Abstract: - In the context of the European Cyrillic print, the printing activity in Wallachia occupies an important place, reflecting the degree of cultural development reached by Romanian principalities and, at the same time, constituting itself as an integral part of a European phenomenon. It is known that between the Romanian culture and the culture of the South-Slavic peoples there was a strong connection. The first printed books from Targoviste (1508-1512), executed by the monk Macarie, spread in the Slavic world, being used as a model for the books printed in this space. The relations of the Romanian written culture with the other cultures in South-eastern Europe manifested on several plans: the printing activity was in a constant evolution, printers, proofreaders, engravers or bookbinders coming to work in the Romanian principalities, the same way as the Romanian craftsmen produced manuscripts and books for the Balkan communities or even traveled to remote places to set up printing workshops.

Key-Words: Liturgy book, Targoviste, Macarie, Wallachia, Printing activity, Book History

1 Introduction

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Targoviste was an important cultural centre and the bringing of the printing press here was made at a time when the need for religious books was very urgent, and its role was to strengthen the new instrument of the new centralized government.

The founding of the printing house in Wallachia was made at the initiative of the church and of the local officials for their own cultural use, but also for those countries which used the Slavic language in the church. When Radu the Great decided to set up a printing press in Wallachia, the printing art had already existed for over half a century in Western Europe Therefore, it is not just a coincidence that during the reign of Radu the Great the printing press was founded and also that during his reign a new form of organization was given to the church of Wallachia.

Macarie the monk, who accompanied the young Montenegro Prince George Cernoievici to Italy, is mentioned in 1483 overseeing at Venice the printing of a Slavic Liturgy Book.[1]

A few years later, the same George Cernoievici would bring the printing press from Venice and install it in Cetinje, in the monastery founded by his father. Here, Macarie would print: an Orthodox Prayer Book (1496), an Oktoih (Book of psalms) (1493-1494), and in 1495 a Psalter. The invasion of the Ottomans of the territory of Montenegro would determine the printing press to stop work, after only two years; at this time Macarie together with his protectors would take refuge to Venice. After a while, he would go to Wallachia brought back by the Serbian metropolitan bishop Maxim, but there is no written evidence to testify to this. [2]

2 Radu the Great’s Role to the establish a printing press at Targoviste

About Radu the Great it is said that he was a "wise, peaceful and honest ruler" who "did not wage wars, wanted peace, and was particularly concerned with religious and cultural problems".[3] Ensuring the autonomy of Wallachia in the Ottoman Empire he created a favorable climate for cultural development [4], so that the printing activity would have favorable conditions for further development. Radu the Great was especially concerned with strengthening the prestige of the Church and with its endowment with "clear sources of education".[5] His initiative to give printed church service book, instead of the manuscripts which circulated by that time, corresponds to the general measures taken to organize the state and the Wallachian Church. In order to achieve this aim he would bring the former patriarch of Constantinople, Nifon, to his principality to which he said: "I will reign, and you
have to guide us in the law of God. Be our spiritual shepherd and our messenger to God."

The founding of the printing press in Wallachia no longer appears to be such a fortuitous work, but falls within the frame of the social and cultural history of the country. The Liturgy Book from 1508, the Oktoih from 1510 and the Gospel Book from 1512 implemented, in printed form, the leading class and church desire to give the largest and most essential part of religious services a unitary form.

3 A controversial problem: the origin of these three works

The problem concerning the origin of Macarie’s printing press has been discussed both by Romanian and foreign researchers. Some historians, like D. Sp. Radojicic and Dejan Medakovic [6] have insisted on the affiliation of these books to the Cetinje centre. But the printing material used by Macarie to print these three books is different from that used by him in the printing house from Cetinje. Macarie’s printing works from Cetinje have the features of books published under conditions of a high quality level of printing, and clichés of ornamented letters from Venetian printings are used together with Latin letters as ornamentation elements, methods which have not been seen in any Romanian printings.

On studying the same issue, Nicolae Iorga [7] has shown that "Macarie made his apprenticeship in Venice" and after he was forced to flee to Montenegro because of the invasion of the Ottomans, he "came to Wallachia", bringing with him a small bag with nicely cut stencils, of ornamented initials and of title pages skilfully interwoven, signs of Venetian influence. In his turn, Sextil Pușcariu [8] claimed that "it was natural for Macarie to look to Wallachia as the safest field of work" and that "he would have come here carrying with him the small bag with stencils".

In his turn, Virgil Molin [9] has categorically stated that: "Macarie’s books, the first necessary to Wallachia, have been edited and printed in Venice". Moreover, V. Molin has tried to identify the printing press in Târgoviște to Aldus Manutius’s and Torresani’s in Venice stating that: "The printing was made under the press house of a typographic centre in Venice, most probably Torresani’s. In other words, Macarie played only a binding role with the Orthodox world of the Balkans". This assumption relies on the following reasons: the characters of the letters in Macarie’s books (1508-1512) are typically Venetian; the printing press is in two colors, an exclusively Venetian technique; the paper used is of Venetian origin; the binding is identical to the Venetian ones existent around year 1500. According to V. Molin, all the Cyrillic printed works issued up to the third decade of the sixteenth century within the South-eastern European space belong to only one typographical centre: Venice.

But this hypothesis of printing the Wallachian books of Macarie in Torresani’s printing house does not hold true due to the following reasons: since the letters in the Liturgy Books are thick, imitating the semiuncial script, they differ from the character of the Slavic letters of Venice, as well as from the thin Slavic letters, similar to the Latin alphabet, of Venetian origin, from Cernoiević’s printing house in Cetinje; the ornaments of Macarie’s printed works are not of Venetian origin themselves, but imitate the ones from the Moldavian manuscripts existent by the end of the reign of Stephan the Great; the two-color printing was made in Macarie’s books using a rudimentary technique, by firstly taking out the sheets of paper from under the printing press, then by printing them again in red ink to cover the blank spots, which causes the dissimilarity in line; as for the lack of information in the epilogues of the three books about the place where they had been printed, we may assume that the coat of arms indicates the place, and if these books had appeared in Venice, the printing workers would have specified the year and place of publication; the two-year span of time between the publication of the three books at Targoviste indicates that printing was made in a less equipped printing house, fitted with little material, and that this is not the case of a typographic order commissioned from a large typographic centre such as Venice; since the proofreading of the text, printed in the second copy book, where there had been some mistakes which distorted the meaning of the text, was made only for the second circulation, this proves that the printing was made inside a small printing room which had only started operating; if the printing of the Liturgy Book had been made in Venice, the proofreading would have been made for all of the copies; the bindings of Macarie’s books were made in the monasteries and workshops existent in the country and they are different from the ones made in Venetian workshops. Since the Oktoih was printed in 1510, it could not have been executed in Torresani’s printing house because it was closed at the time.

Another theory regarding the origin of Macarie’s printing press relates to Swiepolt Fiol’s Cyrillic printing house in Krakow. In 1916, A.P. Sobolevski affirmed that the printed works from Krakow made in 1491 are "founded on texts of Romanian origin", i.e. on Slavic manuscripts which applied the spelling used in Wallachia in the sixteenth century.
The true is that the Cyrillic books from Krakow, compiled under the basis of the Slavic texts from the East, exhibit printing features which do not allow either identification or close association with Macarie’s printed works in Wallachia [10] because the Cyrillic books from Krakow have very special title pages.

Also, letter M has been studied too. There are two types of character: an “aligned M”, which fits perfectly between the two levels of the line and is characteristic to the Cyrillic printing press in Venice, to the South-Slavic and to the one in Prague in the 15th-16th centuries, and a special shape of character which we have named “lapped M”, because the middle of the letter exceeds by 1-3 mm beyond the bottom level of the line. The same "lapped M" is to be found in the Cyrillic printing in Krakow, with a huge difference: in Macarie’s printed works, the middle of the letter, which exceeds below the level of the line, it is rounded, whereas in Sweipolt Fiol’s, it has a pointed form. The conclusion we may draw is that the two printers took their inspiration from different sources: Sweipolt Fiol used East Slavic manuscripts, his character being engraved after them, whereas Macarie made use of Moldavian manuscripts.

4 Another controversial problem: the printing place of these three works

Among the typographic centers in existence on the territory of the Romanian Principalities which have been said to represent the place where the three books had been published, we mention Bistriţa, Snagov, Govora and the monastery of Dealul. As regards Bistriţa, the first to approach this aspect was N. Iorga: “At Dealul, or, better, because here the adorning work was made under the reign of Neagoe, at Bistriţa Craiovestilor, where some say that Maximiam himself celebrated the wedding of Miliţa, this noble work of art was made”.[11] But it is necessary to mention that the monastery had been completely destroyed by Mihnea Vodă in 1509, being rebuilt under the reign of Neagoe Basarab, during 1515 – 1519, the existence of a printing house inside an unfitted space would have been impossible.

Snagov was another typographic centre where some believed that the first books from the entire Romanian territory had been printed; Alexandru Grecu [12] holds a similar opinion when he states that “the monastery of Snagov may be the printing place for the first three of Macarie’s books”, and asserts that Neagoe Basarab must have taken great care of this monastery. The first documented attestation under the name of Snagov dated from 1408, when this appeared in a document of Mircea the Elder. Only in 1517 Neagoe Basarab started to rebuild monastery Snagov and it is difficult to believe that a printing press may have been installed inside an improvised space.

Govora is also included among the hypotheses regarding the printing place of the three books. Al Odobescu [13] is the one who first made this supposition by arguing that, at Govora, Matei Basarab installed a printing press starting from the year 1637, a fact that would lead one to conclude that a tradition in this direction had already existed once a printing house was operating here. From what has been said above we infer that we have no proof to believe that in 1507, when the printing of the Liturgy Book was commenced, any typographical activity had already existed.

In conclusion the Liturgy Book, the first book printed in Romanian space, was not printed in either of the above mentioned centers, but at the monastery of Dealul, near Târgovişte, a place where all the feudal, political, cultural and clerical reforms found their origin, a fact which had been previously mentioned through the attempt of the Romanian rulers to centralize the powers of the state into their own hands. Thus, the setting up of the printing laboratory in Wallachia must be strongly connected to the subordination of the feudal church to the centralized authority of the lay ruler, accompanied by an increase in the princely revenue which allowed for the founding of cultural establishments such as the monastery of Dealul. It is more probable that the installing of the printing press was made within the enclosed space of a monastery because there were workshops for refined crafts and scholar monks who could help in the proofreading of texts, including religious books.

Even some of the ornaments of the title pages of Macarie’s printed works are close in style to the “Armenian” [14] ornaments from the monastery of Dealul (ornaments which make up circles and squares knit from the creeping stalks of stylized plants).

5 The first printed book in Romanian space: Liturgy book (1508)

The monk Macarie arrived in Wallachia at the the invitation of Radu the Great to set up a printing house. The books printed in Wallachia are the usual church texts which were translated long ago from Greek into Slavonic and copied in manuscripts for the use of the Romanians who had adopted the Slavonic rite. In the printing house from Dealu, Macarie printed: a Liturgy Book (1508), an Oktoih (1510) and a Gospel Book (1512).
The significance of Macarie’s Liturgy Book is double-folded: it is the first Romanian printed book and it is the first edition of a book of cult written in Slavonic. The printing of the Liturgy Book began as early as the year 1507 "as ordained by Io Radu Voivod for evermore be his remembrance"[15]. The printing was made with the financial and moral support of the new ruler, "Io Mihnea great hospodar of all Ungro-Wallachia’s land and of Podunavia, son of great Io Vlad hospodar, in his first year of reign, straining himself also the humble monk and priest Macarie. In the year 7016, the phase of the Sun 16, of the fifth month, indiction 11, November 10 days", a fact which results from the epilogue of the book.

As for the dating of the Liturgy Book, a few problems have occurred here too, as it is strange that, inside the epilogue, the style from the 1st of January is used, whereas in all the Wallachian princely and private documents from that age, the Byzantine style is used starting with the 1st of September. Thus, the epilogue appears to be a personal contribution of the typographer which disregards the rules and custom of the realm. The year starting with the 1st of January was used in Moldavia but it looks as Macarie had not been influenced by Moldavia but by the West, by Venice, because inside the books he printed at Cetinje, inside the epilogues, the date of the year is calculated according to the 1st of January style, and other less frequently used elements of chronology such as the phase of the sun and moon appear as well.

More than a few copies have survived of Macarie’s Liturgy Book and they exhibit two variants of the printed text. This is due to the fact that, in the second book of the Liturgy Book, several mistakes have been found which altered the meaning of the text and, as a consequence, the book was reprinted and the copies which had already been sent could not be corrected.

According to the Old Romanian Bibliography, the Liturgy Book (1508) has 128 leaves (256 p.) and is numbered by books. The first four leaves are not numbered; they are followed by 15 books of eight leaves each which are numbered with Cyrillic figures. The last book contains only 4 leaves. Among the contents of the introductory leaves it stands written: "To that among the saints, our father archbishop of Caesarea Cappadocia, Basil the Great, instruction to the priest about divine sermon and about the sacrament".

Inside the Liturgy Book, at the end of the masses, the following orders are printed down: St. Basil’s the Great advice to priests: the rite of the Anaphora (section of the Mass in which the priest prepares the bread and wine for communion); the Liturgy Books of Saint John Chrysostom (this title is missing form the table of contents where it is reunited by mistake under one single title with the previous chapter), of Saint Basil the Great and of the sacraments before they are consecrated and a few other ordinary rites: the rite of blessing the alms, the evening service prayers, the Matins prayers etc. Also, we must mention the rite of the litany (this title is missing form the table of contents, where another prayer is indicated under the heading Morning prayer recited on Sundays, after the Canon of the Trinity) or the prayer for the defence of the country.

We may conclude that Macarie’s Liturgy Book of 1508 represents a rare form of the Slavic Liturgy Book, due to the presence of the Teaching of Basil the Great to priests, which appears only in manuscript 651 from Matei Basarab. Moreover, some of the prayers shown in the end are very rare and to be found only in the Slavonic text of a seventeenth century manuscript from the Monastery of Bistrița.

As far as the ornamentation of the Liturgy Book we must say that Macarie was a creator of local tradition by defining the specific features of the Romanian Cyrillic printing press within the context of the entire Cyrillic printing circulating in Europe in the sixteenth century. In the Monastery of the Mușatini, a new completely different style emerges in the art of the manuscript books – the Moldavian old manuscript. Its characteristics refer to the exceptional beauty of the letter’s ductus, the geometric ornamentation of exquisite elegance, the chromatic harmony, the matchless miniatures which, as Nicolae Iorga himself observed, would deserve to be granted a place in the history of the major Arts. A comparison made between these ornaments, especially of the title pages, has revealed that in the Slavonic manuscript of Jeremiah’s prophecies, written at Neamț in 1475 [16] there are several almost identical title pages in terms of their drawing: they exhibit the same rectangular shape of the title page, the same knit and stylized creeping stalks which make up intersecting circles, and the same twigs arranged on both sides of the rectangle, with no crowns (in case of the manuscript), while the initials of the chapters are richly adorned with knit creeping stalks and delicate ornaments.

The transposition of the ornamental elements of the local manuscript book onto the printed book seems natural because the Liturgy Book is the church service book which was first printed in the entire European Cyrillic characters by Macarie, in Wallachia. For this reason, Macarie could not rely on a printed model, he was forced to resort to the
manuscript book and create ornamentation adequate to the text.

In the Liturgy Book, there are three title pages with knit ornaments, one of them is reproduced three times, another one only two times and the third exhibits the coat of arms of Wallachia. One of them is rectangular in shape and is made of creeping stalks and wattle which form intersecting circles. Two ornaments which end with the representation of two princely crowns start from the extremities of the two inferior corners. The second title page is oval in shape and observes the same ornamentation technique as the first one, whereas the third type shows the illustration of the Wallachia coat of arms framed inside a square, the represented bird depicting both an eagle and a falcon.[17] The bird’s feathers are accurately indicated, wings spread out, carrying in its beak a cross with three-cusped arms in the extremities, accompanied in the lower part and on the sides by a twig with flowers and leaves. In the upper register of the heraldic composition, there is a sun with eight rays (left) and a turned half-moon (right). [18]

As regards the capital ornamented initials, we will have to underline that they were not been engraved by Macarie himself, in a new style, unknown to the Cyrillic printing by the time, but they took the shape of wickerwork, because the paragraphs of the text implied a long row of new initials. Thus, Macarie created ornamental initial letters by knitting creeping stalks of flowers and plants, as well as another black series which imitated the Gothic uncial letter.

We must raise for discussion not only the influences which inspired Macarie, but the most significant influence exercised by Macarie’s printings from Wallachia over the entire South-eastern European Cyrillic printing press – Romanian and South-Slavic – in that century, as well. Hence, in 1519 in Hertăgovina, in Gorajde, a new Cyrillic printing house was founded. Fjodor Ljubavici printed three books here: the Liturgy Book (1519), the Psalter (1521) and the Prayer Book (around the year 1523). At this printing house from Gorajde we discover elements of book ornamentation in case of a group of initials and a vignette, which undoubtedly reflect the influence of Macarie’s printing press in Wallachia. On examining the vignette which appeared for the first time in the European Cyrillic alphabet in the Liturgy Book of 1508, we notice the resemblance to the Psalter of 1521 from Gorazde. Ljubavici of Gorajde must have copied the image from Macarie’s printed book, then he cast it in wood and cut a new stereotyped plate, from which he printed the said vignette in his book. Differences are very small, and this shows that the assumption which states that both typographers might have used the same Serbian manuscript as their source of inspiration is out of the question. Similar resemblances are to be found in the case of the initials from Fjodor Ljubavici’s Psalter.

As regards the copies of Macarie’s Liturgy Book which have been preserved on the territory of Romania, we would like to mention that in the collections of the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest there are three copies of the Slavonic Liturgy Book printed by Macarie in 1508: One of the copies has 128 p.; most of the leaves are worn-out at corners, the binding is made of leather, cold-printed, adorned with floral and geometric ornaments, and, for the notes, we mention: “Pomenii (gospođi) raba Bojice Stoicu i Marko” (sec. XVI), Cyrillic alphabet, Slavonic language. Source: donation (formerly belonged to the Central Library in Bucharest, the Monastery of Bistrița); the second copy has 127 p., it is well preserved, the binding is also made of leather, cold-printed, adorned with floral and geometric ornaments (sixteenth century), and, for the notes, we mention: “This Liturgy Book belongs to the monastery of Bistrița”, Romanian language; “Sia liturghia zovemii glagolimi manastirea Bistrița anatema Gaa iznisti iz manastirea“ (seventeenth century), Cyrillic alphabet, Slavonic language. Source: donation (formerly belonged to the Monastery of Bistrița; smoke seal of the Monastery of Bistrița); the third copy has 72 p., it is well preserved, the binding is made of leather, with gilded borders and religious insets (seventeenth century); Notes: “formerly belonged to the Church of Bălgrad (Alba-Iulia)”, Romanian language. Source: donation (formerly belonged to the Church of Bălgrad, Alba-Iulia). At the Library of the Orthodox Metropolitan Seat in Sibiu there is a copy which exhibits the following characteristics: it has 126 p., two leaves at the end of the book are missing, it has wooden covers wrapped up in ornamented leather, the copy is part of the first printed books and it is not proofread. It has an Ex-libris (bookplate): “Priest (Te)odosie from Vlăscoi Zemlii“ (1630), alphabet: Cyrillic. Notes: “This ritual book written in Slavonic language was donated to the Archiepiscopal Library of Sibiu on Novembre 8 v. 1898 from the Church at Alun. Alun on Novem. 8, 898 v. Iosif Suciu vicar gr. or. rom.“ / Iosif Suciu (08.11.1898), Latin alphabet, Romanian language; “Year 1671 when I was ordained a priest” / (seventeenth century), Romanian language. Another copy is kept in the Romanian National Library: it has 128p., book 1 of 4 leaves bound at the end of the book, the back and the corners of the
book are deteriorated, the body of the book is deckled, the first 2 leaves are detached, the binding is made of brown leather on wood adorned with geometric and floral ornaments; it exhibits handmade ornaments: the coat of arms of Wallachia framed in frontispiece, red and black characters, an Ex-libris (bookplate): The Library of the Cultural Establishment “Nicolae Bălcescu“. Source: inheritance

The notes made on these printed works, irrespective of the funds which preserve them, show us that the books circulated not only in Wallachia, which was a natural thing to happen, but that they were used beyond the boundaries of the country.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the books printed by Macarie at Targoviste, between 1508-1512, place the Romanian printing press above that of the other Eastern European countries, coming to help the Romanian priests who celebrated the divine service using manuscripts, but also owing to the fact that it circulated in all the three Romanian principalities and beyond their boundaries as well, in those countries where the religious service was celebrated in the Ancient Slavic language, allowing thus for a unification of religious practice.

References
[18] Ibidem.