



Summary :

Within the framework of Greek diaspora at the Danubian cities in Romania (Brăila, Galați), an especially vivid publishing activity was developed during the second half of the 19th century, especially from the 1870s until 1900. Dozens of books were published, mainly communal and school regulations, speeches and literary texts. Since the beginning of the 20th century, however, the centre of Greek printing was transferred to Constanța, on the Romanian coast of the Black Sea, and to Bucharest. Moreover, many Greek newspapers were printed in Romania, especially in Brăila.

Date

Second half of the 19th c.-20th c.

Geographical Location

Danubian cities in Romania

1. Introduction

In the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, suzerain to the Ottoman Empire, a significant amount of books was published from the late 17th century until 1821. These books, usually ecclesiastical and educational, were printed in presses operating under the control either of the clergy (metropolitans, bishops, abbots) or the sovereign princes themselves. Consequently, these printing houses were not commercial establishments such as the well-known Greek publishing houses in Venice, which had to align their policy in regard to the market's needs, but were contrary connected to the Greek-Orthodox political and clerical elites and to their ambitions.¹

The Greek presses operating after 1830 in the urban centres of both Wallachia and Moldavia, especially in the Danubian ports ([Brăila](#), [Galați](#)) were businesses owned by Greek emigrants, often Greek subjects as well.² These printing houses published not only books in Greek, but also in Romanian as well, often in French, Yiddish, and in Italian, thus satisfying the needs of the people inhabiting these multi-ethnic and multi-lingual port cities within the Principalities.

2. Greek publishing during the second half of the 19th century

Since 1830, Greek books within the Danubian Principalities were published mainly in Bucharest and Iași (Jassy),³ while until 1860 the Greek books printed in Brăila and Galați were very few, since the publishing activity in these cities was limited.⁴ After the unification of Wallachia and Moldavia in 1859, the number of presses greatly increased and, naturally, so did the publication of Greek and Romanian books.

From 1864 to 1900, at least 96 Greek books were printed in Brăila, 55 in Galați and 59 in Bucharest.⁵ It is clear that during the second half of the 19th century, the centre for Greek publications in Romania had shifted from the capital to the port-cities, which furthermore were populated by a larger number of Greeks. A lot less Greek books were printed in Dobrudja, and only after the region was annexed to Romania in 1878; specifically, there were 3 published in [Constanța](#) and 2 in [Tulcea](#).⁶

2.1. Greek printing houses in Danubian centres

Greek books were published by printing houses owned by Greeks, as well as Romanians, but also Jews, Frenchmen, Italians or other foreigners located in Romania. Characteristically, about half of them were printed by the publishing houses of Fr. Thiel, I. Nebunelli and other foreigners. The only significant press owned by a Greek was the one of Frangiskos Momferratos that operated between 1845 and 1871 and during the 1860s published at least 10 Greek books. Earlier (1848-1849), Momferratos had established a printing house in neighbouring Brăila.⁷



In Brăila, Greek books were published by the presses of the clergyman Anastasie R. Brăileanu, of the Bulgarian H.D. Panicikov, of Theodorvici & Constantinescu.⁸ The "Typo-lithography of P.M. Pestemaltzioglou" constituted a special case for its success and constant presence in Greek publications. Pestemaltzioglou, born in 1831 in [Bursa](#) in Asia Minor, had been in the publishing business since 1858 as both a newspaper editor and a printer.⁹ In 1870 he founded "Trigonon" (triangle), his first printing house that within its first two years of operation published over 20 books, most of them being in the Greek language.¹⁰ In 1873 he established the "Typo-lithography of P.M. Pestemaltzioglou" that was the largest printing business in town, awarded medals and honours in international exhibitions, until it closed down in 1915. In total, it printed more than 150 books, most of them in Romanian (108) and many in Greek (around 30). Some of the Greek books, such as the *Palingenesia tis Ellados* ("Renegeration of Greece"), a book referring to the 1821 Greek War of Independence with copper engravings, were quite luxurious.¹¹ In 1881, he also founded a branch office in Constanța that became one of the first publishing houses in the city.¹²

2.2. Book classification

The Greek books published in the Danubian printing centres were of many different sorts. A large part consisted of statutes and regulations of various Greek educational establishments, usually the grand private schools in Brăila and Galați, such as the Venieris school. In contrast, school books were far less, since the need for them was covered by books published in Athens or Constantinople.¹³ A few editions were communal charters and texts of committees' reports, but also obituaries. There were also literary works, usually poems or even theatrical plays of a patriotic disposition. Let it be noted here that *I stratiotiki zoi en Elladi* ("Military life in Greece"), one of the most significant texts of 19th century Greek literature, was published in Brăila in 1870.¹⁴

3. Greek publishing during the first half of the 20th century

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Greek publishing decreased.¹⁵ No Greek books appear to have been printed in Tulcea, while in Galați as well the number of books must have radically diminished. Even in Brăila, the most significant publishing centre for Greek books in Romania, production was limited.¹⁶ The only Greek publishing house founded, "Ethnos" (Nation), under the direction of L. Kostomyris, was restricted to publishing the newspaper of the same name, while during the first Post-war years it relocated in Bucharest.¹⁷

During the Inter-war period, no press of Greek ownership operated in Brăila, while the publications were scarce in general. The most notable printing houses were Jewish.¹⁸ New centres for the business of Greek books were Bucharest, where almost all of the Greek newspapers were published, and Constanța. In the latter, especially active was the printing house-bookstore of Ch. Vourlis "Ovidius".¹⁹

4. Greek Press

The Greek newspapers published in Brăila, Galați and Constanța during the second half of the 19th century comprise a notable portion of the Greek diaspora press flourishing during that time, mainly in Trieste, Egypt and [Bulgaria](#).²⁰

There were at least 3 Greek newspapers in total published in Galați and over 15 in Brăila. These newspapers were mainly political, usually weekly or issued in a non-regular fashion. Much emphasis was given on political developments in Greece, while the activities of communal committees were often commented upon. Disputes with Romanian and/or Bulgarian newspapers were frequent.²¹

The first Greek newspaper published was *Ermis* ("Hermes"), printed in Brăila, for which we know of only two editions (September 2nd and 6th, 1848). It was a bilingual publication focusing on the collaboration between Greeks and Romanians during the 1848 Revolution.²² More significant was the presence of the newspapers published during the last three centuries of the 19th century, namely *Sylogoi* ("Associations"), *Ermis* (1873-1876) and *Eleftheros Logos* ("Free Speech", 1895-1901). In Constanța, periodicals (*Thaleia*, 1923-1924) and journals were printed.²³



A few newspapers were styled as journals, such as *Apothiki ton Ofelimon Gnoseon* ("Storehouse for Useful Knowledge"), published in Brăila between 1864 and 1865, while some satirical editions were also present, since their kind was flourishing in Greece during that time. The most important satirical newspaper was probably *I Maimou* ("The Monkey"), also printed in Brăila. The most notable Greek journalist in Romania was Dionysios Metaxas-Laskaratos from Brăila, publisher of *Eleftheros Logos*.²⁴

1. There are many studies on printing houses within the Danubian Principalities; see eg. Simonescu, D., "Le livre grec en Roumanie", *Balcania* VII/2 (1944), pp. 447-464; Καραθανάσης, Αθ., *Οι Έλληνες λόγιοι στη Βλαχία (1670-1714)* (Thessaloniki 1982), pp. 158-172, 238-249.
2. No specific monograph or study for Greek publishing in the Principalities is available; see however Papacostea-Danielopolu, C., "La vie culturelle des communautés grecques de Roumanie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes* VII (1969), pp. 311-333, 475-493, and Μπελιά, Ελ., «Ο Ελληνισμός της Ρουμανίας κατά το διάστημα 1835-1878. Συμβολή στην ιστορία του επί τη βάσει των ελληνικών πηγών», *Δελτίον Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας* 26 (1983), pp. 5-62.
3. In Bucharest and Iași many Greek books were published between 1830 and 1860; see Γκίνης, Δ.Σ.-Μέξας, Β.Γ., *Ελληνική βιβλιογραφία 1800-1863. Αναγραφή των κατά την χρονικήν ταύτην περίοδον όπου δήποτε ελληνιστί εκδοθέντων βιβλίων και εντύπων εν γένει Α'-Γ'* (Athens 1939, 1941, 1957), index; Papacostea-Danielopolu, C., *Comunitățile grecești din România în secolul al XIX-lea* (București 1996), pp. 33-43, 127-132.
4. For the exceptionally limited book printing in Brăila, where only 9 books were published between 1838 and 1859, see Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 7-17, 73-74. One of these books was *Agamemnon*, a translation of Vittorio Alfieri's Italian theatrical play of the same name in Greek.
5. Πολέμη, Π., *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία 1864-1900. Εισαγωγή, συντομογραφίες, ευρετήρια* (Athens 2006), p. 18. The number of the books is probably larger, since, as Popi Polemi mentions, "the salvage ratio in publications coming from printing houses outside of Greece is different; the "leaks" there are immensely bigger", see *ibid.*, p. 17.
6. Πολέμη, Π., *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία 1864-1900. Εισαγωγή, συντομογραφίες, ευρετήρια* (Athens 2006), p. 18. The scholars Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), p. 29, record at least 8 books printed in Constanța.
7. Πολέμη, Π., *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία 1864-1900. Εισαγωγή, συντομογραφίες, ευρετήρια* (Athens 2006), pp. 95, 117, 119, 132, 137. Information on printing houses in Galați during the second half of the 19th century in Păltănea, P., *Istoricul orașului Galați de la origine până la 1918 II* (Galați 1995), pp. 285-294. For Momferratos' branch office in Brăila see Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 12-13.
8. Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 74, 78-79, 100.
9. Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), p. 16.
10. Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 25-26.
11. Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 28-32. Also see Drăghici, R., *Cartea greacă la Brăila* [Greek books in Brăila] (Brăila 2006), pp. 26-45, where are included a list and photographs of Greek books published by the "Typo-lithography of P.M. Pestemaltzioglou" and located in the Brăila District Library "Panait Istrati".
12. See Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), p. 29, and Πολέμη, Π., *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία 1864-1900. Εισαγωγή, συντομογραφίες, ευρετήρια* (Athens 2006), p. 127.
13. On that see Rados, L. (ed.), *Școlile Grecești din România (1857-1905), restituții documentare* (București 2006), pp. 149-152, where a list of school books from 1896 is included. One of the few school books printed in Romania was P.M. Pestemaltzioglou's *Alphavitarion* (Spelling Book) that was published by the press of the same name in Brăila in 1878, while a second edition was issued in 1882; see Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 32, 91.



14. See Δημαράς, Κ.Θ., *Ιστορία της Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας. Από τις πρώτες ρίζες ως την εποχή μας* (Athens 1964), p. 335; Ηλιού, Φ.,-Πολέμη, Π., *Ελληνική Βιβλιογραφία 1864-1900. Συνοπτική αναγραφή Α'* (Athens 2006), 1870. 222-223 [p. 435]. For the writer Charilaos Dimopoulos, teacher of the Greek language in Brăila, see Μουλλάς, Π., «Ένας γνωστός άγνωστος. Ο συγγραφέας της Στρατιωτικής ζωής εν Ελλάδι», in Βαγενάς, Ν. (ed.), *Από τον Λέανδρο στο Λουκή Λάρα. Μελέτες για την πεζογραφία της περιόδου 1830-1880* (Irkleio 1999), pp. 269-277.
15. Let it be noted here that the lack of methodical recording of Greek publishing during the first half of the 20th century encumbers the assessment on Greek printing activity in Romania.
16. Let it be noted here that the greatest Greek publisher, Periklis M. Pestemaltzioglou, passed away on March 30, 1902.
17. See Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 53-54. The "Ethnos" printing house published only 3 books, only one of which in Greek, *ibid.*, p. 139.
18. For the Jewish publishing houses in Brăila, see Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 38-44.
19. See Μάνεσης, Στ., «Η ελληνική κοινότης Κωνσταντζης Ρουμανίας», in *Mélanges offerts à Octave et Melpo Merlier II* (Athens 1952), p. 110.
20. For the Greek diaspora press, see Δρούλια, Λ. (ed.), *Ο Ελληνικός τύπος 1784 έως σήμερα. Ιστορικές και θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις* (Athens 2005), pp. 357-474, with rich bibliographical references. For the Greek press in Romania, see Οικονομίδης, Δ.Β., «Σημειώσεις διά την ιστορίαν των εν Ρουμανία ελληνικών εφημερίδων και πρώτων βιβλιοπωλείων», *Μνημοσύνη* 6 (1976-1977), pp. 68-93, and mainly Cicanci, O., *Presa de limbă greacă din România în veacul al XIX-lea* (București 1995).
21. For the political views held by Greek newspapers in Romania and their articles, see Οικονομίδης, Δ.Β., «Σημειώσεις δια την ιστορίαν των εν Ρουμανία ελληνικών εφημερίδων και πρώτων βιβλιοπωλείων», *Μνημοσύνη* 6 (1976-1977), pp. 68-93, and mainly Cicanci, O., *Presa de limbă greacă din România în veacul al XIX-lea* (București 1995), pp. 25-153.
22. See Drăghici, R.,-Bounegru, S., *Tipografii Brăilene* (Brăila 2001), pp. 12-13, 73.
23. See Μάνεσης, Στ., «Η ελληνική κοινότης Κωνσταντζης Ρουμανίας», in *Mélanges offerts à Octave et Melpo Merlier II* (Athens 1952), pp. 109-110.
24. A work of Dionysios Metaxas-Laskaratos was *Ελληνικά Παροικία Ρωσσίας και Ρωμανίας* (Brăila 1900), a well-known book, rich in information on the Greek diaspora of Russia and Romania.

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