of information, and the advent of mass production highlighted the need to inform people of information unique to their circumstance: the news.

Cultures who had a negative relationship with print do not represent ignorance or a lack of value towards knowledge, rather, it demonstrates the need for information to be factual, accurate, and used as a uniting tool, rather than be used as a tool that scams people, or a tool to divide. This is especially important as we move into an age where processing information is faster than ever, but is not always, necessarily, as accurate. A healthy relationship between the public and the news media is, therefore, of the upmost importance, because, without it, journalists will not be able to do their jobs as effectively – if, at all. It is therefore clear that the impact of print news is just as clear today as it was when it developed. Without print, the shape and infrastructure of the news media would be radically different, if the news media even existed, as print was essential in creating the news. It is of the upmost importance then that moving forward, we take the relationship cultures had with print into account, as it can help inform us as to the relationships with the news today.

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