

## Valuable Ukrainian printed books from the 16th – 17th century in Bulgaria

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### Abstract

*During research work in the central Bulgarian libraries and archives our attention was drawn to the presence of early Ukrainian printed books from the end of the 16th century. Our interest in them increased during field expeditions to provincial museums and churches, where among the liturgical books we found later Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra editions. In this report, we share our observations of these valuable collections. We offer systematized and updated information about the distribution of Ukrainian printed books from the 16th-17th century in Bulgaria. We pay close attention to the five copies of the Ostroh Bible from 1581 preserved in our country and we discuss some rare early editions from Lviv and Kyiv found in our libraries. We trace the ways of dissemination of these publications in the Bulgarian lands, their long-term use and significance.*

**Keywords:** Ostroh Bible, Ukrainian books, Bulgarian libraries, archives

### Introduction

In the 16th century, Bulgaria was part of the Ottoman Empire and lacked its own governmental, royal, cultural, and educational institutions. Therefore, a number of contemporary innovations were not locally available, among them printed books. For a long time, printed editions in Cyrillic remained for the Bulgarians an “imported product”. Available data indicate that until the appearance in 1806 of the first Bulgarian printed book, *Nedelnik / Kiriakodromion*, which was printed in the town of Rymnik in Romania, the books available in Bulgaria were at first Venetian printed books in Cyrillic (16th century), while in the 17th and the 18th century there were mostly Russian and Ukrainian editions of religious and later secular works. In terms of quantity in the 16th and 17th centuries, statistics show that there were 150 titles and many more copies printed in the Slavonic printing houses in Venice, Cetine, Targovishte (Wallachia), and Muntenia. A few dozen of them are kept in Bulgaria.

In the 16th century, in the Balkans, the most widely available books for the Slavs were the Venetian editions in Cyrillic from the printing house of Božidar Vuković and his heirs, intended for Bulgarians and Serbs. At that time, there were also small printing houses sporadically functioning in Wallachia, Transylvania, Belgrade, and in some

Serbian monasteries. Their output comprised fewer copies and was more limited in circulation, but it was known among the Orthodox Slavs in the Western Balkans. At the end of the 16th century and in the first half of the 17th, Ukrainian printed books began to spread through the Bulgarian lands as well. These were the first editions of the Bible, the *Margarit*, the *Apostolos*, and the *Nomocanon*. Today, copies of these publications are preserved in different Bulgarian repositories and in this article we would like to attract the attention of scholars to these books, limiting the time period under investigation to the middle of the 17th century. It has to be noted that scholarly research hitherto had rarely focused on the editions printed in Ukraine. More often, these have been included in the context of Russian books printed in Church Slavonic and brought to Bulgaria through different channels. Therefore, the present article discusses already known titles in the light of the most recent research in the field and adds information about some new discoveries in the Bulgarian repositories.

## **Bulgarian-Ukrainian literary relations since the end of the 14-th century**

It may be stated that active Bulgarian-Ukrainian literary relations date back to the end of the 14th century when Bulgaria fell under Ottoman rule. A good number of Bulgarian clergy and men of letters left their native lands and travelled to Wallachia, Moldavia, and Ukraine. Valuable specimens of Medieval Bulgarian literature “migrated” with them. Among those who, in the 15th century, settled and worked in Kyiv were renowned Bulgarian men of letters from the Tsamblak family, who also became Metropolitans of Kyiv, Cyprian of Kyiv (1375–1406) and Gregory Tsamblak (1415–1419). Owing to the spiritual and literary work of these and other Bulgarian migrants, Medieval Bulgarian books were disseminated in Kyiv and spread the veneration of the most popular Bulgarian and South Slavonic saints (St. John of Rilla, St. Paraskevi of Tarnovo, St. Joakim of Osogovo). Examples of later direct Bulgarian literary influence on the Ukrainian printed books from the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century include the *Bukvar* (Primer, Alphabet Book), published in Ostroh in 1578, which included the treatise “On Letters” by Chernorizets Hrabar; works by the Ukrainian man of letters Ivan Vyshenskyi, who lived for a while in the Bulgarian Zographou monastery on Mount Athos and used in his works the anonymous *Story of the Martyrs of Zographou Monastery* and *Tale about Mount Athos* by Stephen of Mount Athos (Ангелов, 1980, p. 33); the Offices and the engravings of the Festal Menaion (1538) of Božidar Vuković, and the “Horologion” (1566) of Jakov Krajkov, which can be found in the *Anthology* of Kyiv (1619) (Атанасов, 1980, pp. 94–98; Петковић, 1986, pp. 83–104).

In the 17th century, the literary exchange between Bulgaria and Ukraine developed more actively in the opposite direction, meaning that Bulgarian manuscripts and printed books copied, used, and borrowed from Ukrainian publications. An example is the manuscript miscellany with Sunday teachings by hieromonk Daniel from 1626 (National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” in Sofia [NLCM], Cod. 304), which followed closely the Didactic Gospel, printed by Ivan Fyodorov and Pyotr Mstislavets in Zabłudów in 1569 (Атанасов, 1986, pp. 13–15; Мирчева, 1995, pp. 3–4). The texts of this Gospel (or of its later Moscow editions) are present in the first Bulgarian printed book, the *Kiriakodromion* (1806) by Sophronius of Vratsa (Атанасов, 1986, p.157; Петканова, 1960, pp. 199–246). This book also included Gospel quotations in Modern Bulgarian from the Bible of Ostroh (its Moscow edition of 1663) (Солак, 1994, pp.

384–390). The Ukrainian printed books had a strong and lasting influence on the development of the Bulgarian literature during the time of the Bulgarian Revival in the 18th and the 19th century.

How did the first Ukrainian printed books make it to Bulgaria? Most often they were brought by Bulgarian monks who travelled to Russia and Ukraine to collect alms for their monasteries. The first journey of this kind was attempted by monks of the Rilla monastery during the time of Ivan IV the Terrible (Дылевский, 1946, pp. 66–78; Ангелов, 1980, pp. 5–86; Нешев, 1997, pp. 5–6). In the 16th-17th century, Bulgarian monks and metropolitans often undertook journeys of this kind (missions or embassies), passing through Kyiv and Lviv, visiting Ukrainian monasteries, and returning with new books and church supplies (Милтенова, 2020, pp. 345–348; Минчева, 2020, pp. 124–135). For example, surviving documents reveal that in 1671 Gerasim, the Metropolitan of Vidin, arrived in Kyiv, accompanied by clergymen and laity. In the same year, at the Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra (Kyiv Monastery of the Caves) *The Office and Life of St. John of Rilla* was printed as a separate book for the first time. Most probably, the first copies of this book were brought from Kyiv to Bulgaria by the Metropolitan of Vidin (Дылевский, 1946, pp. 66–78; Ангелов, 1986, pp. 5–83). Today, copies of this edition are kept in Rilla Monastery (one copy), in the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” in Sofia (two copies), and in the Bulgarian Zographou Monastery on Mount Athos (one copy).

For many centuries, the Rilla Monastery and other major monasteries – those of Bachkovo, Glozhene, and Troyan – disseminated Ukrainian printed books in Bulgaria. The cities along the Danube bank (Vidin, Lom, Svishtov, Russe) also acted as focal points of trading with Central Europe, Ukraine, and Russia (Милтенова, 2020, p. 349). However, in terms of cultural relations, spiritual influence, and dissemination of printed editions, the Athonite Monasteries and their dependants were of greatest importance. Today, the Hilandar Monastery and the Zographou Monastery still keep a few copies of editions of the Ostroh printing house: Ivan Fyodorov’s *Bible of Ostroh* (1581), the *Asketikon* by St. Basil the Great (1594), and *Margarit* (1595).<sup>1</sup>

The Foreword to the *Bible of Ostroh* (1581) mentions the long search for translations and original texts in Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian monasteries that were needed for the compilation of the book. Some scholars speculate that Ivan Fyodorov himself went to Wallachia, Moldavia (Suceava), and Turkey (Bulgarian lands) to look for manuscripts containing Slavonic Biblical texts. In the *Bible of Ostroh* were traced influences not only of the Slavonic manuscript tradition but also of the first Slavonic printed texts from the Gospels, such as the Gospel of Targovishte (Wallachian–Bulgarian origin), printed in 1512 (Иванова, 1999, pp. 308–309; Петров, 2016, pp. 143–155).

In the 17th century, the Catholic Bishop of Sofia, Peter Bakshev<sup>2</sup> wrote in his reports to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that Ukrainian printed books defending

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<sup>1</sup> Digitised copies of some early Ukrainian printed books can be found at: НАСЛЕДСТВО НА ЗОГРАФСКАТА СВЕТА ОБИТЕЛ: <https://zografnasledstvo.com/produkt-kategoriya/scan-library-main/>

<sup>2</sup> Peter Bogdan Bakshev (1601–1674) was a Bulgarian Catholic archbishop, custos (guardian) of the Franciscan Order in Bulgaria. He graduated the Collegium Clementinum at Rome and became one of the distinguished Bulgarian catholic intellectuals of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At that time a conversion to Catholicism meant an opportunity for better education for some Bulgarians from the regions of Chiprovtsi, Svishtov, Pleven in North Bulgaria, where the Catholic propaganda (Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei) was very active. In 1667, Peter Bogdan Bakshev wrote the first *History of Bulgaria*.

Orthodoxy against Catholicism were popular among the Bulgarians. In one of his reports from 1640, he discussed the *Bible of Ostroh*, which Prince Constantine was going to use against the spread of Catholicism in the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom. In 1848, the Russian scholar Viktor Grigorievich reported that in Rilla Monastery he had seen three Bibles of that kind, one of them in good condition (Григорович, 1848, p. 186).<sup>3</sup>

It has to be clarified that in Bulgaria the complete Bible, printed as a whole, became widely available relatively late. Since the book was not used in the liturgy, the demand for it began to grow only towards the middle of the 19th century, when the first translations of parts of the Old Testament and the New Testament into Modern Bulgarian appeared. Nevertheless, the copies of the *Bible of Ostroh* preserved in Bulgaria, with the hand-written notes left by Bulgarian clergymen on the margins of their pages, indicate early dissemination of the Bible in our lands.

It should be remembered that the edition of the *Bible of Ostroh* was forbiddingly expensive, and thus only a few of the Bulgarian churches could afford to own it. These Bibles were treasured as the most precious possessions and were not used for daily service. Probably, only highly learned priests were allowed to browse through them for their private reading and in preparation of their sermons. Therefore, it can be surmised that this exclusivity of the *Bible of Ostroh* was the main reason for the comparatively high number of surviving copies preserved in good condition and kept in the Bulgarian libraries and archives up to the present day.

## Modern developments in research

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Bulgarian scholars Evtim Sprostranov and Benyo Tsonev published descriptions of four copies of the *Bible of Ostroh* found in Rilla Monastery, in the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and in the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius.” In 1967, the renowned Bulgarian archaeologist Bozhidar Raykov published information about another copy, which was subsequently acquired by the National Library (Спространов, 1900, pp. 22–23; Цонев, 1910, p. 477; Райков, 1967, p. 251). The first studies of Ukrainian printed books in Bulgaria were completed in 1960s and 1970s by Nikolai Dilevskii and Petar Athanassov (Дылевский, 1966, pp. 206–224; Атанасов, 1972, pp. 72–83; Атанасов, 1977, pp. 20–23). The information about these copies, published by Athanassov, was subsequently quoted by Ukrainian and Russian bibliographers, and is mentioned in the latest union catalogues of Nemirovskii, albeit with some discrepancies (Запаско & Исаевич, 1981; Немировский, 2011).

More than 50 years after the appearance of these descriptions and studies, it is important to check, update, and complement the information. In this paper, we present some summarized statistics of the early Ukrainian printed books of the publishing houses of Ostroh, Lviv, and Kyiv from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, stored in Bulgarian libraries and archives (Table 1). In the second half of the 17th and during the 18th century, the number of books printed in Ukraine and Moscow in Church Slavonic greatly increased. The collections of old printed books of the Church–Historical Institute and of the Library of Rilla Monastery still do not have modern

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<sup>3</sup> In 1902, Sprostranov described only one *Bible of Ostroh* in Rilla Monastery. The other two remained as undated Bibles of unknown place of publication (Спространов, 1902).

catalogues, thus their resources have to be studied *in situ*. There are new catalogues of the National Museum of History, and the University Library of the Sofia University, and there is also a digitised catalogue of the Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which are reflected in the present study. Our own observations about the collections of old printed books of Rilla Monastery, Troyan Monastery, and the churches of the town Samokov, near Sofia, are also included here.

**Table 1: Ukrainian printed books (16<sup>th</sup> to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century) in Bulgaria**

Ukrainian printed books	Copies in Bulgarian libraries
Ostroh	18
L'viv	22
Kyiv	15

Today, we can confirm the existence of nine copies of the *Bible of Ostroh* of Ivan Fyodorov (1581), kept in the following depositories (Table 2): two incomplete copies in the National Library in Sofia (one of them has a handwritten insertion); three copies in Rilla Monastery (one of them is complete and well preserved); one in the Church–Historical Institute in Sofia; one in the Metropolitan of Vratsa; one in the Museum of Lom; and one in the Museum of Etropole (Атанасов, 1972, pp. 72–83; Немировский, 1974, pp. 136–137).

**Table 2: *The Ostroh Bible* of Ivan Feodorov from 1581 in Bulgaria**

Libraries and archives in Bulgaria	Copies of Ostroh Bible
National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" in Sofia	2
Library of Rilla Monastery	3
Church History and Archives Institute in Sofia	1
Metropolitan of Vratsa	1
Historical Museum in Lom	1
Historical Museum in Etropole	1

Additionally, we will consider other rare editions of the Ostroh publishing house, found in repositories in Bulgaria. These are: 1) Psalter and New Testament (1580), kept in the Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS);<sup>4</sup> 2) *Margarit* of John the Apostle

<sup>4</sup> In the Union catalogue by Nemirovskii (2011), it is erroneously stated that a copy of a Psalter with the New Testament, published by Ivan Fyodorov in 1580 is to be found in the University Library in Sofia (Немировский, 2011, p. 358). The book is kept in the Central Library of the Academy of Sciences and can be read following the link: [http://aleph.cl.bas.bg/F/2CYYAK65AS4UCUEALVXV2TGFN3Q955237EH14NTKICXLC SNKHU-05535?func=find-b&request=%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3&find\\_code=WRD&adjacent=N&local\\_base=BOOKS&x=0&y=0&filter\\_code\\_1=WLN&filter\\_request\\_1=&filter\\_code\\_2=WYR&filter\\_request\\_2=&filter\\_code\\_3=WYR&filter\\_request\\_3=&filter\\_code\\_4=WFM&filter\\_request\\_4=&filter\\_code\\_5=WCL&filter\\_request\\_5=](http://aleph.cl.bas.bg/F/2CYYAK65AS4UCUEALVXV2TGFN3Q955237EH14NTKICXLC SNKHU-05535?func=find-b&request=%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3&find_code=WRD&adjacent=N&local_base=BOOKS&x=0&y=0&filter_code_1=WLN&filter_request_1=&filter_code_2=WYR&filter_request_2=&filter_code_3=WYR&filter_request_3=&filter_code_4=WFM&filter_request_4=&filter_code_5=WCL&filter_request_5=)

(1595), two copies, one of which is in Rilla Monastery, almost complete, with only the first folio missing; the other is in the National Library in Sofia, and it is incomplete (112 folia); 3) *Asketikon* of St. Basil the Great, printed in Ostroh in 1595, two copies, one in Rilla Monastery, and the other in the Zographou Monastery on Mount Athos; 4) One truly invaluable and rare edition, kept in the National Library in Sofia: “Lament,” printed in Ostroh in 1603 („Ламент домоу княжат Острожский над зашлим с того света ясне освещоним княжатем Александром Константиновичом Острожским воеводу волинским“).

This copy of the poem “Lament,” written on 10 folia, is the only one ever found in Bulgaria and the best-preserved example worldwide (Атанасов, 1971, pp. 61–77; Запаско & Исаевич, 1981, p. 33; Кирилова, 2015, p. 13). The work is a part of a convolute (miscellany), assembling seven publications in total. The book is small in size (16<sup>o</sup>) and was gifted by a priest of a village in the region of Radomir, near Sofia. The volume contains seven editions from the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. Apart from “Lament,” the rest of the works are educational, grammar books, intentionally collected and bound together, probably at the beginning of the 17th century. Three of the publications are in the Latin alphabet and are Polish language grammars (or *Abecedaria*); they are bibliographically extremely rare, since these are the only copies known worldwide (Атанасов, 1971, pp. 61–77; Cleminson, 1997, pp. 71–79). Here we present the editions, collected in one volume, according to their catalogue descriptions, in Cyrillic and in Latin alphabet, and their place and year of publication. Their library signatures are given in brackets:

- *Беседа избранная о воспитании чад от Йоана Златоустого, Львов, 1609 (Рц 609.1).*
- *Elementaria institutio Latini sermonis et pietatis christianae, Cracow, 1575 (Рл 575.1).*
- *Dia Dziaitek nauka czytania pisma polskiego, Cracow, [1611] (Rn 611.1).*
- *Nauka ku czytaniu pisma polskiego, Lwow, 1599; (Rn 599.1)*
- *Наука ку читанию и разумению писма славенскаго, Вилни, 1596 (Рц 596.1)*
- *Буквар (Славянска граматика), Острог, 1598 (Рц 598.1)*
- *Ламент домоу княжат Острожский [Дерман, 1603] (Рц 603.1)*

Ralph Cleminson believes that the convolute was comprised already in Ukraine and reached Bulgaria in its present form. This is a thematically organised miscellany related to the issues of education and edification of children in their early school years (Cleminson, 1997, pp. 71–79).

Another unique edition, kept in Bulgaria, in the library of Rilla Monastery, is the *Homilies* of John Chrysostom and the *Acts of the Apostles* (1624). The book begins with a Foreword by the Archimandrite Zakhariia Kopystenskyi addressing the South Slavs (the Bulgarians and the Serbs are mentioned), who are asked to accept this book as a gift.

During field work in Troyan Monastery, we discovered one perfectly preserved *Octoechos*, printed in Lviv in 1644, with original binding, and we are using the

opportunity to present it for the first time here. Our observations on the collections of old printed books of provincial monasteries reveal the presence of a great number of editions of the Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra, dating to a later period, mainly the 18th century.

For example, in the Monastery of the Intercession of the Theotokos in Samokov, the number of Akathists to the Theotokos and to St. Barbara is truly impressive. They were all published by the Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra in the 18th century (one Akathist to the Theotokos dates from 1741, another one from 1756; two Akathists to St. Barbara date from 1753 and 1777). A number of other later editions of the Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra were discovered in the Samokov Museum (Psalms from 1728 and 1730, a Prayer Book from 1731, and a Canon Book from 1744). Another Akathist to the Theotokos from 1693 is preserved in the National Museum of History in Sofia.

In this article we have gathered updated and confirmed information regarding the Ukrainian printed books in Bulgaria, more than 50 years after the publications of Dilevskii and Athanasov. The synthesized information shows which Ukrainian editions reached the Bulgarian lands in the 17th century, were in circulation in the following centuries, and are preserved up to the present day. The end we shall leave open, "to be continued", for there are still uncatalogued and under-studied collections of old printed books in Bulgarian monasteries, provincial churches, and museums.

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