



## Summary :

Konstantinos Tombras, printer from Ayvalik, studied the art of printing at the printing office of Firmin Didot in Paris, and later on founded the first Greek printing house in Ayvalik. After the destruction of Cydoniae (Ayvalik), he played an important role in the development of printing within the Greek state.

## Date and Place of Birth

Late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ayvalik

## Date and Place of Death

Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (?)

## Main Role

Printer

### 1. Tombras' activity in Ayvalik

Konstantinos Tombras was born in [Ayvalik](#) (Cydoniae) in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was a printer with a very important contribution to the development of printing in the greek-orthodox community of Cydoniae and the greek state, later on.

He first came in contact with the art of printing in Paris in the mid 1810s. He apprenticed at Firmin Didot's printing house, where he was sent as a student of the [Cydoniae Academy](#), on a grant by the greek-orthodox community (namely by the elder Emmanuel Saltelis) to learn printing and return to Ayvalik to found a printing house. The community covered his expenses because they wished a printing house in their town to facilitate the spread of the new sciences in the community.

In Paris, Tombras became a member of [Adamantios Korais'](#) circle together with K. Demides, who had been sent to Paris to study the art of gun-making. They learned the important principles of the typographic art and were able to operate a printing house. Tombras was highly trained in the art of printing, type-setting, the construction of typing casts and the art of the printing press, whereas Demides was skilled in setting the typographic characters and tools.

When Tombras returned to Ayvalik, he brought with him the equipment (typographic fonds, machinery and greek characters), that were required for the founding of the first greek community printing house. The printing house ran under his administration until 1821, in the courtyard of the Church of the [Virgin of the Orphans](#). Initially, the printing house was placed under the administration of the Academy of Cydoniae and became autonomous later on. Tombras taught the art of printing to his nephews Anastasios Nikolaides and Ioannis Tombras, who worked with him in Greece for the next years <sup>1</sup>. After the destruction of Cydoniae, Tombras, along with Nikolaides, was saved by finding refuge in [Moschonisia](#), and later [Psara](#). Although Tombras had made provisions to pack the printing house for the transportation, it was destroyed.

### 2. Tombras' activity in Greece

At the same time, Demetrios Ypsilantis brought to Greece from Trieste a small wooden printing apparatus. He was concerned whether he would find in Greece someone skilled enough to operate it. When Tombazis informed Ypsilantis of Tombras being rescued in Psara, he immediately sent a ship to the island to transfer him back. Ypsilantis, Tombras and Nikolaides met after many misfortunes (the three men had tried to meet in Astros, in the first place, and later on in Vervena). The question of finding the suitable place to install the printing apparatus was debated. Finally, the first printing house of the greek state was built in Kalamata inside a mosque.<sup>2</sup> Theoklitos Farmakides was the first editor of the office and among the first printed documents were the newspaper "Elliniki



Salpix" and Demetrios Ypsilantis's pamphlet. Tombras was, however, ordered to transfer the printing house to the town of Tripolitsa, which was already liberated. Nevertheless, due to the unsettled social conditions, he did not even unpack the printing apparatus, and went to Argos, where there was no security either. In the meantime, Tombras had become heavily ill. The surrender of Corinth to Kolokotronis and the decision of the National Assembly to move the seat of the Central Government there, provided a solution. Tombras and Nikolaides moved the printing house to Corinth and installed it in Theocharakis' residence. Theocharakis himself, yet, was not in a position to engage himself in printing tasks. When finally the installation was put in operation, the second edition of the First Constitution or Provisional Regime, and other official documents were printed. The printing house did not last long though, as when Dramalis entered Corinth in 1822, he destroyed it. Tombras was rescued by following Kriezis' corps.

During the following years Tombras worked in different printing houses of the Administration on Nafplio, and collaborated with Nikolaides, Demides and Ioannis Tombras. In 1828 he set up with Demides the first private printing house in Nafplio. After the declaration of independence of the greek state, he worked in different printing houses in the country.



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2. Μαζαράκης-Αινιάν, Ι.Κ., «Τα ελληνικά τυπογραφεία του Αγώνος», *Νέα Εστία* 1043 (Δεκέμβριος 1970), p. 268.

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