

# Catalogue of Book Subscription during the Bulgarian Revival Period

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**Abstract:** *The lists of contributors, printed at the end or at the beginning of revival books as a token of gratitude from the writer / translator / publisher to those whose financial support enabled the publication of a work, contain valuable data on the history and sociology of literature that very often can be found only in these lists. The analytical systematization of these data in a catalogue of personalities is the basis on which the theoretical understanding of the literary and sociocultural processes during the era is based.*

**Keywords:** Bulgarian Revival, book subscription, book subscribers, sociology of literature

**Ключови думи:** Българско възраждане, спомоществователство, книги, социология на литературата



Interest in the data contained in the lists of book subscribers printed in books during the Bulgarian National Revival dates back a long time. These lists have been the subject of research in the works of a number of prominent humanitarians: Nikola Nachov<sup>1</sup>, Anton P. Stoilov<sup>2</sup>, Petar Dinekov<sup>3</sup>, Trayan Radev<sup>4</sup>, Vasil. Sl. Kiselkov<sup>5</sup>, Nikolay Zhechev<sup>6</sup>, Manyo Stoyanov<sup>7</sup>, Docho Lekov<sup>8</sup> and others.

Various opinions have been expressed, explicitly emphasizing the importance of these data for the history of our Revival. All researchers point to the difficult economic conditions as the reason for the emergence of book subscription, which forced authors and publishers to seek the financial help of future readers so that the books could see the light of day. And invariably anyone who has worked on the supporting lists has been impressed by the wealth of data they contain that cannot be found anywhere else.

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<sup>1</sup> Nachov 1911; 1921; 1925; 1927.

<sup>2</sup> Stoilov 1926.

<sup>3</sup> Dinekov 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Radev 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Kiselkov 1960.

<sup>6</sup> Zhechev 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Stoyanov 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Lekov 1982.







This fact was already noted by N. Nachov, the first person whose attention was drawn to this phenomenon specific to the Bulgarian Revival. According to him, these lists, as they were preserved in the old books, can serve as an archive: '[...] we know where various Bulgarian officials were at a given time – as they could have been in Turkish times: teachers, priests, monastery abbots, traveling monks (taxidiotes) and representatives with their respective metochia of various monasteries of ours (Rila, Svetogorsk) and foreign (Jerusalem and Sinai), doctors, church and school administrators, church superintendents (epitropoi), various merchants, etc., also and which students were in some junior and senior schools and when. This is what we use mostly when other archives are missing'<sup>9</sup>. The analyzes of the data from the book subscribers' lists are important for the study of the geographical and social distribution of the Renaissance book, for clarifying the problem of cultural environments during this era, for the social structure and stratification of Bulgarian society, for the development of the academic work, for literary tastes and preferences, about the relationship reader – work – perceiver, etc. As M. Stoyanov points out, 'if all the indications about the occupation and official position of the book buyers in the lists of subscribers are collected and arranged by occupation, connecting to the place and time, a magnificent index of the economic profile of the Bulgarian people during the Renaissance era will be obtained'<sup>10</sup>.

For the present study, the last quote is particularly revealing with its conditionality and hidden wishful thinking. Unfortunately, there is no complete description of all the data from the 19th century book subscription lists.

So far, there is only one somewhat comprehensive study – that of Tr. Radev, and it refers to the data from 1806 to 1840. But the information array from the first and second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is very different. The data from the second half is more than four times as numerous. Which probably explains

why comprehensive analysis is lacking and all statements made are marked with more or less probability.

The problems facing analytical data cataloguing are many. First and foremost is the vast amount of source material that must be extracted from the old books and processed. This is a very time-consuming job, because it involves thousands of names of subscribers. A second problem is posed by the uncertain forms of the names of the Bulgarians during the Revival, which necessitates very careful checking in order to be able to say whether in individual cases it is the same person who signed different books or for different people, etc.

But this data, once extracted and systematized at a certain level, is subject to computer processing, which can really help a lot in refining a number of viewpoints.

As a result of my many years of dealing with helper lists, I came up with the idea of the following description to be able to retrieve and display everything that these lists contain.

It consists of 12 fields, in which the following data are described independently:

1. First name
2. Patronymic
3. Family name
4. Nickname
5. Definition (hajiya, brothers, titles)
6. Occupation
7. Relatives
8. Birthplace
9. Donation/ other basis for the sponsorship
10. Settlement in which the subscription is claimed
11. Book for which prepaid, indicating its chronological number in the list of books printed with assistance, and number of copies
12. Year of issue.

This is the data that the representation of the particular person in the list may contain. Each field is developed according to predefined parameters and can be activated either alone or in combination with others, depending on

<sup>9</sup> Nachov 1927: 349.

<sup>10</sup> Stoyanov 1978: 176-177.

the data we are interested in. Information on institutions (pupil', women's, singing, etc. societies, schools, community centres, churches, whole villages, guilds, urban societies, etc.) will be arranged separately.

The purpose of this analytical catalogue is finally to take the data set in the supporting lists out of the 'slips' state in which it has existed

to one degree or another until now in the archives of various researchers, and to allow these data to be retrieved so, to facilitate the largest possible number of studies – literary, sociological, linguistic, cultural, settlement. I hope that he will once and for all bring extreme clarity regarding specific information, as well as extreme ease in working with them.

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## Каталог на възрожденското книжовно спомоществователство

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Изследването представя аналитичното описание на данните, извлечени от списъците на спомоществователите, публикувани в края на книгите, отнасящи се до самите личности, подредени азбучно. Този каталог е изворовата основа, на която се гради цялостното теоретично изследване на разпространението и проникването на книгата в различни слоеве на българското общество през първата половина на XIX век: обособяване на тематични ядра, формиране на читателска публика, изграждане на книжовна норма, създаване на културни средища, проследяване на процесите на приемственост и новаторство в новата българска литература; установяването на ядро от активни спомоществователи, които са не само читатели, но и дарители и меценати.

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