Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires

26 | 2024
Tradition et religion (II)
Lectures critiques

Aurélien Girard, Bernard Heyberger & Vassa Kontouma (éds), *Livres et confessions slave et l'Occident (xvie-xviie siècles)*

Tijana Krstic
https://doi.org/10.4000/120gr

Référence(s) :
Turnhout, Brepols, « Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses » 197, 2023, 461 pages, 17 illustrations.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : christianisme oriental, histoire du livre, manuscrits, impression, confessionnalisation, vernacularisation, histoire connectée, prosélytisme
Keywords: Eastern Christians, book history, manuscripts, printing, confessionalization, vernacularization, connected histories, proselytization

Texte intégral

1 In this important book, the editors bring together thirteen articles examining the ways in which books in manuscript and print produced by various Eastern Christian communities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Venice or for them (in Rome, Paris, and elsewhere) between the 16th and 18th centuries, were intertwined with complex confessional politics, both locally, in the places where they were produced, and globally.

2 In his informative and erudite introduction, which provides a historiographical overview and methodological framework for the volume, A. Girard makes a case for a comparative and connected history of Eastern Christianities in place of fragmented confessional and national histories that prevailed until the recent emergence of global history. He underlines that Eastern Christians lived under vastly different conditions in various early modern polities but argues that comparisons are justified because all the territories in question experienced the impact of Catholic and Protestant missions, most notably by making various Eastern Christian communities aware of their own specific characteristics and beliefs and pushing them to articulate their own confessional identities. A. Girard also makes a case for an *histoire croisée* of Eastern Christianities due to increased mobility of the literate elites, in particular merchants and clergymen, in the context of which books played a special role in the process of knowledge transfer related both to their content and to the technical know-how of book production. The volume, thus, sets to interrogate the relationship between the book (in both printed and manuscript format) and the emergence of confessional identities among Eastern Christians, pushing the conversation beyond the paradigms of "decline," "latinization" and "pseudo-morphosis".

3 Indeed, the articles that follow live up to that promise. The collection presents the state of the art on the subject by combining timely syntheses of recent research by leading scholars in the field, with specific case studies that contextualize and historicize various iconic editorial-cum-publishing projects and their protagonists.

4 Thus, H. Murre-van den Berg provides a valuable overview of her and other scholars' recent research into printed and manuscript book production by and for the members of the Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman provinces between the 1500s and 1800s; B. Heyberger draws larger conclusions from his work on the book production in Arabic among Christians in the Ottoman Empire in the 17th and early 18th centuries to highlight global collaborations and local power dynamics around ecclesiastical seats in which printed book could be used to strengthen local clergy's authority; G. Pizzorusso looks at the history of printing in "oriental" languages in Rome from the 16th to the 18th centuries, diving into the heretofore only partially studied catalogues of the printing press established in 1626 by Congregatio de Propaganda Fide; L. Tatarenko examines the nature of the book production in Cyrillic script and the ways in which competing Uniate and Orthodox communities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth used printed and manuscript books to appeal to different audiences, and negotiate both local and global power and confessional dynamics between the 1590s and 1640s.

5 These synthetic articles, which present significant insights based on long-term

research projects with extensive data are combined with case studies on specific, often emblematic, editorial projects by well-known individuals. These individuals had to navigate confessional politics between Catholic or Protestant missionary endeavors, on the one hand, and the far-from-homogenous confessional dynamics within specific Eastern Christian communities, on the other, as well as, in certain cases, Ottoman Muslim sensibilities. Thus N. Papailiaki examines how Orthodox-Catholic dynamics and Jesuit missionary experience in the Greek Archipelago gave rise to the production of *Targa tis pisteos* (*The Shield of Faith*, 1658) by François Richard, a polemical work written in vernacular Greek, which triggered a vociferous response of the Orthodox establishment in Constantinople; J. Getcha provides important insights into Peter Moghila's influential *Trebnik* (one of the first Slavonic translations of the Byzantine *Euchologion* to be published, in 1646) and the editorial interpolations he made inspired by *Rituale Romanum* of Paul V, as well as the text's reception in the Orthodox world; C. Walbiner examines the first edition of *Mizān al-zamān*, an Arabic translation-cum-adaptation of Juan Eusebio Nieremberg's *De la diferencia entre lo temporal y eterno* (1640), published in the monastery of al-Shuwayr in Mount Lebanon in 1734 by Abdallah al-Zahir, which is argued to be the beginning of modern printing in the Arab world; M. Nichanian provides an in-depth study of Oskan Erevantsi's intellectual formation, confessional sensibilities and political acumen that informed his project of publishing the Bible in Armenian in Amsterdam in 1666, but also his broader editorial agenda; K. Sarris reconstructs the publication trajectory of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Meletios of Athens, and argues that this work completed c. 1713 in Athens came out only in 1783-1784 in Vienna due to its confessional ambivalence that made it uninteresting and unacceptable to the Orthodox establishement in Constantinople; finally, V. Kontouma builds on her extensive research into the career of Patriarch Dositheos II of Jerusalem to examine how diplomacy and the Patriarch's own evolving confessional awareness emerging through the dialogue on the Eucharist with the French Jansenists and English Protestants during the 1680s informed his editorial agenda and the goal of establishing the printing press in Romanian principalities.

6 All of these papers also highlight various degrees of confessional ambiguity, inter- and trans-confessionalism, sometimes arising from specific local conditions of confessional coexistence in which books were produced – like in the case of Cretan liturgical music manuscripts "mixing" Orthodox and Catholic liturgical traditions and featuring writing in Latin but in Greek characters, analyzed by F. Kritikou. In other cases, such features arose from the authors/editors' own convictions about confessional unity of different churches or exigencies of political circumstances that forced them to make concessions, often with Rome, in order to get their own printing and/or confession-building projects funded.

7 The choice or language and script in print and manuscript book production and their link to communal identity and confession-building projects are discussed in most papers but are in the focus of F. del Rio Sanchez' study of the Maronite Library of Aleppo and the role of Arabic and Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac script) in the development of the Maronite Catholic communal identity. Essays by L. Tatarenko & G. Pizzorusso also delve into the politics of language and script, as does R. Păun's study of the Syndikon of Orthodoxy published in 1700 in a bilingual Romanian-Slavonic edition. Together with H. Murre-van den Berg's study, these articles also point to the importance of vernacularization, starting in the early 17th century, which was driven by local ritual specialists who had come to believe that ordinary believers should have a more intimate text-based knowledge of the written tradition, both in

order to interiorize their faith and to engage into local politics and economies of faith. R. Păun's and L. Tatarenko's studies also underline the complex matrix that determined whether a particular book would be circulated in print or manuscript, and in which language and script, depending on the genre and expected audience of the chosen text.

8 Overall, the volume sheds light on the dynamic relationship between manuscript and printed book in Eastern Christian communities, arguing that the print did not have a "revolutionary character" but that there was rather a coexistence and continuity with the manuscript culture. In fact, as several articles in the collection show, the arrival of the printed book, and especially printed Catholic literature, among various communities of Eastern Christians increased the volume of manuscript production in local languages, both in reaction against Catholic propaganda and in support of it. Manuscripts were also much sought after by various editors hoping to publish specific works, which stimulated manual copying of certain types of sources.

9 In conclusion, this is a very welcome contribution to the growing fields of the history of the book, manuscript studies, as well as Eastern Christian studies, which opens up further possibilities for comparative and connected explorations beyond the areas and communities discussed here. While the entrepreneurial and artisanal aspects of various printing and copying projects are addressed in a number of papers, it is hoped that future studies, following up on the clues in the colophons and various archival and letter collections, and possibly using new digital tools, would provide even more insight into connections and networks between authors, copyists, printers, investors, commissioners and distributors of books and manuscripts in the early modern Eastern Christendom.

Pour citer cet article

Référence électronique
Tijana Krstic, « Aurélien Girard, Bernard Heyberger & Vassa Kontouma (éds), *Livres et confessions chrétiennes orientales. Une histoire connectée entre l'Empire ottoman, le monde slave et l'Occident (xvie-xviie siècles)* », *Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires* [En ligne], 26 | 2024, mis en ligne le 01 janvier 2024, consulté le 25 avril 2025. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/cerri/8940 ; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/120gr

Auteur

Tijana Krstic
Tijana Krstic is Professor at the Department of Historical Studies at Central European University in Vienna. She specializes in religious and intellectual history of the early modern Ottoman Empire as well as inter-confessional relations in the Mediterranean and Eurasian contexts. She is the author of *Contested Conversions to Islam* (Stanford University Press, 2011), and co-editor with Derin Terzioğlu of *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire*, c. 1450-c. 1750 (Brill, 2020) and *Entangled Confessionalizations?* (Gorgias Press, 2022).

Droits d'auteur