

Leonora Navari, *PRIVATE LIBRARIES IN GREECE: personal experiences with prominent libraries*.

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Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. My thanks go to CERL and to the Laskaridis Foundation for giving me the opportunity to discuss a subject of great interest to me. My subject, private libraries in Greece, is a large one. Today I will discuss only libraries I have worked with or know through my own work.

The nature of book collecting in Greece differs in some respects from that of book collecting in other parts of the world. Many, if not the majority of these collections, are based on the collector's attachment to a particular locality, or his interest in a cultural phenomenon or a historical development which is connected with Greece.

The sense of connection with place is very strong. Speaking from my own knowledge, the islands of Paros, Tinos, Andros, Euboea, Ikaria, Chios, Corfu, Cos, Rhodes, Lesbos, Crete, and Santorini each have their own dedicated collectors. A number of these collectors have opened their collections to the public, either through illustrated catalogues or by contributing to exhibitions. Among them are Aristides Mantadelis of Andros, John Koilalous of Chios, Dimitris Tsitouras of Santorini, Kyriaki Kontoyiorgou of Paros, Katerina Sarafi of Tinos, Yannis Karakostas from Euboea, Alekos Markoglou of Cos, Christos Zacharakis, who collects maps of Crete and Cyprus, the late Antonis Maillis of Rhodes and the late Takis Papoutsanis of Lesbos. The cities of Argos, Athens, Corinth, Prevesa, Thessaloniki, and Edipsos in Euboea have their supporters. This same phenomenon includes collectors of books and maps on Asia Minor, the Greek mainland, the Argolid and Corinthia, the western Peloponnesus, ancient Thrace, and Macedonia.

In many cases this interest is purely local, whether the collection consists of books or maps, and the collector limits himself to a very specific area. But in some cases this interest spreads out to include different facets of the topography, history, and culture of an area. With this development of interests, the collection can reach astonishing heights. For example, as in the case of an important collection which began with the topography of Corfu. The collector had begun to interest himself in the Venetian occupation of Corfu, and from there his collection has developed to cover the whole of the Venetian conquests in the Aegean, including the conflict of Venice with the Ottoman empire, and it contains many rarities, such as the various geographical works of the Venetian cosmographer Vincenzo Coronelli. The Margarita Samourkas collection of maps of Greece began with a gift, a small map of Santorini, her native island. This small map pricked Mrs. Samourkas's interest, with the result that her collection of maps of Greece is now one of the most comprehensive map collections in private hands in the country. It includes an almost complete collection of 16th and 17th century isolarios of the Aegean. Beginning with a local interest in the history and topography of Thessaloniki, one collector from that city has amassed a collection of books

on the Macedonian front in World War I. The Koilalous collection of Greek costume prints sprang from a general interest in art and antiques. John Koilalous is a natural collector with many interests, but with his costume prints the initial focus was his birthplace, the island of Chios.

But for a number of collectors in Greece, it is not so much the local connection that inspires them, but rather the legacy of Greek culture. A number of very important collections reflect the influence of ancient Greek culture on the renaissance in Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries. The productions of the house of Aldus or of the Giunta and other early publishers, are the objects of the hunt.

Another aspect of this cultural attachment is reflected in collections of books produced for the Greek reading public from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Perhaps this particular field is of interest to many Greek collectors because of the fact that printing in Greece as we know it today was a very late occurrence. The first printing press in Greece itself was the press founded in Corfu by the French Napoleonic forces in 1798. The first book to be printed in Athens was issued in 1827. But until the development of printing in Greece itself, which began to flourish from about 1830, Greek readers had to order books from abroad.

Libraries representing these aspects of book collecting in Greece include the Petritsis collection, sold at Sotheby's in the 1990s, the collection of Paola Komoussi, sold by Christie's in Athens also in the 1990s, the Oikonomopoulos collection of early Greek printing, and of course the library of Konstantinos Staikos.

But this interest can become very specialized. For example, a collector from northern Greece has amassed the works of the Greek geographers, mainly those published in the 18th century. And springing from this interest is his collection of the individual maps of Greece and Thrace from all the editions of Ptolemy's *Geographia*. And there is Mr. George Dolianitis, who has a fascinating collection of books and ephemeral material on the Olympic games, with its special focus on the first revival of the Games in Athens in 1896. Another collector friend specializes in Greek popular sheet music; many examples of these publications have cover illustrations by eminent Greek artists.

These special interests, both local and historical, tend to remain within narrow confines. But there are some collectors whose interest in Greece is wide-ranging almost from the very beginning of their collecting activity.

This was so in the case of both Henry Blackmer and Christopher Tower. When these men retired, they came to Greece, built houses in Athens, and began to collect books. Henry Blackmer, in fact, had begun to buy books on architecture while he was living in Paris. When he came to Greece, that interest spread to include books on Greece and the Levant generally. This may have sprung from the fact that his family, through the Blackmer Foundation, supported an archaeological excavation in the Sudan, and Henry Blackmer usually spent about a month in the summer cruising in the eastern Mediterranean after visiting the excavation. Or perhaps his interest in neo-classical architecture, with books like that of Le Roi or Stuart and Revett, based on their own travels in Greece, began to sharpen

to include works on the countries themselves. At first this interest was expressed in rather common illustrated works depicting views in the various countries of the Levant. But, as time went on, he became more and more interested in the history of Greece and its relationship to the whole of the Balkans and Turkey. One of the most important aspects of the Blackmer collection was its eventual inclusiveness, not only with regard to Greece as part of the Balkans, but as reflecting a general approach to cultural and cross-cultural phenomena. An example is the very rare *Mascarade à la Grecque*, published at Parma in 1771, with its figures in costumes composed of Greek architectural fragments. Blackmer had begun to collect material on the Greek war of Independence, in particular accounts by Philhellenes. His interest extended from there to the relations between Turkey and the Balkans. Among many other rarities, he owned two illustrated works on the Russo-Turkish war of 1827-1828, the Comte de Bearn's *Quelques souvenirs d'une Campagne en Turquie* and Sayger and Desarnod's *Album d'un voyage en Turquie*, 1830. Sayger's work, in particular, illustrates towns in western and eastern Thrace which contained large Greek populations. Blackmer's interest in the Levant embraced many aspects: history, costume, architecture, neo-classicism, the French scientific missions in Egypt and the Morea, works by and about missionaries in the Levant, and so forth.

Perhaps the most important private library of books on Greece at the moment is that of Stathis Finopoulos. Mr. Finopoulos began his collection while he was living in London. According to his own account, his collecting activities began when he met a friend on the street carrying a pile of books. He asked his friend what he had been doing. His friend replied that he had been at the Farringdon Road, at that time (we are talking about the early sixties) a place where there were a number of book barrows, with books sold at low prices. Mr. Finopoulos had no connection with books at that time, but he had a sharp eye for a bargain and decided to see what was going on in the Farringdon Road. After three or four visits, he came across the third volume of Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*, the price set at four pounds. He immediately bought it, and thus began the development of the Finopoulos library, today perhaps the single most important collection of travel books on Greece after that of John Gennadius himself. Finopoulos concentrated on books about Greece published before 1862, the year of Otho's abdication from the throne. But Finopoulos has also amassed a collection of historical sources and other information to support his library, rather in the manner of John Gennadius. A number of other collectors have followed in Gennadius's footsteps.

The diplomat Stefanos Caratheodory spent most of his working life in Europe as ambassador of Turkey to Brussels and Berlin in the late 19th century. His fine library, which included a complete set of Napoleon's *Description of Egypt*, continued to be enriched by his son, Constantine Caratheodory, mathematician and correspondent of Einstein. The Caratheodory library has been dispersed, but researchers can locate many of its books in other collections. It contained many rarities, including Dodwell's views of Greece and Lazius's *Rerum Graecarum Libri*, 1558.

Another collector, Damianos Kyriazis, one of the most important Greek collectors of the 20th century, amassed books in all the subjects Gennadius had established for his own library: early Greek printing, travel and topography, art and archaeology, the Eastern Question,

books relating to the Balkans in general, as well as historical documents. After his death in 1948, his daughter, Maria Kyriazis Spentsas, following his wishes, divided a large part of his collection between the Benaki Museum and the Gennadius Library. One of the many highlights of the gift to the Gennadius at that time is the Ali Pasha archive. In 1994 Maria Spentsas donated the remainder of her father's collection to the Gennadius Library. This splendid gift includes many books from the library of Marie Louise, wife of the emperor Napoleon.

The library of the collector Panos Gratsos follows in this same tradition. His books, with his 'Skins' bookplate, referring to the name of his estate in Ithaca, were sold at Sotheby's in 1990. He had a fine collection of early Greek printing as well as an extensive collection of early travel in the Levant, including several 16th century portolans and a beautiful costume book published by Onfroy ca. 1775, with the plates coloured in gouache.

But what of the fate of these private libraries? A surprising number have been preserved in various institutions. This is not a new thing in Greece: the library of that eminent figure of the Greek enlightenment, Adamantios Koraïs, forms the basis of the public library of Chios town. Koraïs's friend, Constantinos Nikolopoulos, left his library to his father's native town, Andritsena in the central Peloponnesus. The library of the priest and intellectual Theophilos Kaïris forms the basis of the Kaïrios Library on the island of Andros. Today this tradition continues. The Staikos collection of books printed for the Greek market is now part of the Onassis Foundation. The Oikonomopoulos collection of early Greek printing is now part of the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation. The Finopoulos collection is now part of the Benaki Museum. The Victor Melas map collection is now one of the collections of the National Bank Cultural Foundation. Perhaps the most important example of this cultural phenomenon is that of the Gennadius Library itself, which Gennadius left to the Greek state, to be administered by the American School of Classical Studies.

I have been discussing private libraries located in Greece. But as with all things Greek, we must take into account the Greek diaspora. So if we talk about Greek or Hellenic libraries, the picture is much larger. The same sorts of interests we have been talking about are to be found among Greek collectors living abroad. The fine library of the late A. C. Lascarides, with its many rare books on Philhellenism, was sold privately to a Greek ship-owning family in the early 1990s. Various members of the Goulandris family, as well as other ship-owning families, collect books on Greece. One such collection was sold anonymously at Sotheby's in November, 2008. But there are other collectors, non-Greeks, who collect books on Greece and the Levant, who do not live in Greece. Guy Evans, whose library was sold at Sotheby's in 1992, is an interesting example of a person who was mesmerized by Greek life and expressed his love of Greece through his book collecting. Guy's first contact with Greece came through Cyprus, where he served in the British army in the early 50s, before the outbreak of the troubles with EOKA. He fell in love with the island and its way of life. He learned Greek sufficiently well to write poetry in the fifteen-syllable style, and he composed

an ode to his book-collecting friend Stathis Finopoulos.

Cyprus is also the focus of the collection of Mrs. Sylvia Ioannou. Her interest in Cyprus is so all-embracing that her collection includes early Venetian chronicles, early editions of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, novels and theatrical works set in Cyprus, as well as chronicles of the Crusaders and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. In fact, one could base a history of the Latins in the Levant from sources in the Ioannou collection, which now forms the base collection of the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation. The catalogue of the Ioannou library includes a long index of the provenances of books in the collection. We hope that this index, and others like it in similar catalogues, will both benefit from and add to the Provenance Database now being constructed by the Consortium of European Research Libraries. Thank you.