

PAOLO SEBASTIANO MEDICI, SOFRONIJ VRAČANSKI
AND THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN THE BALKANS¹

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1. *Sofronij's Life*

Sofronij (Lat. *Sophronius*), born Stojko Vladislavov (1739-1813), bishop of Vratsa, is one of the central figures of the Bulgarian Revival (*Vъзраждане*). He is the first Bulgarian bishop to break the Greek ecclesiastical monopoly among the Bulgarian subjects of the Sublime Porte in the period of the Phanariots. He was a spiritual pupil of Paisij Hilendarskii (Paisius of Hilendar), whose *История славяноболгарская* (*Istoriija Slavjanobolgarskaja* "Slavonic-Bulgarian History", 1762) is considered the prime historical-religious-political manifesto of the Bulgarian National Revival. Sofronij would later abandon his ecclesiastical jurisdiction due both to the military and political disorder that raged in north-western Bulgaria, and to his inability to confront the payment of bribes requested from the Patriarchate. He would clandestinely cross the Danube and take refuge in Bucharest, where the situation was completely different. In Bucharest he immediately set up relations with the two "ambassadors" of the Bulgarian community in the court of the Czar: Ivan Zambin (of Vratsa) and Atanas Nekovič (of Teteven). Later, he would vouch for them with the Russian Court on behalf of a committee of Bulgarians in the Romanian territory.

In 1804 the Serbian insurrection, which would occupy the Porte for several years, broke out. In 1806 Russia declared war against Turkey, a war that came to a rapid end in May of 1812 with an attack by Kutuzov against the army of Napoleon. Influential generals of the Czarist army saw in Sofronij a key cultural and political reference for the Bulgarians and they met with him frequently, even during the period of the armistice, from 1807 to the spring of 1809. In the summer of 1808 Sofronij presented General Michail Miloradovič with a list of Bulgarian volunteers ready to fight against the Porte, but since the armistice was still in effect, Miloradovič stalled. Nevertheless, Sofronij managed to make direct contact with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Rumjancev. On the 21st of March, Sofronij launched an appeal to Bulgarians to join the Russian forces, who would supply the volunteers with all the necessary goods and equipment along with a promise of future payment from Czar Alexander. Between the autumn of 1810 and May of the following year, he sent requests to Kutuzov for fiscal extensions and favorable treatment for Nekovič and his unit. When the war ended, he met with Kutuzov and managed to arrange the enli-

¹ See my previous essay *I «Riti e costumi degli Ebrei confutati» del livornese Paolo Sebastiano Medici nell'opera di Sofronij Vračanski, figura centrale della "Rinascita" culturale bulgara* ["Rites and Customs of the Jews Refuted by Paolo Sebastiano Medici of Livorno in the work of Sophronius of Vratsa, a central figure in the Bulgarian Cultural Revival"], «Nuovi studi livornesi», XIII (2006), pp. 173-180. A series of propitious circumstances gave me access to the earliest Italian editions of Medici's book (*Riti e costumi degli ebrei descritti e confutati dal dottore Paolo Medici sacerdote e lettor pubblico fiorentino*, P.G. Viviani, Firenze 1736, and see n. 12), to the Greek translation of it by Antonio Bortoli, and to a photocopy of the manuscript Pogodinian n.1204 (the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg), an autograph of the Bulgarian translation from Greek by Sofronij, given to me by my Bulgarian colleague Klimentina Ivanova. A major part of the article has been translated and published in the most important Bulgarian literary journal, «Literaturni Vestnik» (Literary Journal), 5 June 2013. The entire text was then published in a Bulgarian translation by Darija Karapetkove in the journal of the New Bulgarian University «Sledva», 29 (2013), pp.19-23. See now G. DELL'AGATA, *Sofronij Vračanski e una pista italiana di un certo antisemitismo balcanico*, in M. CICCARIANI, N. MARCIALIS, G. ZIFFER (eds), *Kesarevo Kesarju: Scritti in onore di Cesare G. De Michelis*, Firenze University Press, Firenze 2014, pp. 101-107.

stment of 4,000 Bulgarian volunteers (about a fifth of their entire contingent) into the Russian Army. Sofronij and Kutuzov both died in 1813.

2. *Some Sofronij's Works and Translations*

Sofronij's frenetic political activity, summarized above, was accompanied by a prolific production of publications. Sofronij is the first author of the new literature in the Neo-Bulgarian language with his celebrated autobiography, *Житие и страдания грешнаго Софрония* (*Žitie i stradanija grešnago Sofronija* "Life and Sufferings of Sinful Sofronij"). Nevertheless, prominent among his works is his Bulgarian translation of two books that appeared in Italy much earlier, but that became, only at the threshold of the nineteenth century, a cornerstone of a precise plan of acculturation and national revival, which occurred mainly because of the breakdown of the evolving relations of production and of the ideological-cultural climate between Italy and the Balkan subjects of the Porte. Both works are in the Greek tradition, both are translated into vernacular Bulgarian and strictly tied to the Venitian political and cultural environment and to the Romanian territories of the period that we have just noted (Serbian insurrection, Russian-Turkish war and Russian occupation). The first work is the *Theatrum politicum* by Ambrogio Marliani (Rome 1631).² The book had an enormous success in nearly all of Europe, due to the numerous anti-Machiavellian works that appeared after the published edition of *The Prince* (1532) and above all due to the condemnation of that work by the Holy Office in 1569. As early as 1539 the English cardinal Reginald Pole in his *Apologia* to Charles V, called Machiavelli "the master of the new atheism, of the new irreligion and immorality" and *The Prince* "the manuscript of tyrants, that gives precepts that only Satan could give to his own son".³ The *Theatrum politicum* was reprinted many times: in Nuremberg, 1652; Danzig, 1655; Cologne, 1692; Augsburg, 1741; Trnava, 1757; Buda, 1772. In 1771 a Polish translation appeared in Vilna.⁴ It was translated in 1787 directly from the Latin into Russian in two volumes by the professor of the Seminary of Moscow Efim Vedenskij with the title *Правосудие судья или Зрелище Политическое* ("Justice of the Judge or Political Theater").

3. *Sofronij and Paolo Medici's "Rites and Customs of the Jews"*

Sofronij's second Italian front in his cultural and political program is a book that had extraordinary success in Europe: *Rites and Customs of the Jews Described and Refuted by Paolo Sebastiano Medici*. The author (his Hebrew name was Moses), was born in Livorno the 23rd day of the month of Av of the year 5431 (30 July 1671), the son of Elisad (It. Alessandro) Leon of Ancona, married to a certain Rosa (or Rossa).⁵ He was baptized in June of 1688, on the eve of his seventeenth birthday, at the main church (*Collegiata*) of Livorno, taking the name of Paul, the *Apostolus gentium*, and the family name of the grand dukes of Tuscany. A preaching friar of the Tuscan Grand Duchy, and occasionally also in the Church States, he was active in places where Jewish communities were found. Beginning in 1692 he taught

² A. MARLIANI, *Theatrum politicum in quo quid agendum sit a principe, & quid cauendum*, etc., F. Corbelletti, Roma 1631.

³ *Apologia Reginaldi Poli ad Carolum V. Caesarem super quatuor libris a se scriptis de unitate Ecclesiae*, in *Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli S.R.E. cardinalis*, ed. A.M. QUERINI, pars I, 1744, pp. 66-171; cf. T. BOZZA, *Scrittori politici italiani dal 1550 al 1650*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 1949, p. 13 (my translation). More in general, see A. PROSPERI, *Pole, Reginald*, in *Enciclopedia machiavelliana* (2014), http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/reginald-pole_%28Enciclopedia-machiavelliana%29/.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵ M. LUZZATI, *Ancora sull'esumazione del corpo di un bambino ebreo battezzato "in vitis parentibus" e sulla sua sepoltura nel Camposanto di Pisa (1709)*, in C. MANGIO, M. VERGA (eds.), *Il Settecento di Furio Diaz*, Plus, Pisa-Livorno 2006, pp. 149-151. See also L. SARACCO, *Medici, Paolo Sebastiano*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 73 (2009), http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-sebastiano-medici_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

Hebrew in the Florentine Studio, and from 1718 he was a professor of Holy Scripture.⁶ Author of numerous language and grammar books as well as biblical exegesis, he was known for the particular vehemence and harshness of his sermons, for the most part delivered in Livorno, Pisa and Florence, where he lived. According to an odious custom, the Jews were forced to assist at Saturday sermons aimed at spiritual “salvation.” The Jewish community protested against the violent “fundamentalism” of Medici both to the Borgo San Sepolcro and to Rome. A written protest against the sermons of Paolo Medici in Livorno, Pisa and Florence was sent to the Holy Office in the name of the Jewish community of Rome as well as other cities, from the famous and learned Roman rabbi Tranquillo Vita Corcos in 1705, with the approval of catholic scholars, such as Giovanni Pastrizio from Split.⁷ Corcos’ memoir, which was printed and distributed by the publishing house of the Apostolic Camera, rejected with erudition the “inventions” of Medici aimed substantially at representing Jewish rites not only as false, superstitious and steeped in magic, but above all as products of “demonic” inspiration.⁸ However, according to Marina Caffiero, the fact that *Rites and Customs of the Jews* was published only thirty years after this memoir is indicative of the doubts of the Christian authorities in that time period.⁹ She titled the short chapter of her book on Paolo Medici, *The Hatred of a Convert*.¹⁰ In Florence in 1701 Medici published the *Catalogo de’ neofiti illustri usciti per misericordia di Dio dall’Ebraismo e poi renduti gloriosi nel Cristianesimo per esemplarità di Costumi e profondità di dottrina* (“Catalogue of illustrious converts who, by the mercy of God, left Judaism and who then were made glorious in Christianity by the exemplariness of its customs and the profundity of its doctrine”), a work that Parente considered “a very modest work of the compilation of the *Bibliotheca Magna Rabbinica*”.¹¹ Medici’s *Rites and Customs of the Jews Described and Refuted* was published in Florence in 1736. A second edition published by Luc’Antonio de Bedmar, Madrid 1737 (the location and the publishing house are disputed by some) grew out of *A Letter to all followers of Judaism, compiled with the reflections of Niccolò Stratta, formerly Rabbi and then Roman Catholic* (pp. 366-379).¹² The work, intended to be a polemical response, a century later, to the *History of Jewish Rites* by the celebrated Venetian rabbi Leone da Modena,¹³ is comprised of 33 chapters, with an attached appeal *to Christian readers* and one *to Jewish readers*. Between chapter 32 and 33 is inserted a *Letter written to the Jews of Italy from the doctor Paolo Medici, Priest, Public Lector and Florentine Academic*.

⁶ F. PARENTE, *Il confronto ideologico tra l’Ebraismo e la Chiesa in Italia*, in *Italia Judaica*. I (Atti del convegno internazionale, Bari 18-22 Maggio 1981), Ministero dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali-Ufficio Centrale per i Beni Archivistici, Roma 1983, pp. 303-373: 354-357, 365-370.

⁷ Ivan Paštrić (Lat. *Iohannes Pastritius*), born in 1636 in Poljica (Dalmatia) and taken to Split in the first year of his life.

⁸ M. CAFFIERO, *Battesimi forzati. Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi*, Viella, Roma 2004, p. 40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39. See also EAD., *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria*, Einaudi, Torino 2012, pp. 80-93.

¹¹ PARENTE, *Il confronto ideologico*, p. 366.

¹² The complete Italian title of this edition (where *descritti e confutati* becomes only *confutati*) is: *I riti e costumi degli Ebrei confutati dal dottore Paolo Medici sacerdote fiorentino. Coll’aggiunta in questa seconda edizione di una Lettera all’universale del Giudaismo, compilata con le riflessioni di Niccolò Stratta già Rabbino e poi Cattolico Romano. Nella quale coll’autorità degli Scrittori più accreditati nell’Ebraismo si prova la venuta del Messia Gesu Cristo Redentore nostro, essere già seguita, e l’Incarnazione del medesimo nel ventre purissimo di Maria Vergine Nostra Signora* (Rites and Customs of the Jews Refuted by Doctor Paolo Medici, Florentine priest. With an addition in this second edition of a Letter to All Followers of Judaism, compiled with the reflections of Niccolò Stratta, formerly Rabbi and now Roman Catholic. In which is proven, on the authority of the most accredited writers of Judaism, the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ, along with the Incarnation of the same in the pure womb of Our Lady the Virgin Mary).

¹³ LEON MODENA, *Historia de Riti Hebraici*, J. GAFFAREL ed., Paris 1637; then Giov. Colleoni, Venezia 1638. In 1681, a French translation came out in Paris. See P. G. ZORATTINI, *Modena, Leon*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 75 (2011), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leon-modena_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leon-modena_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

In which, according to the reckoning of the most famous Rabbi, he vividly shows that the Messiah has already come (pp. 327-344). Medici analysed Jewish customs and traditions concerning birth, engagement and marriage, divorce, circumcision, the education of children, religious beliefs and practices, and holidays and their meanings. His purpose was to challenge the rituals in order to invalidate their use and practices after the coming of the Messiah, and to portray these beliefs and practices not just as foolish superstitions, but practically forms of witchcraft. It's not insignificant that in the preface *To Christian Readers* he wrote: "Dear Reading Friend, I beg of you to withhold the laughter that may awaken in you in reading things so bizarre. Instead, it should bring you to tears considering to what level of misery the unfaithful Synagogue is reduced." (p. 4) For the author, the denial of the coming of the Messiah is the central point that characterizes the "blindness" and the "obstinacy" of the Jews. The argument is made both in Chapter 32 and in his *Letter Written to the Jews of Italy* (that dates back to 1715). The volume closes with a list of false Messiahs beginning in the year 130 up to the year 1682. The work was reprinted numerous times: Milan, 1738; Venice 1740, 1742, 1746, 1757, 1764, 1767 and 1788; Madrid 1786; Venice 1801; Florence 1847; Turin 1874. Parente points out that the catalogues of the British Museum also list a Latin translation of 1758 (Trnava) and a Hungarian translation of 1899.¹⁴ In Venice a Greek translation was printed by Antonio Bortoli in 1755 (and again in 1780): Ὁρησκεία καὶ ἔθη τῶν Ἑβραίων. Συντεθέντα μὲν μετὰ καὶ τῆς Ἀναίρεσεως αὐτῶν εἰς Ἱταλικὴν διάλεκτον. Παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου Δόκτωρος Παύλου Μεδίκων. Μεταφρασθέντα δὲ εἰς τὴν ἀπλὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν Γλῶσσαν πρὸς εὐαρέστησιν τῶν περιέργων Φιλομαθῶν ("Religion and Customs of the Jews. Containing also the refutation of the same in the Italian language by Doctor Paolo Medici. Translated into everyday Greek for the enjoyment of the curious learned persons.") This is the text utilized by Sofronij for his translation, conserved by manuscript Pogodinian 1204 (the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg), prepared for a quite unexpected publisher; however, this manuscript is known as "the book of the three religions." Finished in 1805, it contains four sections, proceeded by an introduction dated May 24, 1805: 1) Православное исповедание веры "Professione della fede ortodossa" (Folios 6-78);¹⁵ 2) Paolo Medici's Повест о веры и обичаи еврейския "Story of the Jewish Faith and its Customs" (Ff. 78b-179b); 3) Система мохамеданская и религия их "System of the Mohammedans and their Religion" (Ff. 180-352)¹⁶ and 4) the "autobiography" of Sofronij, the celebrated "Life and Sufferings of Sinful Sophronius" (Ff. 353-362).

The Greek translation, published by the Venetian printer Antonio Bortoli in 1755, does not include the two letters of appeal to Christians and Jews, nor the insert with the *Letter Written to the Jews of Italy* nor the *Letter to all followers of Judaism compiled with the reflections of Niccolò Stratta* that are found in the edition of 1737. The Greek text is translated almost completely, with only minor gaps;

¹⁴ PARENTE, *Il confronto ideologico*, p. 370.

¹⁵ For the sources of this part see S. VRAČANSKI, *Съчинения в два тома* (Work in two volumes), II, Bălgarski Pisatel, Sofija 1992, p. 574 ff. The "profession of the faith," a part of which was translated by Sophronij, is traditionally attributed to Peter Mogila (Ukrainian: Петро Могила; Romanian: Petru Movilă), the Metropolitan of Kiev and Galicia, and to the rector of the Mogilian College Isaia Kozloyski. It would have been written in Latin in 1640 in contrast with the "pro-Protestant" patriarch Cirilo Lukaris, condemned in 1638. In 1642 it was presented in Jassy and translated from Latin to Greek by the Cretan Meletios Sirgos, who had studied in Venice and Padua. Printed in Greek in Holland, Belgium and in 1695 in Leipzig, it was translated, during the time of the Russian Patriarch Adriano, in the Slava-Greek-Latin edition of the Academy. Following that, it was reprinted several times in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev.

¹⁶ Taken, with some abbreviations and several interesting insertions and comments, from the Russian translation of the celebrated book of D. CANTEMIR, *Sistema de religione et statu Imperii Turcici*, translated by Ivan P'inskij as Система или состояние мухамеданския религии (The System or Constitution of the Muslim Religion), St. Petersburg 1722, which was published with the sanction of Peter the Great and against the wishes of Gavriil Bužinskij, counselor of the Synod and "protector of the synodal press." See V. CÂNDEA, *Studiu introductiv*, in D. CANTEMIR, *Sistemul sau întocmire religiei muhamedane*, in Id., *Complete Works*, ed. V. CÂNDEA, VIII, II, Ed. Academiei, București 1987. For the translation-adaptation and for the ideological-political use of the Cantemir's book by Sofronij, see Т.Н. КОПРЕЕВА, *Неизвестный литературный источник Жития Софрония Врачанского* (Unknown Literary Sources of the Life of Sofronij Vračanski), *Труды отдела древнерусской литературы* 23 (1968), pp. 261-275.

the language is, in general, a fluid vernacular Bulgarian. It is interesting to note that the Предисловие к любезнейшему читателю (*Preface for the gentle reader*), in which Sofronij describes the author Paolo Medici (“що е сочинена от Павла Медика, що е от прежде бил евреин и приел веру христьянскую... Той Павел – муж учен, словесен и на еврейскую веру изкусен”, “written by Paolo Medici, who first was Jewish and then passed to the Christian faith. This Paolo – scholar, man of letters and expert of the Jewish faith”) is, with insignificant differences, the same as the introduction of the Greek edition of 1755. Of course, where the Greek text speaks of the 1700 years that have passed since the Diaspora, intended as punishment for the Jews, Sofronij talks of 1800 years.¹⁷

4. Paolo Medici's Fortune in Bulgaria

Sofronij was unsuccessful in publishing his work on the three religions, a large part of which still remains unedited. With the exception of his autobiography, many other sections have yet to see the light of day. A copy of the section on the profession of the orthodox faith was published by the Bulgarian synod.¹⁸ The most recent and complete edition of Sofronij's works, which we have cited several times, contains only slightly more than a dozen pages of the translation of the book of Paolo Medici.¹⁹ Cantemir's book on Islam is also only partially translated in this edition.²⁰

However, the work of Paolo Medici was published, at least in part, in Bulgaria in 1839. The history of this edition goes back to the Romanian territories and to Sofronij's own time. In 1803 a violently anti-Semitic pamphlet that revived the theme of ritual killing, was published in Jassy. It was attributed to a monk of the Athos Monastery of Kavsokalivia, Neofitos from Patras, who was also a disavowed Jew: *Înfruntarea jidovilor asupra Legii și a obicieiurilor lor, cu dovediri din sfînta și dumnezeiasca Scriptură, atît din cea véche, cît și din cea noaă* (“Refutation of the Jews regarding their religion and their customs, with demonstrations taken from the Holy and Divine Scripture of the New and Old Testament”).²¹ In 1818 a Greek version of the work appeared with a preface by Neofitos and a series of chapters taken from the Greek edition of Paolo Medici. Its title in full is: Ανατροπή της Θρησκείας τῶν Ἑβραίων καὶ τῶν ἐθίμων αὐτῶν, μετ' ἀποδείξεων ἐκ τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ θείας Γραφῆς παλαιᾶς τε νέας. Μεταφρασθέντα ἐκ τῆς Μολδαβικῆς εἰς τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀπλουστέραν τῶν Γραικῶν διάλεκτον, ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου Γεωργίου. Ἐν ἧ προσετέθεισαν περὶ τὸ τέλος ἐκ τοῦ Παύλου Μεδίκων γραφέντων τὰ ἐκλεκτότερα. Νυν τύποις ἐκδοθεῖσα συνδρομὴ καὶ δαπάνη του τιμιωτάτου ἐν πραγματευταῖς κυρίου Γ. Κ. Γ. [Ἐν Ναυπλίῳ] (“Refutation of the religion of the Jews and their customs, with demonstrations taken from the Holy and Divine Scripture of the New and Old Testament. Translated from Moldavian into everyday Greek by Giovanni di Giorgio. To which are added at the end, selected excerpts from the writings of Paolo Medici), published by G(eorgios) K. G(atzos), Nafplio 1818.” The editor Georgios Gatzos introduces Neofitos with great praise, describing him as a former rabbi who, rejecting all danger, has unveiled the mysteries of the suspected ritual killings committed by the Jews and declares to have provided this information for the benefit of all (pp.3-4). The

¹⁷ Ms. Pogodinian n. 1204, f. 78b.

¹⁸ S. VRAČANSKI, *Катехизически, омилетични и нравоучителни писания из ръкописното наследство на Светителя, Синадално Издателство*, [*Katehizicheski, omiletichni i nравоučitelni pisanija iz răkopisното наследство на Svetitelja*], “Scritti catechistici, omiletici e morali tratti dall’eredità manoscritta del Santo”, Sinodalno Izdatelstvo, Sofia 1989.

¹⁹ S. VRAČANSKI, *Съчинения в два тома* (Work in two volumes), I, pp. 192-336, II, pp. 401-414. It deals with chapter 27 (marriage), 28 (Repudiation and divorce) and 29 (The Release of the Sister-in-law).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 414-500. In the ms. Pogodinian n. 1204 the section occupies 172 folios, that is 344 manuscript pages.

²¹ S-au tipărit de Ieromonahul kir Macarie și de Gherasim Ierodiacon Tipograf, [Iași] 1803 (Romanian language in Cyrillic characters). According to L. PREDESCU, *Enciclopedia României cugetarea: material românesc oameni si infaptuiri*, București 1940, anastatic edition Ed. Saeculum, București 1999, s. v. *Neofit Căvsocalivitul*, Neofitos taught in Muntenia and Transylvania and resided in Bucharest, where he died in 1780. Very fluent in Romanian, he devised a new method of translation from Greek to Romanian.

following Neofitos' introduction recounts that it was only at the age of 38 that he was illuminated by Divine Grace and, that once baptized, decided to reveal with his book the "mysteries" of the Jews and to dedicate himself to their spiritual "salvation." The title page states that the *Ανατροπή* was translated "from Moldavian into everyday Greek." It also notes the addition of selected passages from the writings of Paolo Medici. The passages of Paolo Medici are taken, in abbreviated form, from chapters 6 (on the Talmud), 2 (on the witch Lilith), 30 (on Jewish burial and on the transmigration of the soul with the rebuttal of Medici), 32 (on devils, angels and heaven), and concludes with the list of false Messiahs (pp. 168-187). A third edition of this book was published in Nafplio in 1834 and the following year, as an addition to it, appeared again in Nafplio the *Πόνημα Χρυσούν* ("The Golden Work").²² This work is also part of the anti-Semitic testimonials given by Jews and also in this case by an ex-rabbi. It was written in Arabic by Samuel, rabbi of Morocco, translated into Latin by the Dominican Alfonso Bonon with the title of *De erroribus Judaeorum [...] Opus aureum*, which was published in Venice, Macerata, Lucerne, etc.,²³ and finally from Latin to Greek by Nikiforos Theotokis, who published it in Lipsia in 1769.²⁴ The same Nikiforos Theotokis is author, among others works, of *Kiriakodromion*, which is the source of the *Nedelnik* of Sofronij.

The 1834 Nafplio edition is probably the source of what has erroneously been considered a second Bulgarian translation of Medici's book, due to Natanail Zografski and Georgi Samurkaš and published by Teodosij Sinaitski in 1839 with the title *Служение еврейско* ("Jewish Rituals").²⁵

Passages of the Greek translation of Medici's *Rites and Customs of the Jews Refuted* was thus accessible to Bulgarians beginning in 1839 with the edition of Salonica – a full 34 years after the book was completely translated from Greek to Bulgarian by Sofronij, for his project of acculturation about his own people (the Orthodox Christians) and the "others" (the Jews and Muslims, namely Turks). The book, however, was never published and to this day still awaits a complete, commented edition.

5. An Italian track of a certain Balkan anti-Semitism (via the Phanariotes)

To understand the vast circulations of strong anti-Semitic positions, such as those we have described so far, from Italy to the Balkan and Southeastern European lands under the Ottoman Empire, it is good to keep in mind some historical factors, the result of important changes that have taken place

²² Πόνημα Χρυσούν / Σαμουήλ Ραββί του Ιουδαίου, Εξελέγχον την των Ιουδαίων πλάνην. Πρώτον μεν εκ της Αραβικής εις την Λατινίδα μεταφρασθέν Νυν δε εκ της Λατινίδος εις την κοινήν των Ελλήνων Διάλεκτον. Εκδοθέν το πρώτον Λατινιστί και Ελληνιστί δι' εξόδων του Κυρίου Νικολάου Σκούρτου. Εκδίδεται νυν το τέταρτον ως επίμετρον εις το του Νεοφύτου πόνημα, επιγραφόμενον Ανατροπή της θρησκείας των Εβραίων. Δαπάνη των τυπογράφων, Εκ της Τυπογραφίας Κωνσταντίνου Τόμπρα Κυδωνιέως, και Κωνσταντίνου Ιωαννίδου Σμυρναίου, Εν Ναυπλίω, 1835.

²³ See e. g. *De erroribus Judaeorum RABBY SAMUELIS, Opus Aureum: hebraerum olim odio fere suppressum, & Annos ultra ducentos occultatu [...]*, typis Lenianis, Venetiis 1655; other edition: apud P. De Orlandis, 1714.

²⁴ SAMUEL RAVI FROM JUDEA, Πόνημα Χρυσούν [...], εξελέγχον τὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων πλάνην [...], Τυπογραφία Βρέιτκοφ, Leipzig 1769.

²⁵ The complete title is Служение еврейско и все злоторение нихно со показание от свещено и божествено писание ветхо и новое. И се положи на край от Талмуда еврейскаго, що е писал Павел Медийски, що имат повеке хули противни пред Бога, противни и пред ангели божи. Се писа по молдавски език от Неофита монаха, що беше равнинин еврейски и после по святое крещение се чини учител христианский. Второ па се изписа на греческий язык, трето па сега от греческий язык се преизноси и се преписа во простий и краткий язык болгарский ка разумению простому народу. В типографии солунской при хаджи папа Теодосий архимандрита Синайтскаго в лето 1839 ("Jewish Rituals in all their wickedness with demonstrations from the sacred and divine scripture of the Old and New Testament. At the end are added from the Jewish Talmud four writings of Paolo Medici on the many revolting insults against God and against the divine angels. It was written in Moldavian by the monk Neofitos, who was a Jewish rabbi and then, after baptism, became a Christian teacher. Then it was translated into Greek and from Greek transposed for the third time into simple and short Bulgarian in order to be understood by the common people. From the publishing house of Salonica by hadži papa Teodosij Sinaitic archimandrite, 1839").

particularly in the eighteenth century in this large area of the Mediterranean. From a century or more after the fall of Constantinople, the political and cultural interests of the Greeks moved, toward the Balkan area, Southeastern Europe and especially Russia, where, during Catherine's reign, where Eugenio Vùlgaris and then Nicephoros Theotokis reach the highest offices of the Russian Orthodox Church. Vùlgaris, also in line with the changing ideas of the Great Catherine, combines his activity as theologian and hierarch of the Orthodox Church with the translations and the disseminations of Voltaire's thought and the Enlightenment. The Greeks, after the failures of the anti-Turkish crusades of the sixteenth century, are now placing their hopes for redemption in the Russian Empire. After the opening in the mid-1700s of commercial relations between Austria and Russia, there are many Greek merchants who trade between the West and Turkey, with offices in Vienna, Marseille, Naples, Trieste, Venice and other cities. To govern Wallachia and Moldavia, the Sultan, with considerable political intuition, appoints Greek Orthodox notables, the Phanariotes, so called by the Phanari, the port district, which became the seat of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch. Beyond the changing historical judgement on the Phanariotic era, which ended with the outbreak of the Greek revolution, by Greek and Romanian "nationalist" historiography, the overall activity of the governments of the Phanariotes must be judged positively, both in terms of modernization of the economy, especially in agriculture, and of a significant growth of education and culture. The language of the various secular and religious schools and academies is obviously the Greek that unites the writers of the various ethnic groups (Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians and Russians). Some of the Phanariotes studied in Venice and Padua. Venice, which has notably declined from a political and commercial point of view, however, preserves a sort of quasi-monopoly in Greek book production. Venetian ships distribute books in Greek from the Adriatic to Istanbul, Smyrna and the Greek islands of Turkey. And it is precisely in this framework that we can follow the penetration of the livornese Paolo Medici's "I riti e i costumi degli Ebrei" in the Bulgarian and Romanian lands. The Greek editions of 1755 and 1780 of *Θρησκεία καὶ ἔθη τῶν Ἑβραίων* due to Antonio Bortoli, who also signed the introduction to the volume, are accessible to Bulgarians and Romanians. Sofronij translates the entire book into Neo Bulgarian with the unsuccessful intention of publishing it. In 1803 appears in Jassy an anti-Jewish operetta, attributed to the monk of Patras Neofitos, a renegade Jew like Paolo Medici, which also takes up the theme of ritual murders, written in Romanian, whose Bulgarian translation, dated 1818, was edited and introduced by Georgios Gatszos and it includes selected passages taken from the Greek edition of Paolo Medici. Finally, *Служение еврейско* (Jewish ritual) appeared in Thessaloniki, printed by Archimandrite Theodosius of Sinai. The excerpts from Paolo Medici have been translated from Greek into simple Bulgarian language by Natanail Zografski and Georgi Samurkaš. It is in this way that malignant anti-Semitic ideas, fabricated by the livornese converted Jew Paolo Medici, are added to the anti-Jewish moods of Southeastern Romanian and Bulgarian Europe thanks to the Venetian edition of Antonio Bortoli.

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SUMMARY

This paper centres on the development of anti-Semitic literature in the Balkans through Sofronij's Bulgarian translation of the Italian work *The Rites and Customs of the Jews Refuted* by Paolo Medici. As an ideologist and writer of the Bulgarian Renaissance, Sofronij Vračanski (1739-1813) translated the entire Greek edition of the work of Paolo Medici; this translation is conserved by manuscript Pogodinian 1204, completed in May of 1805 and titled Повест о веры и обичаи еврейския (The Story of the Faith and Customs of the Jews). My work aims at highlighting the editorial and cultural importance of the work of Paolo Sebastiano Medici (a convert from Leghorn born Moisè di Alessandro Leon) as a starting point for the development of an anti-Semitic cultural paradigm widespread in the entire Balkan area, thanks to the Greek translation of *The Rites*.

KEYWORDS: Sofronij Vračanski; Paolo Sebastiano Medici; Balkan Anti-Semitism.