

# About Mihail Stepaneshvili's contribution to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture by the agency of his first printings on the Georgian soil

PhD. Prof. Emeritus Nicolae V. Dură  
*Academy of Romanian Scientists,  
Georgian National Academy of Sciences*

## Abstract:

*For the introduction of the printing press on the Georgian soil contributed four persons (two Georgians and two Romanians), namely two clerics, Antimoz Iverieli (Anthem the Iberian) and Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili), and two princes, Vakhtang VI Bagrationi and Constantin Brâncoveanu, hence the necessity to make some precisions – brief it be – about the contribution of these founders of the introduction of the printing press in Georgia, and, ipso facto, about the beginning of the historical relations in the cultural field between Georgia and Romania.*

*In his quality of metropolitan of the Church from Ungro-Wallachia, Antimoz Iverieli was also the person who contributed both to the introduction of the printing press in his native country, and to the accomplishment of the process of reintroduction of the Romanian language in its liturgical use. And, more than that, both Antimoz and Ștefan, printed – at the order of the Romanian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu – books in Greek, Slavonic, Arabian and Romanian language.*

*In the pages of my paper, I underlined also the fact that the prince Vakhtang VI was the person who officially demanded a printing press, as well as a master of printing art, from prince Brâncoveanu, but the person who carried the printing press from Bucharest (Romania), who settled it down in Tiflis (Tbilisi), who printed the first books on the Georgian soil and who created the first School of printers in Georgia was the Romanian master in the art of printing of that epoch, namely Mihail Ștefan.*

*In the same time, I highlighted not only the special contribution of the Romanian printer to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture, but also the share of the others three persons, that is, of the princes Vakhtang VI and Constantin Brâncoveanu and the Metropolitan Antimoz Iverieli, to whom I added some words concerning the role played also by Dositheus II Notaras of Jerusalem for the concretization of the Georgians justified desire to have a printing press on their land.*

*Key words: the printing press, the first Georgian printed books, the cultural relations, the founders' fathers*

## Preliminaries

In 2016, Georgia and Romania celebrated the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Georgian-Romanian relations, that stand on four great pillars: two Georgians and two Romanians, namely: St. Martyr Antimoz Iverieli, metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia († 1716), St. Martyr Constantin Brâncoveanu, prince of Wallachia († 1714), Vakhtang VI Bagrationi, prince of Kartli (from 1716 king), and the subdeacon Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili), a master in the art of printing who arrived in Georgia in 1707, where he settled down the first printing press and printed the first books on the Georgian land. All these four persons are indeed the founders Fathers of cultural and spiritual relations between our peoples and countries.

With the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Georgia and Romania cultural relations, held in Romania, Georgian texts, engravings and typographic ornaments, the gables, frontispieces etc. – some of them from the works printed by Mihail Ștefan – were exhibited in 2019 in an exhibition

of Georgian prints organized by the Ambassador of Georgia in Bucharest, Mr. Nikoloz Nikolozishvili, with the support of the signatory of these lines, in the premises of the Ovidius University in Constanța. And, a few days later, a such Exhibition had place at the „Antim Ivireanul” Library in Râmnicu Vâlcea, where Antimoz was bishop (1705-1708), and where he printed books helped by Mihail Ștefan, who, in that time, corrected and amended the Romanian texts of his bishop.

Certainly, we can't speak about the contribution of Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili) to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture without to mention his relations with his fellow-labor in the field of printing books, that is, Antimoz Iverieli, a great hierarch and an outstanding scholar, who, beyond his notorious pastoral and scholarly activity that marked not only the cultural history of our countries, Romania and Georgia, but also of the entire Christian orthodox world of that epoch, was also one of the main founders of the cultural relations between our peoples (Georgian and Romanian).

Naturally, in the pages of our paper, we made also reference to the contribution brought by the others founders Fathers of cultural and spiritual relations between our peoples and countries, namely the two great Christian princes of that time, that is, Constantin Brâncoveanu and Vakhtang VI Bagrationi, who were two pillars of the establishment of the Georgian-Romanian relations.

#### **The first Georgian initiatives and contacts with the Romanians to get a printing press**

According to the statements of the patriarch Dositheus II Notaras (1669 - 1707) (I. Dură 1977, 4-292), who was animated by an ardent desire to give the possibility to all the orthodox countries to have access to the printed books, the Orthodox Churches had to make a stumbling block against the actions of proselytism carried on, „in illo tempore”, by Catholics and Protestants by the agency of their printed books.

The patriarch of Jerusalem, Dositheus, was in fact the person „who took Antimoz ... with him to Iasi where he taught Antimoz the printing of books in the Greek printing office founded in 1682 in Jassy” (Imerlishvili 2014, 153). Indeed, Antimoz learnt the art of printing on the Romanian soil, where the first printed book was published in the year 1508, and where the Georgian Andrei (Andrew) received his monastic habit and it was ordained priest (hieromonk).

According to the Georgian and Romanian sources, in 1704 the hieromonk Domenti IV, the brother of Prince Vakhtang VI, accompanied the patriarch Dositheus II in his travelling to Romanian Principalities Wallachia and Moldavia, where he met his fellow countryman, namely Anthim the Iberian, who, in that time, printed books in Greek at the request of the patriarch Dositheus II of Jerusalem, but with the prince Constantin Brâncoveanu's permission. And, most probably, with that occasion the two Georgians, that is, Andrew (Anthim) and Domenti, had the idea of establishing a printing press in Tbilisi.

Due to the advice of the Patrarch Dositheus II Notaras, prince Vakhtang VI exhorted prince Constantin Brâncoveanu to send him a printing press to be settled down it in his country. Indeed, to fulfill his intention, the Prince of Karli (Georgia) empowered the Greek patriarch of

Jerusalem to contact also his compatriot, Antimoz Iverieli, who in that time was Metropolitan of Church of Ungro-Wallachia, and to make together all the diligent steps in order to determine the prince Brâncoveanu to give a positive answer to his request.

In the years 1705-1706 Vakhtang VI demanded officially Constantin Brâncoveanu to send him a printing press for Tiflis (Tbilisi). And, consequently, „in 1707” Mihail Ștefan „departed from Wallachia to Tbilisi ..., and took with him all necessary equipment and printing paper” (300 years, 1719-2019). But, only in 1709, he printed the first book in Georgian language, namely The Gospel, and then, „two copies of the first Georgian Gospel were sent to Anthim, who bounded them and sent to Constantin Brâncoveanu with the dedication on behalf of the grateful Georgian people” (300 years, 1719-2019).

#### **Who was Mihail Ștefan in the light of the statements made by some scholars**

The lack of the possibility to have access to the sources of the first hand, Georgian, Romanian and Greek, determined some scholars to assert that „Mihail Ștefan” (Michael Stepaneshvili) „was from Transylvania or Ungrovlakheti”, and that he mastered „the “Art of Johannes Gutenberg” (1390-1468) directly under the guidance of Antim Iverieli” (Imerlishvili 2014, 155).

In the medieval documents, the land of Transylvania was never called „Ungro-Vlahia” as the other Romanian Principality, that is, Valahia (Wallachia). For the Romans, who conquered this land of Dacia – inherited by our ancient ancestors, the Dacians, the northern Thracians, – was „Terra ultra silvam”, that is „the land beyond the forest”, namely beyond the Carpathians mountains, hence the term „Transylvania”.

In the medieval documents (Latin and Romanian), the land had the same Latin name, Transylvania, that it was translated by Hungarians with the term „*Erdő-elve*” (*Erdély*), Ardeal.

Therefore, the Transylvania – another ancient Romanian country – can't be confused with „Valahia (Ungro-valahia)” (Wallachia or Ungro-Wallachia). Moreover, if Mihail Ștefan would have been a native from Transylvania – that „in illo tempore” was under the occupation of the Hungarians – he couldn't be under the guidance of bishop Antimoz Iverieli. Certainly, we can speak only about of a spiritual guidance, due to the fact that Antimoz was a hieromonk, and then, a hierarch, and Mihail a layman (and later one an hypodeacon or subdeacon). But, this reality didn't imply the fact he would have learn the “*Art of Johannes Gutenberg*” from Antimoz Iverieli, but from the printers of his native country, Valahia (Wallachia), where the art of printing had already two centuries of existence.

In fact, in this quality of master in art of printing Mihail Ștefan was sent in Transylvania by the Metropolitan Teodosie and the Rumanian ruler, Constantin Brâncoveanu, to print books for the Orthodox Romanians before the arrival of Antimoz on the Romanian land. But, even in the case that Mihail Ștefan was born in Transylvania, and his forefathers would have been obliged to pass in Valahia (Wallachia) in order to escape from the great religious persecutions and social oppression exerted by the temporary occupants of that land, that is, the Hungarians, we can't say that he was initiated in the printing art by Antimoz, since he was working as a well-known

printer at the Court of the prince Constantin Brâncoveanu before Antimoz came in Wallachia, where he printed his first books just in Bucharest, the capital of the Romanian Principality of that time.

But, the same researchers arrived to a happy conclusion, namely that Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili) „... deserved a universal respect in Georgia” (Imerlishvili 2014, 155), as, in fact Antimoz Iverieli received it and fully deserve it in Romania.

Regarding the time passed by Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili) in Georgia, we have to know that he worked in Tbilisi between the late 1707 until the early 1712. Therefore, he departed from his adoptive and beloved country, Georgia, not at the end of the year 1711, but at the beginning of 1712, since only in April of the year 1712 his protector „Vakhtang VI was recalled from Georgia to Persia” (Imerlishvili 2014, 155), where he had to remain until 1721.

This undeniable reality determined us to believe that the book „Vepkhistaosani” (The Knight in the Tiger’s Skin) was in fact printed under the guidance of Mihail Stepaneshvili, who was may-be helped by one of his Georgian disciples in the art of the printing, and most probably by the son of the archpriest of the princely court of Vakhtang VI, called Michael. Any case, just if Georgian Michael it is not the same person with Romanian Michael (Mihail), it is sure that his Georgian disciple, Michael, had only the mission to publish the book printed by his master, Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili) or together with this one.

But, what other strange statements about Mihail Ștefan we find in the pages of the foreign historians?! For example, we find out that „... the first printing office in Georgia was created ... with the direct participation of the Hungarian expert in printing Mihai Ishtvanovich” (sic) (Imerlishvili 2014, 156).

Certainly, a such unspeakable statement is not more than another glaring error, as it is clearly proved also by the text of the Prefaces and the Epilogues written by Mihail Ștefan for his books printed in Georgia. But, it is true that in the Hungarian language – used in that time in the Romanian land, called Transylvania (Transylvania), the Romanian name „Ștefan” was usually rendered by Hungarian word „Iștvan”. Therefore, even Mihail Ștefan – who have been sent at Alba Iulia („*Belgrade of Transylvania*”) by prince Constantin Brâncoveanu and by his metropolitan Teodosie of Wallachia to print books for the Romanians from Transylvania – has been forced to bear Hungarian name, and, in the present case, to be named „Iștvan” (Iștvanovici) instead of „Ștefan”.

As it is known, Mihail Ștefan signed his books even in Transylvania with his real Romanian name, that is „Mihail Ștefan”, and only sometimes under the name „Mihail Iștvanovici”, as it was for example the case with his book entitled „Bucoavna” (*Spelling book*) (Bucoavna 1989, 133), published at Alba Iulia in 1699, in order to give more credit of his book among the orthodox Serbians of Transylvania.

Similar exotic assertions about Mihail Ștefan – produced by some foreign scholars – were also used for Antimoz Iverieli. For example, it was written that Antimoz knew „Arabic” (Imerlishvili 2014, 154), even though Antimoz himself confessed the contrary. They also asserted

that Antimoz „prepared the ground for a church service in order that it would be held not in Greek, but in the completely understandable Rumanian language for the people in Ardeal, in Moldova and in Muntenia” (Imerlishvili 2014, 154).

In reality, Antimoz Iverieli was in fact the providential person who – by his pastoral actions – continued and finalized with great success the activity initiated and led with great efforts by his predecessors (the Romanian hierarchs) for the replacement of the Slavonic and Greek languages and the reintroduction of the Romanian language in the Romanian Churches. This it was indeed his great merit for his adopted country!

In the Romanian countries, this process was initiated in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century under the auspices of „the victory of the Romanian language” (P.P. Panaitescu) over the Slavonic language. In the second half of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, this „victory” led also to the replacement of the Greek language by the Romanian language, as prove „à l'évidence” both the measures took by Metropolitan Teodosie († 1708) of Ungro-Wallachia, and the printed Holy Scripture (full text in Romanian) in the year 1688 (Dură 1988, 9-30; Dură 1988 a, 21-39), to which also contributed the printer Mihail Ștefan.

But, despite of this undeniable historical reality, the same researchers stated that Antimoz Iverieli „was an uncrowned King of Rumania”, and „one of the reformers of the Romanian literature” (Imerlishvili 2014, 154). Certainly, such statements are totally quaint of any documentary information offered in abundance by the ancient historical, literary and theological Romanian sources.

It has also to be known that Constantin Brâncoveanu didn't bring Antimoz Iverieli from Iassy (Iași) „to organize” (Imerlishvili 2014, 154) his printing press, but to the request of Chrysanthus Notaras, the patriarch of Jerusalem, in order to have himself access to the printing presses in Wallachia, where to publish books in Greek language, as did his uncle, the patriarch Dositheus II, in Iasi (Moldavia).

In Wallachia too, Anthim the Iberian accomplished efficiently the desire of the Greek Patriarch, since from 67 books printed by him, more of forty were printed in Greek, and the other ones in Arabic and Slavonic languages, and only a few in Romanian language. In fact, the first book printed in Greek by Antimoz – in Bucharest – was „An advice of Basil I the Macedonian to his son Leo VI”, translated from old Greek into new Greek by the patriarch Chrysanthus Notaras, that is a Greek book, and not a Romanian or a Georgian one.

#### **Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Ștefan, the founders of the cultural relations between Georgia and Romania**

The real founders of the cultural relations between our countries are certainly the Iberian (Antimoz Iverieli) (Dură 2016, 153-162) († 1716) and Romanian Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili) (Dură 2017, 191-200), who, having the opportunity to work together in the cultural field for the benefice of their countries, they got to know better the cultural and spiritual identity of both countries, Georgia and Romania.

That „Antimos Iverieli”, called by Greeks by his Georgian name, Andrew, was a native from Georgia, it was confirmed just by Antimoz, who called himself by Turkish word „*gurji*” (Georgian), as it is also attested by the Prefaces of the books printed by Antimoz in Arabian language in the Romanian printing press of Bucharest.

Among other things, for the Romanians, Antimoz Iverieli was not only one of the foreign scholars who printed Greek books on the Romanian soil for the benefice of the Greek Christians, but also the hierarch who contributed – in his quality as Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Romanian Principality (Wallachia) – to the conclusion of long process of centuries for the reintroduction of Romanian language in the Church.

Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili) was the person that, beyond of his reach activity in the field of printing books in the two Romanian countries, Wallachia and Transylvania, he was the one that introduced the first Printing press on Georgian soil, and the printer of the first Georgian books, contributing thus to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture (sacred and secular) beyond the frontiers of the Kingdom of Kartli.

As regards the Georgian language, Mihail Ștefan was able to bring his meritorious contribution to its promotion by his printing books. And, in this activity, he was help by Nikoloz Orbeliani, who chose for his printing books the best manuscripts written in Kartvelian language by the eminent Georgians writers (philologists, theologians, historians etc.) during the centuries.

In fact, so as Orbeliani, a very qualified person, revised the Georgian texts printed by Mihail Ștefan, so on the Romanian printer did it for the texts written in Romanian by Antimoz Iverieli. Anyhow, it is known that even his famous Sermons, that Antimoz delivered every Sunday in his Cathedral of Bucharest, had to be corrected and stylized by the Romanian grammarians, among which one of these was just Mihail Ștefan.

From point of view of their Culture and the Spirituality, the people of our countries had the possibility to be acquainted with each other even before the epoch of Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Ștefan by the agency of the two great spiritual and culture centers of the Eastern Christianity, that is, Jerusalem and Mount Athos, where the Georgians (Kvesitadze, Dură 2017, 9-61) and Romanians people (Kvesitadze, Dură 2017, 62-164) were among the first nations. But, grace to the cultural activity of two scholars clerics, the people of our countries could to know better each other, and consequently to became more familiar with each other’s history, culture and spirituality.

We have also to underline the fact that the Georgian Antimoz was brought in Romania by the Greek patriarch of Jerusalem of that time, that is, the patriarch Dositheus II Notaras (1669 - 1707), to print books in his Greek language for the benefice of all Christian speakers of Greek, who, in that time, they were under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the four Greek Patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), as it is peremptory proved just by the books printed in Greek in the Romania printing presses during the XVII<sup>th</sup> and XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As I mentioned above, for the Romanians, the great merit of the Georgian Andrew – who took the monastic habit in Romania under the name Antim (Antimoz) – consist in the fact that



he contributed to the reintroduction of the Romanian language in the Romanian Church (Mititelu 2017, 95-113), where from XII<sup>th</sup> -XIII<sup>th</sup> centuries the Slavonic language was improved by the Byzantines as a „lingua sacra”, and then from XV<sup>th</sup> -XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries it was replaced by Greek language (the language of the New Testament, excepting the Evangel after Matthew).

Indeed, both as a bishop of the eparchy of Râmnic (Vâlcea) (1705-1708), and as an archbishop and metropolitan of the Romanian Country (Wallachia), Antimoz Iverieli continued the pastoral activity of his predecessor in these two episcopal See, namely of Râmnic and of Bucharest (Wallachia), where the Romanian hierarch Teodosie († 1708) had to fight both against the interests the Phanariotes, and to the despotic behavior of some Greek patriarchs (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), who have been managed to graecized in fact Romanian Church, and, as a result, to replace the Romanian language with Greek language.

Due to the Phanariotes machinations, in the year 1716 the metropolitan Antimoz Iverieli was killed by the Ottomans. For the Romanians, the great hierarch died as a martyr both for the sake of his faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and for the liberty of all Christians who – in that time – were under the Ottoman yoke.

Mihail Ștefan, who was recognized as one of the outstanding collaborators of Antimoz Iverieli in the printing presses from Râmnic and Bucharest, was also well known in all the historical Romanian provinces, namely Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, before to the arrival of Antimoz on the Romanian soil. But, from Antimoz Iverieli, Mihail Ștefan had to learn not only his first words in Georgian language, but also the characters of the Georgian alphabet, that he needed in his providential activity as a founder of a printing press in Georgia.

#### **Some precisions and assessments about the books printed by Mihail Ștefan in Georgia. The Preface and the Epilogue of his first book (The Gospel)**

Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili) – who, unfortunately, for some Georgians and Romanians was an enigmatic personage – printed in Tiflis (Georgia) thirteen books, as follows: in the year 1709, he printed three books, that is, a „Sakhareba” (Gospel), a „Davitni” (Psalter) and an „Samotsikulo” (Apostolos); in the year 1710, he printed four books: an „Hieratikon”, in which are included also some verses printed in Romanian language (Precum cei străini doresc moșia/patria/ să o vadă ...) (as the foreigners are desiring to see their homelands ...); the two „Books of Hours” and a book entitled „the Prayers”. The last one contains – according to the statement of the editor Nikoloz Orbeliani – „the Little Hours Prime, Terce, Sext, and None and the *Menaion* in Greek order”; in the year 1711, he printed five books: „The Holy Bible, the Prophets Book, the Gospel, the Psalter and a guide book „How a Teacher should teach a Student” „printed in Georgian ... by the Ungrovlachian Mihai Stepanesdze, in the City of Tiflis, in 1711”<sup>1</sup>. And, in the early

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<sup>1</sup> I had the happy occasion to see – for the first time – the Georgian books printed by Mihail Stepaneshvili in 2014 during my participation to an international Congress organized by the Georgian Patriarchate and the Georgian Academy. I have an English translation of some of the Prefaces and Epilogues of his books grace to the goodwill of his Excellency, Nikoloz Nikolozishvili, the former Georgian ambassador in Romania, and of the Georgian scholar prof. Goneli Arakhamia, who gave me the opportunity to have an English text of some Prefaces and Epilogues of the books printed by Mihail Ștefan in Tbilisi. For their academical gesture, to both of them my sincere gratitude.

beginning of the year 1712, Mihail Ștefan printed – or left the book already to be printed – the famous book „Vepkhistkaosani” (*The Knight in the Tiger’s Skin*), or his Georgian apprentice, Michael, made only the office to publish a book that it was been previously printed by his master. But, even in this situation, the famous Romanian printer managed to put the basis for a common collaboration between Romanians and Georgians in the culture field.

Regarding the „Guidebook”, this one was in fact a bridged version completed by a Georgian Hieromonk, Germanus. In his words addressed to the readers, the hieromonk Germanus stated – among others – that „the Prince Vakhtang, the defender of the faith of his fathers and protector of Christianity, ..., brought a printing press from Wallachia, which was governed by the Gospodar (voievod / prince) Ioan Constantin Basarab Brâncoveanu”.

Therefore, the Georgian hieromonk Germanus confessed that the Prince Vakhtang VI brought a printing press from „Wallachia”, governed by prince Constantin Brâncoveanu.

The assemblage and the putting into operation of that printing press, in Tiflis (Georgia), was the exclusive merit of the great master in the typographical art, that is Mihail Ștefan, who, by his first books printed on the Georgian soil contributed to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture not only in the geographical space of the Caucasus, but far beyond of this (Jerusalem, Month Athos etc.).

In the pages of this paper, I presented briefly only the content of the Preface and of the Epilogue written by Stepaneshvili to his first book printed in Georgia. From the Proem of the first book printed by Mihail Stepaneshvili at Tiflis (Tbilisi), that is „The Gospel” printed in the year 1709, the reader could retain among others things the fact that this book was for the „*first time*” printed in Georgia by the „*typographer Ungrovlach Mihail Stepaneshvili*”.

The text of the manuscript of „*this sacred book*” was selected and proofread „*by the Hieromonk Nikoloz Orbeliani*”, as this one did in fact for all the books printed by Mihail Stepaneshvili in Georgia.

From the Epilogue of the some sacred book, that is, „The Gospel” printed in „Tiflis” in 1709, we find out that this one was written by „the *humble typographer Ungrovlach Mihail Stepaneshvili*”, as called himself in the monastical spirit of his native country. Indeed, with many centuries before, some famous scholars of the first millennium from his country, like as, for example, the two outstanding personalities of the Christian world of their epoch, the hieromonks John Cassian (Mititelu 2018, 316-331) and Dionysius Exiguus (Dură 1993, 279-290), signed their works with the same appellation, „*humilis*” (the humble).

Therefore, it is not surprise that Mihail Ștefan considered himself not only a humbly typographer, but also as „Your servant that works with passionate heart”, that is as a devoted servant to the king Vakhtang VI, for whom he worked indeed with sincere and „passionate heart”.

In the text of Epilogue of the Gospel, „the *humble typographer*”, namely Mihail Stepaneshvili, addressed to the readers of that sacred book, printed by him, with the following words: „Rejoice all who read this!” The word, „Rejoice”, was not only the expression of the joy



for his great cultural achievement, but also a manifestation of his spiritual Christian satisfaction, that made him to be „full of joy” (Acts, 2, 28).

According to the testimony left by Mihail Ștefan in the Epilogue of his first book printed in Georgia, „Prince Vakhtang” was „the one who” had „the idea of founding a printing press ... in ... Georgia”. But, he added the precision that, for setting up the printing press, it was he, Mihail Ștefan, who created the tools, the machinery and the letterforms. And, put it in his words, „It is me, your useless servant, who has done and runs all these”.

From the statements of Mihail Stepaneshvili, we have also to retain also the fact that the initiative to get a printing press for Georgia belonged to the prince Vakhtang, but only he, in his quality of the master-typograph, was the person who settled down that printing press, created its tools, the machinery and the letterforms, or, according to the words of Mihail Stepaneshvili, was the one „who has done and runs all these”. In other words, even if he could have brought with him some Romanian apprentices, still, they were not been able to do a such work, that is, the assemblage of a printing press.

In the same Epilogue, Mihail Stepaneshvili confessed that „before” his arrival „in Georgia”, to print the first books on the Georgian soil, he didn't travel in Georgia, and he didn't know the Georgian language. And, here is what he wrote: „I knew neither your country, nor your language”. Then, he stated that his Georgian „apprentices were inexperienced in my art”, that is, in his typographical art, in which he excelled from his native country.

Finally, from the Epilogue of his first printed book, the „Gospel”, it has to be also retained the fact that in the time of Mihail Stepaneshvili, the name Georgia was synonym with „Kartli”.

The truthfulness of the statements of Mihail Stepaneshvili, from the text of the Preface and the Epilogue of the Gospel, it was certified by the editor of this book, namely by the hieromonk Nikoloz Orbeliani who, in his editorial Note, said - among others things - that he was a „nephew of the pious King Archil and the glorious King Giorgi”, and that he received order from King Vakhtang „... to correct the books”, that is the Georgian manuscripts, since they „were greatly distorted due to the errors of scribes”. Indeed, Orbeliani had to correct the manuscripts of the „*Holy Gospel with great difficulty*”, and more than that he compared the text of the ancient Georgian manuscripts with „*the typographic Gospels printed by Greeks*”.

From Orbeliani statements, the editor of the first book printed by Mihail Ștefan in Georgian language, recte the „Gospel”, we could also to retain that the king Vakhtang VI was the only one who had the initiative „*to bring a printing press from Wallachia that has never been in Georgia before*”.

The statements made by Mihail Stepaneshvili concerning the initiative of king Vakhtang of Kartli (Georgia) to bring a printing press in his country from Wallachia (Romania Principalities), and the fact that a such printing press it has never been in Georgia before, were therefore certified also by Nikoloz Orbeliani in his editorial Note of the Gospel.

As it is known, only few of these books printed by Mihail Stepaneshvili in Georgia have only a worldly content. The majority of them have indeed an exclusive ecclesiastical and

theological content, hence the lack of a suitable approach and assessment of the content of these books by some Georgians and Romanians historians and philologists.

Since the content of the printed books of Mihail Stepaneshvili in Georgia is indeed eminently theological one, and less historical or literary one, about the content of his printing books are therefore qualified to pronounce only the persons who are well familiarized with the field of theology, or they have an interdisciplinary approach of such subjects. Evidently, only these kinds of the scholars have a credible competence to make considerations and assessments about the content of such books.

However, this reality doesn't exclude the possibility that the text of these books to be analyzed and assessed both from philological and historical point of view, and from theological and cultural point of view, but always through an interdisciplinary approach. In fact, the lack of a concerted work done by the specialists from different fields of research prove „à l'évidence” that only a common contribution gives us the possibility to achieve the holistic scientific results.

It is also true the fact that, until now, the majority of the Romanians and Georgians who wrote about the content of the books printed – in Georgia – by Mihail Stepaneshvili, as well as about his contribution to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture, they did it without to read the documentary sources, that is, the Georgian text, being indebted exclusively to the informations put in circulation by the literature of specialty.

**About the books printed by the two masters in the art of printing, Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili), for the orthodox world (Greeks, Slavs, Georgians and Romanians)**

In Wallachia (Romanian Principality), Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Stepaneshvili printed biblical, theological, liturgical, historical and philosophical books in Greek, Arabian and Slavonic languages for all the orthodox peoples found in that time under the ottoman yoke, as it is certified not only by the respective books, but also by the historical and literary documents of that epoch. And as such, through their printing books, Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Stepaneshvili belong not only to the Romanian and Georgian cultural and spiritual patrimony, but to the entire cultural and spiritual orthodox world.

For the accomplishment of their task, Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Ștefan were help – for the Greek and Slavonic books – by the fact that both of them mastered the two languages, that is, Greek and Slavonic. But, since the Arabian language hasn't been known both by Antimoz and Mihail, they were helped by the Oriental patriarchs (of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch) and their collaborators, who selected and delivered to them the best manuscripts. And, grace to their help, both Antimoz and Mihail learned also how to use and to put the Arabian letterforms in the machinery of the printing press of Bucharest from that time.

As I mentioned above, Mihail Ștefan had the opportunity to learn from Antimoz Iverieli not only some things about the Georgian history and culture, but also the characters of the Georgian alphabet. Therefore, for all these things, we could say that Antimoz was – for Mihail – a teacher, who thought him in his quality of an erudite hierarch and encyclopedist scholar. In the same time, the first man who could have been to speak to the Romanian Prince Constantin

Brâncoveanu († 1714) and to his fellow-man, the famous printer-worker Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili), about the lack of the printing books on the Georgian soil was certainly Antimoz Iverieli.

In his adoptive country, Romanian Principalities, the metropolitan Anthim (Antimoz) was the adequate person to inform everyone about the realities of his native country, Georgia, as, for example, about the lack of the printing books, for which he advocated both to the Romanian Prince, Constantin Brâncoveanu, a veritable Maecenas for the entire orthodox world of those times, and to the Greek Patriarchates, mostly to the Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem, who spent most of his life in different orthodox countries, like Romanian Principalities, Georgia and Russia, to collect money for his Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but only in Romanian Principalities, patriarch Dositheos II Notaras – and his successors in the patriarchal See of Jerusalem – printed the books needed not only for their Churches, but also to all Christians of Greek language.

Since in that epoch the Christian Arabian lands were under the yoke of the Ottomans, and they didn't have neither the freedom, nor the opportunity, to have a printing press, all the Oriental Greek Patriarchates (Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria) beseeched the Romanian prince of Wallachia, namely Constantin Brâncoveanu, to demand to his printers, among which the best one were Antimoz Iverieli, metropolitan of „Ungro-Wallachia” Church, and Mihail Ștefan of Wallachia, to print books in Arabian language too.

About Mihail Ștefan we have to bear also in mind the fact that, in Romania, he didn't make only the work of printer, of proofreader, of translator, of publisher etc., but he did also the work of writer, since he wrote all the „Forwards” and the „Epilogues” for his printed books and, more than that, he corrected and emended the text of the Romanian books printed by Antimoz Iverieli as Bishop of Râmnic, and then as a Metropolitan of „Ungro-Wallachia” (Romanian country), and thus he put his texts in a good Romanian language. In other words, Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili) made for his bishop, Antimoz, – more or less – the work done by hieromonk Orbeliani to all his thirteens printed books in Georgia.

All the books in Greek, Arabian, Slavonic and Romanian languages were printed with financial support of the great humanist Romanian Prince, id est, Constantin Brâncoveanu, who sent also in Tbilisi the first printing press accompanied by the famous Romanian printer, Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili), well known – in that epoch – not only in the Romanian Principalities (Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldova), but also in the Middle East (Palestine, Syria, Egypt) by the agency of the books printed in Greek and in Arabian together with Antimoz Iverieli.

*Instead of Conclusions*, we would like to acknowledge the fact that from the text of the books printed in Tbilisi (1709-1711/1712), including the Prefaces and the Epilogues of Mihail Stepaneshvili and the Notes of their publishers, the hieromonks Orbeliani and Germanus, the reader has the possibility to familiarize not only with the Christian theological thinking of humanist byzantine source, but also with the history of the ancient Georgian language and culture, to which the Romanian Mihail Ștefan brought a real contribution by printing the first books on the Georgian soil.

The Prefaces and Epilogues written and signed by the Mihail Stepaneshvili to his books printed in Georgia remain also an evident testimony about his real contribution both to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture, and to the orthodox Theology of byzantine origin.

In the same time, Mihail Stepaneshvili's contribution to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture remains a historical testimony about the ancient cultural and spiritual relations between our countries, in which our peoples confessed – in their natives languages – the same orthodox apostolical faith (Dură 2006, 15-260) from almost two millennium, hence their common inheritance of a reach cultural and spiritual Christian patrimony, that gives to the peoples of ours countries a legitimated Christian European identity.

Undoubtedly, for a better understanding of the contribution brought by Mihail Stephaneshvili to the promotion of the Georgian language and culture by the agency of his printing books on the Georgian soil, it is certainly necessary to make appeal both to the Georgian documentary sources, and to the Romanian ones. Moreover, we need to be well acquainted not only with the history of the language and culture of the Georgia and Romania, but also with the history of the printing presses of the Orthodox countries of that epoch, since – even in that time – by the agency of the printed books it was promoted both the culture and the languages of the peoples, and their cultural and spiritual identity.

According to the documentary information offered by some Prefaces and Epilogues of the books printed in Georgia by Mihail Ștefan, between 1707 - 1712, after his departure early in 1712 his Georgians apprentices continued to work in the same printing press established by Romanian Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili) in Tbilisi (Georgia) until 1722. But, we might say that owing to Mihail Ștefan's printing press – followed by others printing books – the Georgian culture and spirituality continued to be promoted in his Christian humanist character over the centuries both in Georgia and abroad.

And, the last, but not the least, we have to bear in our minds the fact that – by their worthy works brought in the cultural and spiritual fields – both Antimoz Iverieli, the Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Ungro-Wallachia (Romanian Principality), and the hypodeacon Mihail Ștefan (Michael Stepaneshvili), a famous Romanian printer and a remarkable theologian for his time, remained both of them, for our countries Romania and Georgia, and for the Europe, Caucasians geographical space, Middle East and the Arabic world, as great humanist scholars, who by their printing books prompted both the divine and human sciences.

Above all, for us, the Romanians and the Georgians, Antimoz Iverieli and Mihail Ștefan, remain the principals founders of the „three centuries of brotherhood relations” (Beruchashvili 2023) between our peoples and countries, Georgia and Romania, that oblige our scholars to return „ad fontes” and to keep alive their memory, contributing in this way to the promotion of our common cultural and spiritual identity.

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