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On the History and Art of the Old Romanian Books: The Engravings of Buda
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The special qualities of the graphic arts in the old Romanian books, particularly of the woodcuts, punchon prints and lithographs, insufficiently investigated so far, made me approach this theme. Ever since 1929, the famed historian Alexandru Busuioceanu pointed out the artistic and cultural good qualities of the woodcuts in the Romanian books. „An entire chapter, among the most important in our old art would slightly become rounded off, if from a book to another, from a typography to another, one followed the new and varied thing of these engravers”. Afterwards, throughout the years some more or less complex or complete investigations have been made concerning some typographical centers where the art of engraving was very successful: the Neamț Monastery, Blaj, Râmnic or Sibiu.

The Romanian section of the University Typography of Buda held a very important role, at the end of the 18th century and in the first decades of the 19th century, in promoting culture, science and the Romanian spirituality as well as in safeguarding the national consciousness (it is worth calling to mind that, for a while, Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Șincai and Petru Maior were censors and proof readers in Buda) which excited my interest. Examining attentively a vast bibliography regarding this important center, I found out that, although the graphic aspect of the books printed here is interesting and worth considering, it was not enough studied. Therefore, I have decided to approach this inciting subject-matter in my doctorate paper.

The old Romanian book needs a thorough examination from the philological point of view as well as in the point of the history of culture, printing and art. In the same way, the graphic art needs a multidisciplinary approach, namely it should be generally studied as history is concerned and especially as regards printing, art, culture, science, religion, mythology, literature, philosophy, ethnography, music and so forth.

The limits within which I have carried on my research activity being set, that is 1780, the year when the first Romanian book was printed in Buda and 1830 as superior deadline of publishing old Romanian books, I have tried to attain the following goals: to point out the contribution of numerous Romanian and foreign researchers to the activity of the typography of Buda; to set out the way in which the Enlightenment influenced the activity of the Romanian typography from Buda; to demonstrate the role of the foreign and the Romanian influences on the culture of the town of Buda; to determine the main co-ordinates of the evolution of the typography from Buda; to find out the number of the Romanian books published in the period of time when I carried out my research work; to establish how many books contain engravings; to take photos of all engravings; to find out what engravings and how many of them exist in each book; to notice in what way the engravings are repeated in the books.

My further interest was in the analysis of each engraving. Therefore I described all images; I studied the iconography, the style; I made an attempt to decipher the symbols, which can be religious, historical, philosophical, Freemasonic etc. If the engraving was not signed, I tried to compare it with others or to ascribe it to a certain engraver; whenever I could I compared them with the engravings from other Romanian or foreign centers and where it was possible I found analogies; I determined even the influences which the engravings in the books of Buda had, in their turn, on their homonymous ones from the Romanian area, up to 1830, and even after that. Finally I drew the conclusions.

The sensitive poet Tudor Arghezi states: „Living in poverty and defamation, the man succeeded to be redeemed and to surpass himself, as he invented writing, and finally the book... Look, thousands of hearts and minds live close to you, on your shelves... Before the books the cemetery only could bear testimony. It was overcome by the library. You have got rid of the grave...”. Therefore, the book had the power of defeating the death, as the author’s spirit still continues to exist, to survive in it. Both the European and the Romanian supporters of the Enlightenment understood that the purpose of the book is to be used by all the people, in order to illuminate them, to lead them to happiness.

At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, within the Romanian section of the typography of Buda, there gravitated the élite of which enlightening or Romantic beliefs ardently served their country’s interests, first of all by printing books that promoted the progressive ideas of the time.

Their belief was that through culture the people acceded to a better economic, social and political situation, the same as other nations from the Habsburg Empire or Europe did.

Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Șincai, Petru Maior, Ioan Molnar-Piuariu, Grigore Obradovici, Paul Iorgovici, Nicolae Horga-Popovici, Dimitrie Țichindeal, Gheorghe Constantin Roja, Gheorghe Montan, Ioan Teodorovici, Alexandru Teodorovici, Vasile Coloși, Ioan Corneli, Ioan Tincovici, Gheorghe Munteanu, Naum Petrovici, Zaharia Carcalechi, Eufrosin Dimitrie Poteca, Constantin Diaconovici-Loga, Alexandru Beldiman, Ioan Tomici, Toma Popovici, Paris Mumuleanu, Dinicu Golescu, Theodor Aaron, Damaschin Bojincă, Ștefan P. Niagoe, Moise Bota, Ioan Ciocârlan, Moise Suci, Petru Moaler, Gheorghe Mutso, Eftimie Murgu, Nicola Nicolau, Pavel Vasici Ungureanu, Emanuil Gojdu etc. wrote, translated, edited, distributed or sponsored Romanian books which were printed in Buda.

Their lofty and disinterested convictions are suggestively expressed, for instance, in the translation of Gessner’s work, Abel’s Death done for readers, by Alexandru Beldiman. Vibrating respects are paid here to reason: „you can call the reason out of darkness to illuminate your soul; it

can forcibly order to the tumult to keep silent; it can analyze any desire, any appetite, any foaming passion; and then the ashamed passion keep silent, the vain desires disappear like the morning fog in front of the sun”.

The productivity of the printing press classifies it among the Romanian typographies which carried on their activity between 1508 and 1830, taking the third place after Bucharest and Iasi and the first place, if the statistics refer to the years 1780-1830. It is not only the number of books, almost 240, that is significant, but also their intrinsic value which is quite uncommon. At demand of the church (both the Greek-Catholic and the Orthodox) of the Romanian frontier guard regiments, of the authorities or of certain private persons there were printed philological, philosophical, theological, didactic, economic, geographical and literary books which were successfully used by the Romanian readers from everywhere in the empire, eager to acquire knowledge. The number of copies printed was large, sometimes more than 1000, as it can be seen in the lists of subscribers.

Buda, a cosmopolitan center, where the flow of ideas came from various directions, particularly from the western countries caused a famous cultural center to develop here – due to the University, to the Library and Typography, which published books in 16 languages, of which numerous peoples, including the Romanians, took advantage. This explains why in the large Hungarian city on the Danube, the books were decorated not only with woodcuts, a technique used almost exclusively in the typographic centers in the Romanian area, but also with puncheon prints and lithographs.

Examining the books printed in Buda I noticed that most of them comprise decorative elements, particularly frontispieces and vignettes, 36 of them being decorated with 90 distinct illustrations. This special care for the aesthetics of the books is without doubt due to the staff of the typography as well as to the sleeping partners.

My scientific approach is meant to point out the artistic value of the Romanian books from Buda, value which was conferred, first of all by the engravings (illustrations, frontispieces, vignettes) accomplished in the three techniques mentioned above – as well as the way in which tradition and innovation go together in these images.

After having studied (in many libraries in Romania and abroad, and on the basis of specialized bibliography) the books decorated with the engravings done in Buda between 1780 and 1830 I found out that beside the woodcut – traditional for the Romanian books and perpetuated for a long time (up to 1860 at the Neamț Monastery) – the puncheon print was also used on a large scale, superior and diversified as compared with that existent in the books published on the Romanian territory.

Regarding lithography, it seems to have appeared for the first time in a Romanian book at Buda. The woodcuts (not frontispieces and vignettes) can be found only in religious books, while the puncheon prints were used both in religious and secular ones, and lithographs only in those with profane contents. The engravers from Buda, generally trained at Vienna, permanently tried to keep pace with the artistic novelties in the capital of the empire.

Both iconographically and stylistically the xylographs and the puncheon prints found in the religious books were achieved according to the Byzantine – Balkan and Byzantine – Russian tradition to which were added some elements of Occidental art, particularly of the Renaissance, of the Baroque and of the Neoclassicism. Among the elements of Byzantine type I mention: a certain concern for stylizing; decorative effects and symmetry; the frontal position of figures and their hierarchical rendering; the isocephaly (placing heads of figures on the same level); the landscape and architectures are more or less conventional; the compression of plans or the reduced perspective. In this respect the following books are edifying: *Minei*, 1804- 1805; *Polustav*, 1807; *Octoih*, 1811; *Triod* and *Strastnic*, 1816; etc., on the whole decorated with tens of engravings. They treat various themes of which I mention: **The Three Visitors at Mamre, The Crucifixion, The Annunciation, The Forty Martyrs, Constantine and Helen, The Assumption, The Life Giving Spring, Jesus in Glory, Emmanuel in Chalice, St. Nicholas, St. John of Damascus, Christ's Descent into Limbo** (frontispiece), **The Publican and the Pharisee, The Raising of Lazarus, Jesus Entering into Jerusalem, The Descent from the Cross etc.** (xylographs), **and the Seraphs' Anthem, The Annunciation, Jesus High Bishop on the Clouds, Emmanuel in Chalice** (puncheon prints).

Some religious engravings are of occidental manner in which the plasticity of forms, the rendering of perspective, the appearance of gorgeous buildings are pointed out. I refer to the representation of **David** in the *Psalter* of 1808, 1817, 1818, to the four evangelists: **John, Mathew, Lucas and Marcus**, in the *Gospel*, 1812, to the scenes representing **Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel**, in *Abel's Death* by Salomon Gessner, 1818.

The woodcuts are not signed excepting **Jesus in Glory**, *Acatist*, 1807, belonging to Hederich from Buda. He is also the author of the illustrations from *Minei* according to the documents of the typography. Carolus Fridericus Hederich Frigyes was a self-made man and that explains why the artistic quality of his engravings does not reach the artistic level of similar images which appeared on the Romanian territory (Blaj or Râmnic). On the other hand, the unsigned xylographs (which do not belong to Hederich according to style) in the *Triod* and *Strastnic* seem to be better accomplished.

Among the puncheon prints the best ones are those signed by the engravers of European

importance from Buda or Vienna: János Fülöp Binder, **David's** author from the *Psalter*, 1808, and Johann Wenzel Engelmann, who achieved the **evangelists** from the *Gospel*, 1812. In this sample of illustrations we also find the following engravers: Gottfried Prixner (who signed **David** in the *Psalter*, 1818), Andreas Geiger (the author of the engraving **Adam and Eve** in Avel's Death by Salomon Gessner, 1818) and Sámuel Lehnhardt (signer of the image **Woman and Children Praying** in *The Abandoned Children* by Leopold Şimani), all of them, together with Binder, authors of engravings with secular themes.

It is worth mentioning that very interesting puncheon prints, some of them well – performed, appeared in secular books. Related to the Romanian area these books are original regarding both the theme and the manner of being treated, of occidental type. These images cut in metal are more minutely rendered sometimes consisting of ample compositions with figures in movement, which express varied psychological feelings, laying emphasis on conveying the volume and the perspective.

In this respect I quote some examples of books containing such images. *The Calendar for 100 Years*, 1814, **The Inconstant World's Wheel and its Perilous Waves** (signed Prixner sc. Pest); *The Events in the War of the French*, 1814, **Crossing of the Berezina River**; I. D. F. Rumpf, *Alexander I, the Emperor of the Whole Russia*, 1815, **Alexander I, The Tsar of the Whole Russia** (signed **Ehrenreich Junior**); *The Victory Worthy to Mention*, 1815, **The Pyramid of Cannons at Moscow**; J. H. Kempe, *The Discovery of America*, 1816, having 4 images: **Columbus's Arrival at America's Coast**; **Columbus's Departure from Spain** (signed A. Geiger del. et sculp.); **The Terrible Storm at Sea**; **Columbus's Arrival at the Beautiful Coast of America** (signed **Prixner sc.**); *Genealogy. Calendar*, 1817, with engravings having mythological themes and other six moral subject-matters of whom we mention only the one entitled **The Great Dignitaries and the Mankind** (signed A. Geiger sculpsit); Pierre Blanchard, *The New Plutarh*, 1819, which contains more plates, each having 6 portraits of important historic personalities (one of them signed **Lenhardt sc. Pest**). As I have shown above **Columbus's Departure from Spain** was not only engraved but it was also devised (deliniavit) by A. Geiger. Similarly the title sheet of the *Romanian Calendar* from 1829 had both a creator (**S.P. Niagoe**) and an engraver (**scobit de I Colman**).

The large-sized technical plates placed at the end of some books treating economic themes should also be taken into account: L. Mitterpacher, *Knowledge about Cotton*, 1810 (engraving signed **Binder sc.**), I. Neuhold, *Knowledge about Making Syrup and Sugar*, 1812 (2 engravings signed **Wokál sc.**), Ioan Tomici, *The Culture of Bees* (engraving signed by **Lehnhardt sc.**) and *Advice for the Tobacco Workers*, 1823 (unsigned engraving), and also two versions of a

map (one of them signed **Prixner jun. sculp. Pest.**), added at the end of the *World History* by Pavel Kengylláč, 1824.

It seems important for me to point to the presence of lithographs in the secular books from Buda which are among the first images of this type in the old Romanian Books. In this respect I draw the attention to the portraits of princes in the *Romanian Library*, 1829-1830, attributed to Constantin Lecca from Wallachia and to the four plates comprising allegorical images in the *Romanian Calendars* of Ștefan P. Niagoe from 1829 and 1830. Although only one of them is signed **J. Höschl sc. Pest.**, I consider that the other three are made by the same lithographer.

The lay puncheon prints and the lithographs existent in the books printed in Buda represent not only artistic productions, but they also made their contributions to better knowledge of history, geography, ethnography and of other domains. The authors of these engravings bearing well-known names, up to the present time, are of foreign origin (excepting Constantin Lecca), who usually studied in Vienna, which demonstrate the well-marked occidental influence in their works.

Besides the 45 distinct engravings, with religious themes (some of them present from several times in the same book or repeated in others), and other 45 with secular themes (one of them has not been found yet) the Romanian books from Buda are decorated with many frontispieces and vignettes most of them woodcuts.

Their themes, shapes and sizes are varied. Some of them are signed by **Gritner**, an engraver whose works were widespread in Central Europe, particularly in Slovakia, but also in France and Italy.

It is interesting to notice that there are some elements that can have some connections with Freemasonry. I refer here to rendering of the setsquare and of the compasses – the most representative symbols of this group—or of the beehive with bees swarming around it (often seen in frontispieces and vignettes). To the same category belong Ștefan P. Niagoe's lithography which show the moment when the Freemason is initiated to light, but also the affirmation of the truth obtained by illuminating. It should be emphasized that symbols specific to the Enlightenment (such as the sun), one of their favourite metaphors are often used by Freemasons. All these are explainable if we take into account that Ioan Molnar-Piuariu, Dinicu Golescu, and perhaps Petru Maior (Molnar's good friends) were members of such secret societies.

I have also made an attempt to bring to life the diffusion route of the engravings. With that end in view I had to find out the sources of inspiration of the engravings in the old Romanian books, published at Buda, as well as the impact they had on their homonyms in the Romanian space,

namely the way in which the engravings from Buda influenced, in their turn, the illustrations in the three Romanian countries.

Therefore I have remarked that in case of the religious books they most often followed similar models printed on the Romanian territory (Râmnic, Blaj, Sibiu, Braşov, Buzău) both as regards the text and the illustrations. I have noticed that some images from the above-mentioned Romanian centers followed, in their turn, Ukrainian models (Kiev, Lviv) or Russian ones (Moscow). There are some exceptions, as well, when the source of inspiration of the image from Buda comes from the Occident, especially from Vienna. Concerning the decoration with engravings of the secular books, they used only foreign models, particularly Hungarian and Austrian ones. As a proof, when the engravers sign, they reveal their belonging to the nations mentioned above. On the other hand, examining the books printed in the Romanian area I was surprised to find in Oradea, Braşov, Sibiu, Buzău and Mănăstirea Neamţ graphic elements which derived from the religious books printed in Buda.

Consequently, I can say that a regular route was created: Vienna-Buda-the Romanian area and vice versa, where there used to circulate Romanian books and their engravings. The reciprocal change of ideas, information, people and masters, their role as well as the appearance of a new élite on the artistic plan, contributed to the development of art, culture and to promotion of progressive ideas, which lead to the coagulation of the Romanian nation's conscience.

The leadership of the typography of Buda, the typographers and the engravers tried hard for more decades not only to offer the readers thirstier and thirstier of knowledge, books with varied contents, rich in ideas, but also to confer them a pleasant aspect.

In conclusion if the conservative woodcuts in the church books are still used having slight tendencies to modernity, the puncheon prints existing less in the religious books and more frequently in the secular ones are more realistic regarding the themes and the manner of interpreting that constitute certain innovation whom the typography of Buda, situated closer to Occidental Europe, brings to the old Romanian book. As regards the lithography, the typography from Buda seems to have published the first lithographs in the Romanian books, which sometimes are imaginative, but they represent documents of history, of national culture and civilization. That offers an obvious proof of the innovating role that this center of culture spread among the Romanians from everywhere.