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FEMALE PATRONAGE OF BOOK PRINTING IN THE TRANSOTTOMAN CONTEXT

Рассматриваются отдельные примеры женского меценатства по отношению к типографиям и печатникам в период с конца XV до конца XVII в. в трансосманском контексте. Так представительница греческой знати Анна Нотара инициировала печать важного греческого издания *Etymologicum Magnum* в Венеции (1499). В самом конце XVI в. вдова известного дипломата Иосифа Наси, донна Рейна, активно спонсировала книгопечатание на иврите и ладино в Константинополе, основала собственную типографию и выпустила ряд важных для еврейских читателей книг. В середине XVII в. Елена, супруга господаря Валахии Матая Бесараба, участвовала в патронаже книгопечатания в Валахии. Особый интерес представляет перевод *Imitatio Christi* (1647) на церковнославянский язык, а также славянское издание Цветной Триоди (1649) с эпиграммой, колофоном и предисловием, указывающими на особую роль Елены в их появлении. Эти примеры иллюстрируют особенности ранней истории книгопечатания в Османской империи и за ее границами, где важным фактором являлась мобильность — мобильность населения (опыт миграции этнических и религиозных групп), мобильный характер типографий, а также печатных книг, которые должны были распространяться среди разных групп населения (греческой знати и клира в диаспоре и империи, среди евреев-сефардов, на Афоне и т.д.) При этом ставится вопрос об особенностях именно женского патронажа раннего книгопечатания — предполагаемый уровень образования женщин, их мотивация, интерес и изданию конкретных книг и языкам изданий.

Ключевые слова: женское меценатство, типографии, печатники, Османская империя, диаспора

This paper focuses on three various case studies of noble women supporting and initiating book printing, as well as sponsoring printed editions in the Early Modern period. All these female patrons were in a different way connected with the history of the Ottoman Empire — Anna Notaras as a noble member of the Greek diaspora in Italian cities in the second part of the 15th century, whose family was murdered shortly after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and whose mission was to preserve Byzantine cultural heritage and Greek Orthodox identity in Italy. Jewish noble woman Reyna Nasi, a daughter of Portugesian Maranos (forced converts from Judaism to Christianity), who came from Western Europe to the Ottoman Constantinople in the middle of the 16th century, where she re-converted to Judaism and married Joseph Nasi, Duke of Naxos. After her husband's death she spent all her fortune for the needs of Jewish learning in the Ottoman Empire. On her initiative, two printing presses were founded in order to provide books for Ottoman Jews. The wife of Wallachian ruler Matthew Basarab (1632—1654), Helen (Elena/Elina) patronised printing presses in the Ottoman tributary state Wallachia. She maintained contacts to the monks on the Mt Athos. Helen supported translating and printing of religious and liturgical books for the Orthodox monasteries and churches under the Ottoman rule.

Anna Notaras (died 1507) was a famous Byzantine noble woman, daughter of *megas dux* Loukas Notaras and a lady of the imperial family of Palaiologos. She left Constantinople before 1453 and moved with her sisters Theodora and Euphrosyne to Rome, where her father had numerous connections, honorary citizenship of Venice and of Genoa, as well as substantial sums in Italian banks [1, p. 96]. Her patronage was very important for the Greek community of Venice, especially because of her support of the Greek printing press lead by two Cretans — Nicholas Vlastos and Zacharia Kallierges [2, p. 8] — but also because of her contacts with the city council of Siena and Venice, the means she bequeathed for construction of a very first Greek Orthodox church on Italian territories¹, as well as Byzantine icons she brought with her from Constantinople and donated to the newly founded Greek Orthodox Brotherhood (1494) of Venice for the future religious endowment [4, p. 281].

Greek printing in the second half of the 15th century was in a very initial stage in Italy. One of the first pioneers of printing in Greek became Nicholas Vlastos and Zacharia Kallierges, who started running their press at the end of the 15th century with substantial support of Anna Notaras. New printing technology was called upon to preserve Byzantine and Ancient Greek textual culture, to protect and disseminate knowledge from the Greek handwritten tradition among Western European and Greek scholars.

It was only thanks to Anna's special patronage that a remarkable edition of the most important sample of Byzantine lexicography could be printed in Venice in 1499. The famous *Etymologicum Magnum* compendium, printed under the patronage of Anna Notaras [5, p. 366; 6, p. 26], became the first and the main edition of the Byzantine lexicon from the middle of the 11th century. Her name is mentioned in the colophon. On the final pages it stays that the cost of the production was defrayed „by the noble and esteemed Cretan Nicholas Vlastos, on the recommendation of the most distinguished and most modest lady Anna, daughter of...Loukas Notaras, once Grand Duke of Constantinople“ (ἀναλώμασι μὲν τοῦ || εὐγενοῦς καὶ δοκίμου ἀνδρὸς κυρίου Νικολάου βλαστοῦ, τοῦ κρητὸς· παραινέσει δὲ τῆς λαμπρο-||τάτης τε καὶ σωφρονεστάτης κυρίας Ἀννης, θυγατρὸς τοῦ πανσεβεστάτου καὶ ἐνδοξοτάτου κυρίου || Λουκᾶ νοταρᾶ) [7, p. 55; 1, p. 106]. According to Konstantinos Staikos, this edition is distinguished by the extensive use of red ink on every page. This indicates that each page was printed twice. It is also adorned with headpieces and superb artistic initial capitals at the beginning of the entry for each letter of the alphabet [2, p. 16]. Some historians believe that Anna not

¹ On a Greek church of St. George (*San Giorgio dei Greci*) that was founded in 1539, see: [3].

only financed the publication of the *Etymologicum Magnum*, but also secured the permission and the imprimatur of the Venetian state, also working along with her niece Eudokia who helped with the design of this monumental edition. Some decorations of the page headings and capital letters in the text were based on embroideries made by Anna and Eudokia [1, p. 106; 8, p. 36-37]. This edition is considered to be a real masterpiece among other early Greek printed books. Its decoration reminds of Byzantine illuminated manuscripts.

The fact that the printer Nicholas Vlastos was mentioned in Anna Notaras' will as its executor², gives reason for us to presume that Anna knew him well and trusted him, but also how much she estimated the role of printing for the Greek community in Venice and abroad. It is interesting that her will was written down by Anna's confessor, Orthodox priest John Kapnissis in Greek in the presence of a translator, as according to the Venetian notary, Anna „was ignorant of Latin language“ (*ipsa domina Anna testatrix ignorat linguam latinam*) [9, p. 82]. Some scholars explain this fact with suggestion that Anna was able to communicate in Italian, but refused learning Latin, as she associated it too much with the Catholic Church [1, p. 99].

It is hard to imagine that Anna Notaras sponsored only one book of the Greek printing house in Venice, where in the same and following year appeared three further incunabulae. The *Commentary on Aristotle* by Simplicius (1499), the *Commentary on Porphyrius* by another neoplatonist philosopher Ammonius (1500), Gallen's *Therapeutiki* (1500) were printed by Nicholas Vlastos and Zacharia Kallierges in Venice [2, p. 20]. How can be explained the fact that her name was mentioned only in one of them? It is possible that Anna did not want to be mentioned in the context of editing of „pagan“ Greek philosophy and literature that could be considered to be dangerous for Christian readers [1, p. 105-107] unlike the Byzantine compendium she was most probably proud of. On the other hand, the choice of repertoire of the Cretan printers seems appropriate to the actual demand of the intellectual milieu in Venice. For example, they did not consider necessary to print any liturgical books (not unlike later Serbian/Montenegrin printers, who were working only on production of Church Slavonic books for use in the Orthodox churches and monasteries in the Balkans [10]), but they were guided by Renaissance interest in antique philosophers and scientific editions. Obviously, Anna as a patroness of the printing press by Vlastos and Kallierges approved the printers' choice, even if her name had to be associated only with the one monumental Byzantine edition.

Anna's role is considered particularly important in the context of the preservation of Byzantine cultural heritage, especially in the Greek diaspora in Italy. Her support of Greek book printing in Venice estimated the role of Venice as the centre of post-Byzantine culture. Because of her own migration experience, she could act as an agent of cultural translation taking care of dissemination of the Byzantine knowledge in the new Italian environment, in the face of the Ottoman conquest and rule back in her homeland.

Unlike the Greek printing tradition that had to be cultivated in Venice and other Italian cities — because it failed in the Ottoman Empire — Jewish book printing was able to assert itself not only in Venice, but also in Ottoman Constantinople in 1493 and Salonica in 1512. A particular role in Jewish book history played Sephardic refugees from Spain and Portugal, who brought their printing tools from Italy [11]. The importance of preserving Jewish Sephardic tradition after the famous expulsion from Spain (1492), motivated Jews to mobilise means for printing and spreading first of all Jewish religious and legal books for the needs of Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire itself³, but also for Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities abroad. The dedicated patronage and charity of Jewish notables played a crucial role in the relative success of the Hebrew presses. Also female patrons were active in supporting book printing and spreading of Jewish learning — one of them was famous *kira* Esther Handali, the widow of Elijah Handali, who sponsored the printing of the astronomer and mathematician Abraham Zacuto's genealogical chronicle *Sefer ha-Yuhasin* that was published by Samuel Shalom and printed at the Jabez/Ya'abetz press in Constantinople in 1566 (and later reprinted in Cracow 1581, Amsterdam 1717 etc.). In the introduction to the book it was stressed that Esther had spent her entire fortune on charity [13, p. 113; 14, p. 15; 15, p. 206].

Another woman, who was famous for her patronage of book printing was *dona Reyna Nasi*, the widow of the famous Ottoman diplomate Joseph Nasi [12, p. 81; 16, p. 46; 14, p. 15-16]. Already Joseph Nasi possessed an impressive library in Constantinople that he placed at disposal of Jewish scholars, some of whom he particularly supported and motivated for writing and editing treatises. He possibly also planned to found a printing house, but never succeeded [17, p. 28, 56]. After his death in 1579, a big part of his property was confiscated by the Ottoman authorities. A childless widow Reyna could hardly save her own dowry, 90 000 ducats that she later used to establish and run her printing house [17, p. 29, 102; 18, p. 166]. Reyna Nasi set up a press in the Belvedere Palace, on the outskirts of Constantinople, in the place called Ortaköy in 1592. This area became later an important center of Jewish learning in Istanbul. The press was operated by Yoseph ben Yitzhak Ashkeloni, who produced seven titles between 1593 and 1597. For this purpose letters were fashioned into new forms [12, p. 81]. Dona Reyna is mentioned on title pages of the books as „...the illustrious lady...widow of the Duke, Minister and great leader in Israel, Don Yosef Nasi, of blessed memory...“ [ibid.]. After 1597 the printing house was moved to a near suburb Kuruçeşme, where further eight books

² The complete text of Anna's will, see here: 9, pp. 80-87, here p. 84.

³ This intention of printers can be illustrated by the following quotation from the preface to the *Torah, Haftaroht and Five Megilloth* with Rashi's Commentary (Constantinople, 1506): „Since that day when God confused the languages of the earth by the sudden and bitter expulsion from Spain...books were also abandoned in the trauma of destruction and the confusion of sudden change, for the constant afflictions have left us an empty shell...May their hearts inspire them to spread the knowledge of the Torah in Israel...and to replace some of the numerous works which were destroyed“ [12, p. 79].

were printed within a two year period [12, p. 81; 13, p. 139-147]. Foremost among the fifteen works brought out by Reyna's printing house were books of commentary printed in Hebrew. One part of Talmud was printed (the *Ketuboth* treatise with its commentaries is preserved until today). *Iggeret Schmu'el*, a commentary on the Book of Ruth by Samuel di Uzeda, which states: „Printed in the publishing house and with the type font of the noble lady of noble lineage, Reyna, widow of the Duke and Prince in Israel Don Yosef Nasi by Joseph ben Isaac Ascaloni“ [13, p. 143]. Also one book in Judaeo-Spanish (Ladino) was printed in Reyna's press — *Libro intitulado yihus hatzadikim*, a Ladino translation of a work on holy places in the Land of Israel with explanations about where Jewish *tzadikim* (righteous people) are buried (*qui trata en mostar el lugar, unde estan enterados los tzadikim en Eretz Israel*) [13, p. 140-142; 19, p. 129]. Probably this edition was destined for the use of those intending to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land (*ziyara*) [12, p. 81]. Unlike Hebrew books from Reyna's printing press that could be read by all educated members of Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire and beyond, this *Libro intitulado* addressed only Sephardic Jews, who were able to read in Ladino, but unlike the Hebrew ones, the *Libro intitulado* as a treatise in vernacular language could be accessible also for ex-converts or even Jewish women. Thus one might assume that Reyna's own origin and gender had a particular motivation for her as a patroness to let this Ladino book be printed. The press near Constantinople ceased activity after Reyna's death in 1599, which left the Jewish community without a means to print for several decades.

The last case study comes from the Ottoman tributary state of Wallachia, where the first books in Church Slavonic were printed already as early as the very beginning of the 16th century with help of the Serbian and Macedonian printers from the Balkans and Venice. The new period for the history of printing started for Wallachia and Moldavia in the middle of the 17th century, as under the patronage of local rulers, numerous books for the use in Orthodox religious tradition were printed not only in Church Slavonic, but also in Romanian, Greek, and even Arabic language.

Wallachian Princess **Helen Năsturel** (Elena / Elina), Matthew Basarab's wife and the sister of a famous scholar Udriște Năsturel, actively supported production of printed books in the principality. She was presumably educated together with her brother, as she could read and write, before she married Matthew Basarab (1632—1654) at the age of 14. It was during his reign that book printing was recuperated in Wallachia after several decades of inactivity with help of Peter Mohila, the Archbishop of Kiev [20, p. 483; 21, p. 51]. The most famous edition that occurred under the patronage of Matthew Basarab became a Romanian legal code (of Byzantine origin) *Îndreptarea legii* that was printed in Târgoviște in 1652.

It is known that Helen sponsored and supervised at least two printed editions on her own. The first one was a translation into Church Slavonic of *Imitatio Christi* („The Imitation of Christ“, Книга в Х(ристо)вѣ подражаніи Б(о)жіею), which appeared in 1647 in the printing house at the Dealu monastery [21, p. 62; 22, p. 40]. This famous tractate is attributed to Thomas à Kempis, a German-Dutch canon regular, who composed this Christian devotional book in 1418—1427 in Latin. Its Slavonic translation was prepared in Wallachia by Helen's brother Udriște Năsturel. Two exemplars of this book were found at the library of the Serbian Hilandar Monastery on the Mount Athos⁴.

The preface of the volume reads as follows:

The book of *Imitatio Christi* [arose] with God's help, in order and at complete cost of the most gracious and pious princess and mistress Helena, ruler of Hungaro-Wallachia behind the mountains, the consort of gracious master and voevoda Matthew Basarab. It was translated through hard work and diligence by her relative Udriște Năsturel, the second logothete, from Latin into Slavonic. It was issued for the world in their princely printing house that is at the Dealu monastery.

(Книга в Х(ристо)вѣ подражаніи Б(о)жіею, помощію, повелѣніем же и всѣцѣм иждивеніем, Пресвѣтлыя а Бл(а)гоч(е)стивыя Княгини Г(о)сп(о)жы Елены, Началницы оугровлахіи Запланенскоя, свпрѣжницы Пресвѣтлаго Г(о)сп(о)дара и Воеводы Іу Матѳеа Басарабы. Трѣдолюбіемъ своего ея истаго сьродника Ѡреста Настѣрела, втораго Логоѳета ѿ Латинаскаго на Славенскій ѣзык н(ы)нѣ преведеннаа. из Господарскоа ихъ тѣпографіи, ѣже в Дѣлскомъ Монастири, мѣрѣ издадася...[24, p. 158].

Two copies of the book *Imitatio Christi* were sent presumably by Helen herself or her husband prince Matthew Basarab as a gift to the Hilandar Monastery shortly after it was printed.

Another book Helen sponsored was a Slavonic edition of Triodion-Pentecostarion that was printed already in a princely press of Târgoviște in 1649 [22, p. 42]. Her role as a patroness of this edition, but also as a generous sponsor and donor of churches is emphasized in different parts of the preface, including an epigram dedicated to her, where the author in the wordplay demonstrates that the name Helen comes from Greek term ἔλεος which means „mercy“⁵. The edition is also accompanied by the personal coat of the arms of the female ruler. Her personal connection to the (Serbian?) hieromonk Damaskin from the Mount Athos is stressed, who appears as the one who ordered some liturgical books to be printed in Wallachia in Church Slavonic⁶. Some scholars suggested that this hieromonk Damaskin should

⁴ This book *Imitatio Christi* was mentioned by Sava Hilandarec and Archimandrite Leonid as present at the Chilandar Library. See, О подражаніи Іисусу Христу, № 23 [23, p. 256-257].

⁵ Знаменати чѣмъ хоцеть, има се Елена, || В д(у)ши моеи възыскахъ, и бысть вѣрѣтена, || Іѣже оу грекъ Елеус, казаема м(и)л(о)сть...|| Елена съ Елеус, ея же биваетъ, || М(и)л(о)сть н(ы)нѣ Тракійскимъ, всѣмъ ц(е)рквамъ толика, || Памать ей же безсмертна, ѿ нихъ и велика [24, p. 172].

⁶ ЕЛЕНА Б(О)ЖИИМ ПРОМЫШЛЕНІЕМ и благодатію. Владычица всеа земла вгровлахіи запланинскоа... Ч(е)стѣйшомъ и препод(о)бѣйшомъ вѣ іеромонасехъ в Хр(и)стѣ ѿцѣ Дамаскинѣ, всеа с(вя)тоименнаа горы аѳонскіа, преизашнемъ исповѣдникъ и всѣмъ свѣщамъ с(вя)щеннаго съвѣщпленіа сръбскаго, длѣжный поклонъ ѿдавает [24, p. 173].

have been the hegumen of the Hilandar monastery in the middle of the 17th century [25, p. 133; 26, p. 274-276]. The preface estimates that the Serbian monks from the Hilandar monastery participated at correcting and improving of the text of Penticostarion before it was printed in the royal printing house in Târgoviște. (И Бл(а)говолномѣ раченію срѣбскаго народа впаснѣмъ изчищенный). This comment means that the Athonite Damaskin could have complained to Helen about the quality of Church Slavonic spelling of previous Wallachian editions. He therefore took the initiative to send a man of his own, the hieromonk John, a Bosnian Serb, to Wallachia to advise the Romanians on what was expected of them [25, p. 133-134]. Hieromonk John acted as a corrector and editor of the Triodion-Pentecostarion, and most probably the author of the preface „to the readers“, where he stressed his role by preparing this edition and extensively reported that although he was an Athonite, he had been originally from Kamegrad in Bosnia, where he had also taken monastic vows at the monastery Gomionica. (Трѣ^{днхжеса} о семь съписаніи, азъ грѣшный и меншій въ иноцѣхъ Іоаннъ іеромонахъ, стогорецъ. ѿ Босны, ѿ мѣста каменградъ. монастыря же гомиѡнници, въ немъ же пріѣхъ иноческій образъ [24, p. 173]). As a printer is mentioned some Proka the Printer (Прока Тѣпарникъ). These details are important for understanding particular cultural connections between Wallachian princes and Serbian monks and the role Wallachians played in patronising book production for the Orthodox population of the Ottoman Balkans in the middle of the 17th century.

The decision to print in Church Slavonic and not in Romanian (that was in great demand in this epoch) can be explained through active contacts to the Orthodox Serbs and the vision of selling and donating books to a broader Orthodox book market than just Danubian principalities. The questions remain, why Helen was particularly interested in printing in Church Slavonic? Was it her deliberate choice? Was she responsible for active contacts with the Hilandar monastery?

In all these examined cases prosperous noble ladies acted as patronesses of book printing in the Early Modern period in the transottoman context. The level of their engagement in the printing process depended on personal connections, interests and financial capabilities. The language factor played in all these cases an important role. The language choice was dictated by the individual education and taste, religious convictions, potential reading audiences.

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Leber Taisiya. Female Patronage of Book Printing in the Transottoman Context. This paper deals with some case studies of female patronage towards the printing houses and printers in the period between the end of the 15th and the end of the 17th centuries in the transottoman context. It was a Greek noble woman Anna Notaras, who initiated a printed edition of the Greek compendium Etymologicum Magnum in Venice (1499). At the end of the 16th century Joseph Nasi's widow, dona Reyna, actively sponsored book printing in Hebrew and Ladino in Constantinople, founded her own printing house and published a number of important books for Jewish readers. In the middle of the 17th century, princess Helen, wife of the ruler of Wallachia Matthew Basarab, patronised book printing in Wallachia. Of interest are two editions in the Church Slavonic — translation of the Latin treatise Imitatio Christi (1647) and Triodion Pentecostarion (1649) with an epigram, colophon and preface estimating a particular role Helen played in their publication. These examples are meant to show some particular features of the book printing tradition in the Ottoman Empire and beyond its borders. Special attention is paid to the mobility of population (of different ethnical and religious groups), mobile character of printers and their printing presses, and also of printed books that had to be disseminated among different categories of readers — Greek scholars and clerics in diaspora and the Empire, among Sephardic Jews, on the Mount Athos etc. What were specific features of female patronage of early printing? What motivated women, how educated they were, which languages they chose and why, what made some books particularly valuable for them — these are questions which are raised in the following paper.

Keywords: female patronage, printing houses, printers, Ottoman Empire, diaspora.

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