

Books and Typography in Moldavia

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*M*odestly and briefly formulated, this is the title of the second edition of Elena Chiaburu's comprehensive study,¹ which is in fact the first general research on old Romanian books in a well defined geographical area. As a historian by profession, author and co-author of an impressive number of studies,² Chiaburu offers in this volume a synthetic overview of the amount of manuscripts and printed texts in the Moldavian geographical area throughout the whole period of the principality's existence³ (the end of the period being – as it appears in the notes contained in the manuscripts and books, published in collaboration with Professor Ioan Caproșu – 1859, that is, the union of the principalities).

With an ambition of doing the first synthetic study on the topic, and building the study on the western (especially French) model of similar works, Elena Chiaburu's book

¹ Elena Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar în Țara Moldovei* (Books and typography in Moldavia), second, revised and completed edition (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2010) 709 (– 712) p. ISBN 978-973-703-570-7.

² Among the ones used by the author in the presented work, we mention the following: "Aspecte economice al producției tipografice medievale din Țările Române" (Economical aspects of medieval typographical production in the Romanian Principalities), *Agora sau despre Cetatea Cărților* 1 (2005): 23–24; "Teorii și ipoteze cu privire la influența artei caligrafice moldovenești din secolul XV asupra tiparului chirilic" (Theories and hypotheses about the influence of the Moldavian calligraphic art of the 15th century on Cyrillic typography), *Biblioteca* 4 (1972); "Meșteri tipografi în Țara Moldovei" (Professional typographers in Moldavia), in *Ion Neculce* (new series) 4–7 (1998–2001); "Modalități de analiză și datare a cărții vechi românești" (Modalities of analysis and dating of old Romanian books), in *Ion Neculce* (new series) 4–7 (1998–2001); "Tehnică și organizare atelierul tipografic din Țara Moldovei până la 1829" (Techniques and organisation in the, typographies of Moldavia until 1829), *Cercetări literare* (new series) 17/2 (1998); "Tipografia din Moldova și lumea ortodoxă în secolul al XVII-lea" (Moldavian typography and the Orthodox world in the 17th century), *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A. D. Xenopol* 38 (2000); and Ioan Caproșu and Elena Chiaburu, *Însemnări de pe manuscrise și cărți vechi din Țara Moldovei* (Notes on old manuscripts and books from Moldavia), Vols. 1–4 (Iași: Editura Demiurg, 2008–2009).

³ Because of the historical alienation of some Moldavian territories – as Bessarabia and Bucovina – from the principality, and in order to avoid potential confusion with the Republic of Moldova, the author has correctly chosen to use in her book the generic term of *Țara Moldovei* (The State of Moldavia).

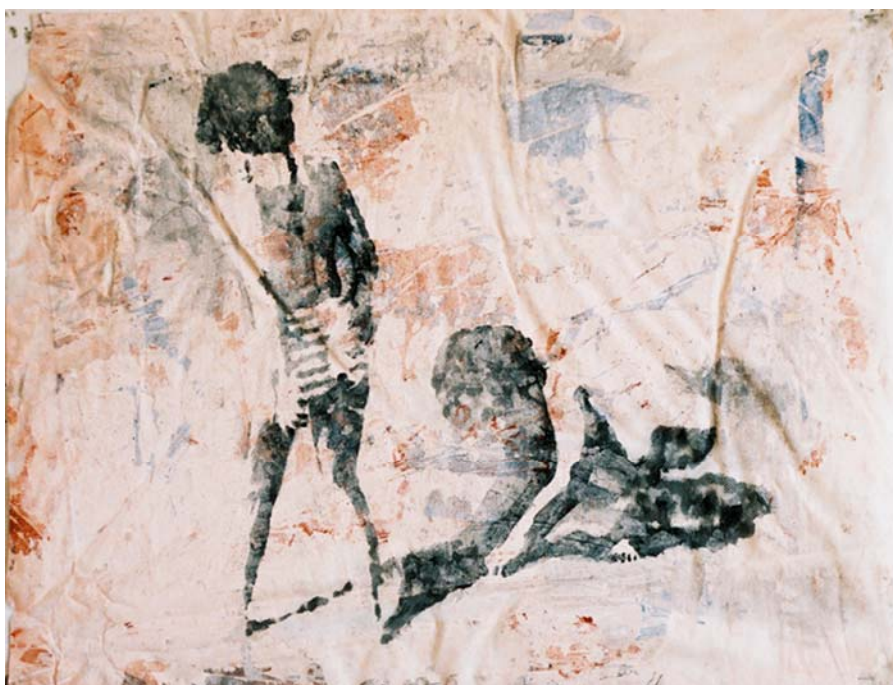
opens with the chapter *Tehnica tipografică și legătura de carte* (Typographical technique and book binding) which uniquely systematizes information from the syntheses about the history of books adding to them an impressive quantity of information from a remarkable diversity of sources, from different documents and from the books themselves. All information is, however, placed into a well clarified historical context that provides depth and previously not considered dimensions. Even though there are many more of them, here we give a unique example of this practice, namely the information about the beginnings of letter casting during the reign of Vasile Lupu.¹

In Moldavia letter casting was done from the beginning of the typographic production even though molds were imported in the first half of the 17th century. Based on the topic-related correspondence between Vasile Lupu and Sofronie Pociățki, the head of the typography from Iași and the Orthodox Brotherhood from Lviv, the literature has frequently made the assumption that the first letters were imported into Moldavia from abroad, especially from Lviv. In a letter from January 12, 1641 the prince thanked the guild from Lviv for casting letters for him in their typography and promised to give donations to the church. Vasile Lupu sent Sofronie Pociățki, the former head of the typography of the Lavra, later Abbot of the Monastery Trei Ierarhi, to bring materials from Lviv. Although – as it was stated in the letter – the Brotherhood accepted the order of the Prince of Moldavia, Sofronie Poceațki had a rather cold reception,² probably because of the disagreements between the Brotherhood from Lviv and the Kiev school. The Metropolitan Petru Movilă wanted to establish his absolute authority on the Brotherhood which, on the other hand, claimed an autonomous organization. There was a conflict of principles as well: the theologians from Lviv did not approve of Petru Movilă's Latin reforms, Sofronie Pociățchi addressed the Brotherhood again on February 17, 1642 preferring "the Greek stifle" who was paid by Vasile Lupu. Two more letters sent by the Brotherhood to the prince and to Vasile Leonvoci, the emissary of the Lavra from Moldavia, suggest that the French term *caracteres* in the letter would be translated as *moulds*.

The actual obtaining of the letters, Letter casting, The graphic aspect of books and illustrations, The printing-press, Typographical corrections, and The book-binder became topics of subchapters in which, removing the printed text from under the sole incidence of the craft, the author offers the reader many opportunities of taking complex trips in political, cultural, social, economic, etc. history.

¹ Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar...*, 26. (We removed from the quote the bibliographical references in the fragment.)

² A certain inconsistency in the transcription of the names, in this case the occurrence of both *Pociățki* and *Poceațki*, will have to be set right with the occasion of a possible revision of the work.



Teodora Cosman, *Catching the Shadow 6/12*, from the series “Photograms”,
acrylic on synthetic tissue, 50 X 60 cm, 2006.

The second chapter, *Organizarea activității tipografice* (The organization of typographic activities), is intended to establish the institutional coordinates of typography. The first subchapter is entitled *Acte legiuitoare de înființare a tipografiilor* (Legislative founding documents of typographies). In the cases when the first founding documents of a typography were relatively late (1812, Iași; 1813, Chișinău), the author’s starting point was the logical assumption: “Certainly, Vasile Lupu, founding the school and typography from the Monastery Trei Ierarhi, gave a charter to both of them, even if only the one given to the school is known to us. The following princes who founded or organized typographies (Gheorghe Duca, Nicolae Mavrocordat, Constantin Mavrocordat), naturally, did the same thing.”¹ While studying typographic activities through administrative, economical or even legislative documents has only been possible since the beginning of the 19th century, the attempt to integrate typographical activities into the context of cultural politics and even actual political visions of some princes has been possible from the beginnings of typography in Moldavia. Given the fact that it was only in the 19th century when typography became an economic enterprise designed to bring financial benefits to those who patronized it, to the editors and typographers, and given the fact that paper production in Moldavia also dates back to the 19th century, we are obliged to consider each book as a “cultural object” that necessarily has to have a political, religious or cultural justification. Elena Chiaburu makes similar observations through the whole text of the book, but, unfortunately, she

¹ Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar...*, 56.

fails to systematize them in the volume where they should be systematized – perhaps in a subchapter preceding the presented one. Since the imperial ambitions of Vasile Lupu are depicted in *Cartea de învățătură* (The book of learning) (known as *Cazania of Varlaam*, printed in 1643) by Varlaam – a close associate of the prince –, it is addressed to all Romanians. The same ambitions can be captured in the fact that out of the *Nomocanon*, translated and adapted by Eustratie the Logothete, only the part dedicated to civil law was printed – *Pravilele împărătești* (The royal rulings) or *Carte românească de învățătură* (Romanian book of teaching), Iași, 1646 –, while the religious text remained in manuscript,¹ only some of its fragments being published by Varlaam with a completion by his texts in *Șapte taine* (Seven mysteries) (Iași, 1646). The same beneficial broadening of the context of typography can be done for the typography in Gh. Duca's or the two Mavrocordats' time, or even for cases where we have documents related to the establishment and functioning of typographies. This fact definitely exceeds Elena Chiaburu's initial research options, therefore we emphasize that our observations should not be considered as criticism, but only as suggestions regarding further research.

The first document that Elena Chiaburu dwells on is a typographic project of some Romanians settled in Russia near Kiev. They wanted to print in their future typography “various divine–religious books and books of natural sciences – NB: we are in the middle of the Enlightenment! – for our children's education and for inland external selling without any toll payment, and until the founding of this typography, it should be commanded the mentioned books to be printed in our language at the typography of the Pecerska Monastery from Kiev, and the typography should expect payment from our congregation only after the books would be sold.”² Even if not achieved, this project indicates some characteristics of the modern typography, where the aspect of being an economical enterprise – that expects a benefit from the editorial activity – is obvious. Unlike, for example, the atmosphere of the anti-protestant ideology and the assertion of a state and church authority that we can sense during the period of Vasile Lupu's and Varlaam's leadership, in this case springs of a merchant-bourgeois type of thinking reveal themselves, in which, in addition to the cultural and religious benefits of the printed books, financial profit is not neglected at all.

The economical dimensions of the printing, poorly investigated so far, turn out to be particularly interesting. The author shows that printing, at its beginnings, required large amounts of money for the initial investment in the printing press, tools and letters, but it was also costly during the period of functioning because of the paper – imported to Moldavia until the 19th century –, consequently it was much beyond the possibilities of a private initiative. By the end of the 18th century it was supported by the church or the sovereign (most of the times by both institutions) in a cultural and political programme consistent with their interests. Therefore the phenomenon of censorship should also be understood from this perspective: texts which contravened or exceeded these programmes were not printed, and as a consequence, many texts remained manuscripts having no chance to get printed in the 18th century and generally in the whole period. The exceptional translating activity of Alecu Beldiman is exemplary in this respect: he

¹ We are currently preparing a modern edition of the manuscript *Pravila alesă* (Selected rulings) of Eustratie the Logothete.

² Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar...*, 57–58.

translated an impressive number of dramatic texts, but only a few of them were printed, moreover, most of these were published outside Moldavia.¹

The author exploits the scarce information offered by the documents and manuscripts available for the beginnings of printing,² and amply develops the information we have regarding the 19th century. In the first half of the 19th century there were, however, two different dimensions of printing: a traditional one of spreading books necessary for religious worship or Christian teaching at Neamț³ and Chișinău, representing the religious line, and a modern one primarily supported by private initiatives, where the printing of secular texts was predominant. Without trying to generalize, we consider that the first direction fits within the old dimension of printing, through which primarily the spread of faith was sought and material benefits were secondary. In opposition to this, the second one – beyond the fact that it supported a coherent cultural programme (dissimilar in the case of Asachi and Kogălniceanu) – did not exclude financial benefits at all. Printing the *Regulamentul organic* (The Organic Regulation); the *Buletin. Foaie Oficială* (Bulletin. Official Print) in Moldavia; or the *Buletin. Gazetă Oficială* (Bulletin. Official Gazette) in Wallachia, proved to be – both in the case of Asachi in Moldova and in the case of Heliade in Wallachia – a good business with the state. The same observation is valid for Kogălniceanu, for the period when his relations with the monarch and the Russian administration were good.

Evolution makes the typographer change his status from an individual owner of some exceptional professional knowledge, also having a status of expert on books, i.e. “grămătic” (scholar), to that of guild (unfortunately, so far we have scarce information about the existence of such a guild) and finally to that of an employee (craftsman) paid for his work. Regarding this aspect, the author presents in her book a rich variety of materials, mostly unknown until present. We also witness a diversification of functions from an individual with both professional and economic tasks in the enterprise of printing a book to the typographer and economic administrator of the typography. Differentiation within the profession (such as caster, setter, etc.) occurred only after the studied period.

An interesting discussion is brought by Elena Chiaburu through the subchapters *Tirajul* (Circulation) and *Ediție vs. tiraj* (Edition vs. circulation). The author gives a correct solution to the problem, showing that “For a new edition another printing composition is needed than that used in the execution of the previous edition. If using

¹ Salmon Gessner, *Moartea lui Avel* (The death of Abel) (Buda, 1818); Voltaire, *Tragedia lui Oreste* (The tragedy of Orestes) (Buda, 1820). Nevertheless, his translations of Florian, *Istoria lui Numa Pompilie* (The history of Numa Pompilie), Vols. 1–2. (Iași. 1820) and *Învățătură pentru facerea pâinii* (Lessons on making bread) (Iași, 1818, 1829) got published in Iași.

² Given the fact that the author does not compare the situation of typography in Moldavia to the situation of typography in Wallachia and Transylvania, the polemical observations referring to the work of Doru Bădără, *Tiparul românesc la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea și începutul secolului al XVIII-lea* (Romanian typography at the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century) (Brăila: Istros, 1998) would be better placed in footnotes rather than in the main body of the text.

³ The more exceptional seems to be in these circumstances the printing of the translation from Dimitrie Cantemir, *Scrisoarea Moldovei* (The letter of Moldavia) (Mănăstirea Neamț, 1825).

the same typesetting, that is not a reprint, but a new circulation of the same edition.”¹ She illustrates this statement with Metropolitan Varlaam’s *Cartea românească de învățătură* (Romanian book of teaching) (1643), where on page 280, as a clear mistake of the typographer, the Evangelical pericope was shortened (which flagrantly violates the prohibition of adding to or subtracting from a biblical text). In order to save the rest of the printed text, a reprint of the page in question was made with the full text of the pericope, but with an obvious abridgement of the text of the homily. Noting the many other differences between the studied copies, our personal experience leads us to state that we are in the paradoxical situation of a single edition in which there are randomly assembled circulations of various pages. None of the modern editions of *Varlaam's Homily* have taken into account these particular differences so far.

The chapter *Prețul cărților* (The price of books) is dedicated to the economical dimensions of typography. Unlike in previous research, the author discusses both the production costs of books and their selling price. While related to the latter aspect we have many notes in the books themselves where the owners noted the amount of money given in the moment of the purchase (or, if it came to bartering, they testified the object of the exchange), in the case of the former aspect no systematizations or theoretizations have been made until present. Regarding books from the perspective of economic history, Elena Chiaburu clearly differentiates the two aspects, one of them being the result of an economic calculation based on production costs, the other one resulting from the value achieved through the aspect of demand and supply and, especially, by the cultural value of the book in question. This is definitely a fundamental contribution to the history of Romanian books.

According to the author, the practice of selling books with predetermined prices in Moldavia dates back to the middle of the 18th century (Iași, 1753, Huși 1751), while this had already been practiced in Transylvania since the middle of the 16th century. An entirely different image is offered by the book prices during the transactions after the printing. The author notes a variation of space and time depending on the rarity of the books. At this point, a geographic principle manifested itself, the prices being generally much higher in the peripheral areas than in the typographic centre. The situation of Transylvania seems to be a good example in this sense: in addition to a remarkable circulation of Moldavian books, we notice here at least the doubling of the circulation of Moldavian books by copying. Based on their price, books became economical goods besides being cultural possessions: as any other valuable product, they could be sold, bought, exchanged, pawned, redeemed, etc. They had, however, a particular value – most printed books being religious – so they were associated with the taboo of disposal or theft.

Being well established values, books were constantly parts of estate inventories of churches and monasteries, and, on the level of particular possessions, they could be left as inheritance, or be parts of dowry lists.

The chapter *Acte și foi volante imprimate* (Printed documents and leaflets) treats aspects of economical and political history rather than cultural history. The diversity of these documents leads Elena Chiaburu to propose a classification and follow the development of each category. This is especially appreciated since the diversity of the

¹ Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar...*, 90.

information they provide caused inherent confusion in previous inventories. Due to their special status, documents show some differences with respect to economical characteristics: some of them – being means of an economic practice (e.g. the seals) – were paid by the issuer, while others were paid by the beneficiary. The political pamphlets which in most cases presented political manifestos, were distributed for free being means of exercising political and military authority or means of accessing authority (e.g. the manifestos of Eteria).

The chapters *Distribuția cărților* (The distribution of books) and *Aria de răspândire a cărților din Țara Moldovei* (The distribution area of books in Moldavia) study the ways of book distribution through selling or donation,¹ or through migrant merchants who took the individual copies of some prints to the most remote regions of the Romanian territory. Especially since the 19th century, many books were distributed for free either through the institution of school or through that of the church. These books depicted consistent cultural or religious politics of the authorities. Elena Chiaburu studies the circulation of books both from the perspective of economical activity (attempting – to the extent the documents allow her – to identify its financial mechanism), and from the aspect of supporting a cultural programme either declared or inferential based on the contents of the books, the latter case being closely connected to the phenomenon of censorship.

The multiplication of texts by copying became a significant aspect of the circulation of prints due to the following facts: on the one hand, typographies – which were among the first victims of wars or violent political changes – were characterized by an intermittent existence, and on the other hand, until the end of the 18th century typography was far from covering the book needs of the Romanian territory, which was caused by the necessity of importing paper from abroad and by the censorship required by the administrative and religious authorities. Duplication gained impressive dimensions in Transylvania where, due to the customs censorship imposed by the imperial authorities in the middle of the 18th century, the Moldavian copyists – a very important fact in my opinion! – crossed the principality from the East to the West multiplying books printed in Moldavia. All texts multiplied by Moldavian copyists were profoundly Orthodox (among these we mention *Cazania lui Varlaam* (Varlaam's Homily), *Șapte taine* (Seven mysteries), and *Interpretarea liturghiei* (The interpretation of the liturgy). Since in the same period an orthodox book was printed in Iași (under the false indication that it was printed in Timișoara),² the question arises: to what extent can this be considered a spontaneous phenomenon, and moreover, was it part of supporting Sofronie's anti-

¹ We mention a lesser known copy of *Viețile și petrecerea sfinților* (The lives and diversion of saints) kept at the Cluj Branch of the Romanian Academy, donated by the great metropolitan to the people of Satmar.

² *Îndreptarea păcătosului cu duhul blândețelor precum dohtorilor celor duhovnicești așa și celor ce să dohtoresc de la dănșii păcătoșilorce să pocăiesc întru folos aezată* (The guidance of the sinners, displayed for their benefit, with the spirit of piety, as for the spiritual fathers, also for those who are comforted by them, and for the sinners who are in penitence.), published in Timișoara Banatului, in the year 1765 (a book in fact printed in Iași by Monk Evloghie and Ilie the Collector.

Catholic movement, the implication from abroad into the development of the movement being a known fact. This remains a question to be answered by future research.

The purpose of the printed books and especially the establishment of libraries offer a compound social response to the act of printing, completing the circuit author–editor / typographer–reader, the latter becoming a potential creator of texts that can also be integrated into a new similar circuit. The establishment of libraries represents a very important research field which is amply sketched in the present work.

In the logical construction of the demonstration, the next chapter, *Meșteri și meșteșug* (Craftsmen and craft)¹ is dedicated to the profession of typographer itself. The chapter – with its subchapters *Însușirea meseriei de tipograf* (Learning the profession of typographer), *Meșteșuguri înrudite cu tipografia* (Crafts related to typography), *Legătoria de cărți* (Book binding), *Tipografi – oameni înstăriți* (The typographers – wealthy people), *Tipografi – cărturari ai vremii lor* (The typographers – scholars of their time), *Tipografi implicați în politică* (Typographers involved in politics) – treats the professional, economical and cultural status of those who were working in this field. In a future edition of the work or as an extension of the research, we believe, the introduction of the notion of *corrector* would also be welcome. This function was unique in comparison to the status of western typographers, the notion referring to the person who had the complex functions of translator, editor, proof-reader and even typographer (or only some of these), his main purpose being that of “the one who is assuming the theological responsibility for the printed text.”

The last chapter, *Relația dintre tipar, biserică și școală* (The relation of typography, church and school), studies the connections between typography and different institutions through the subchapters *Tiparul din Țara Moldovei și Ortodoxia* (Typography in Moldavia and Orthodoxy), *Tiparul din Țara Moldovei și Ortodoxia orientală* (Typography in Moldavia and Eastern Orthodoxy), *Tiparul din Țara Moldovei și românii din Transilvania* (Typography in Moldavia and the Romanians from Transylvania).²

The presented work – which would be impressively rich in material even without additional documents – is completed by various Annexes containing documents and prices, a list of printed leaflets and prints from Moldavia (the first complete list, as far as we know), a research on the circulation area of Moldavian prints, and others.

Being based on an extensive research and having a systematic and homogeneous character, Elena Chiaburu's work proves to be a remarkable synthesis on the treated topic. Even though it is explicitly dedicated to Moldavia, it allows for many generalisations on the level of the entire Romanian territory, calling for future regional researches to follow a similar scientific path. The greatest merit of the book is that it sets the history of Romanian typography out of the cone of accidental casuistry offered by many other Romanian works. The “Leporello's list” we got used to by other works becomes for the first time an argument within a logical demonstration.

Translated by Boglárka Németh

¹ Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar...*, 268–302.

² Although after the separation of Bucovina and Bessarabia from Moldavia special researches on the relation between Moldavian typography and the Romanians from this regions, the printed text being one of the vectors of preserving the national unity.