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WOODCUTS OF BYZANTINE TRADITION IN THE OLD ROMANIAN WRITINGS PRINTED IN BLAJ (1750-1830)¹

In 1737 the Greek Catholic Bishop Ioan Inochentie Micu-Klein moved the bishopric residence to Blaj intending to create here an important ecclesiastical, cultural and political centre of the Romanians from Transylvania. Accordingly he requested architects from Vienna, tracing out the plan of the town in the middle of which an imposing cathedral was to be built. Close by, he also aimed to set up a printing house, to open a system of national schools and to found libraries – very important facts which should provide spirituality to his people. Owing to the hard times, to the political struggle in which Inochentie Micu had firmly engaged, and mainly because of his exile to Rome (where he died) the cultural goals of the martyr fighter were only later achieved².

On account of these circumstances, Bishop Inochentie's desiderata – that a printing press should function in Blaj – were only put into effect in 1747 by his successor Petru Pavel Aron, an achievement which facilitated the opening of national schools in 1754³. Here, the representatives of the Transylvanian School (an ideological, cultural and political movement of Enlightenment type) were trained and worked for a while. Through their main historical, philological, literary and theological works they held an important position in raising the national awareness⁴.

In spite of numerous impediments and restrictions imposed in that time to Romanians by the Court of Vienna and by the Diet of Transylvania, within the typography of Blaj there carried on their activity gifted and hardworking typog-

¹ This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-PD-2012-3-0433.

² See for details: Augustin Bunea, *Episcopul Ioan Inocențiu Klein (1728-1751)*, Blaj, 1900.

³ See bibliography for details: Augustin Bunea, *Episcopii Petru Paul Aron și Dionisie Novacovici*, Blaj, 1902; Ioan Chindriș, Niculina Iacob, *Petru Pavel Aron*, Blaj, 2007.

⁴ D. Popović, *La littérature roumaine à l'époque des lumières*, Sibiu, 1945; Lucian Blaga, *Gândirea românească în Transilvania în secolul al XVIII-lea*, București, 1966; Dumitru Ghișe, Pompiliu Teodor, *Fragmentarium iluminist*, Cluj-Napoca, 1972; Ion Lungu, *Școala Ardeleană. Mișcare ideologică și națională iluministă*, București, 1978.



Fig. 1. Vlaicu, The Virgin with Child, *Ceaslov*, Blaj, 1751

Сл. 1. Влајку, Богородица са дететом, *Ceaslov*, Блaj, 1751.

raphers and wood engravers who came here from different parts of Transylvania, from Wallachia and Moldavia. Master craftsmen of other nationalities also worked in Blaj alongside with the Romanian artisans⁵. Consequently the creative work of the woodcutters Vlaicu, Ioanițiu Endrédi, Sandul Tipograf, Petru Papavici Râmnicăeanu, Dimitrie Finta⁶ is well known. They and some others who remained unidentified or anonymous executed more than 100 illustrations and title leaves. They also engraved several frontispieces, vignettes, initial letters and other ornaments that particularly decorate religious books. The didactic writings or other secular books are rather modest as regards the graphic art.

During the long period of time, 16th-19th centuries, undoubtedly in the second half of the 18th century, in Blaj was created the most important centre of Romanian xylography from Transylvania and one of the most interesting and exciting on the entire Romanian speaking territory⁷. Our assertion is based on the quantity and quality criteria. It must be emphasized that the woodcutters of Blaj (place which

⁵ Cornel Tatai-Baltă, Teodor Smericinski, *Din activitatea tipografiei de la Blaj (1787-1821) reflectată de un material arhivistic*, in *Apulum*, XIX, 1981, p. 239-258; Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *L'imprimerie de Blaj (1747-1830)*, in *Magyar könyvszemle*, Budapest, 2002, 2 szám, p. 113-128.

⁶ Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin, *Xilografii de la Blaj (1700-1800)*, Blaj, 1929; Gh. Oprescu, *Grafica românească în secolul al XIX-lea*; vol. I, București, 1942; Ioan Bianu, Nerva Hodoș, Dan Simonescu, *Bibliografia românească veche (1508-1830)*, Tom II-IV, București, 1910, 1936, 1944; Mircea Tomescu, *Istoria cărții românești*, București, 1968; Cornelius Dima-Drăgan, Aurelia Avramescu, *Die Illustration im altrumänischen Buch (1508-1830)*, in *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel-Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Nr. 17. vom 28 Februar 1981, p. 506-524; Eva Mârza (coordonator), *Repertoriul tipografilor, gravurilor, patronilor, editorilor cărților românești (1508-1830)*, Sibiu, 2008.

⁷ See bibliography for details: Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj (1750-1830)*, in *Apulum*, XII, 1974, p. 629-641; XIII, 1975, p. 719-745; XV, 1977, p. 705-727; XX, 1982, p. 221-239; XXI, 1983, p. 245-262; XXII, 1985, p. 183-196; XXIII, 1986, p. 211-222; idem, *Incursiune în xilogravura românească, sec. XVI-XIX*, in *Apulum*, XVII, 1979, p. 441-467; idem, *L'activité des graveurs sur bois de Blaj (1750-1830)*, in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXV, nr. 1-2, 1986, p. 113-121; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj (1750-1830)*, Blaj, 1995; idem, *Les sources européennes de la gravure sur bois de Blaj*, in *Series Byzantina*, Volume VI, Warsaw, 2008, p. 75-86; idem, *Ipostaze cultural-artistice*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 29-39.

became more animated by their presence here) followed a series of models which had particularly appeared in the Romanian writings printed beyond the Carpathians, namely at Râmnic, Bucharest, Buzău, Târgoviște, Snagov, Iași, Rădăuți etc. They successfully continued the best traditions of Romanian wood engraving, which reached the climax in the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), Prince of Wallachia. From the viewpoint of iconography and style, the influence of the western art, particularly of later Gothic style, of Renaissance, and of German Baroque is well marked in the works of Vlaicu, Ioanițiu Endrédi, Sandul Tipograf and of other anonymous authors. In this respect we have revealed the impact of Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543)⁸, Johann Georg Wolfgang (1662 or 1664-1744)⁹ etc.

On the other hand, Petru Papavici Râmniceanu, the most prolific woodcutter of Blaj, signer of 42 woodcuts and to whom some other 23 are assigned, is on the whole a traditionalist, frequently appealing to wood engravings printed in Romanian writings, especially at Râmnic. He also carved woodcuts under Ukrainian influence. However he sometimes followed Renaissance or Baroque models, probably of German origin.

It must be taken into account that even if the woodcutters of Blaj approached iconographic themes specific to Western art, such as *Madonna on the Crescent Moon (Mondsichelmadonna)* by Ioanițiu Endrédi, *Apostol*, 1767 or *The Panorama of Blaj* by unknown author, *Votiva apprecatio*, 1760, none the less one can note the persistence of iconographic themes of Byzantine-Balkan and Byzantine-Russian manner. The illustrations being very numerous, we are going to mention only the following:



Fig. 2. Sandul Tipograf, Descent into Hell, *Apostol*, Blaj, 1767
Сл. 2. Сандул Типограф, Силазак у пакао, *Apostol*, Блај, 1767

⁸ Idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*; idem, *Influența lui Dürer asupra xilogravurilor din vechile tipărituri românești (sec. XVII-XIX)*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, XIV-XV, 2004-2005, p. 173-182; idem, *Influența lui Dürer și a unor artiști germani asupra xilogravurilor de la Blaj din a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea*, in *Apulum*, XLIII/2, 2006, p. 159-171.

⁹ Idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*; idem, *Le baroque dans la gravure sur bois de Blaj*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, II, 1992, p. 77-91; idem, *Materialul grafic al Molitvenicului de la Blaj din 1784. Diversitatea surselor sale de inspirație*, in *Transilvania*, Serie nouă, Anul XL (CXLIV), nr. 5-6, 2012, p. 66-72.



Fig. 3. Petru Papavici, The Healing of the Man Born Blind, *Penticostar*, Blaj, 1768

Сл. 3. Петру Папавици, Исцелѣне слепог од рођења, *Penticostar*, Блај, 1768

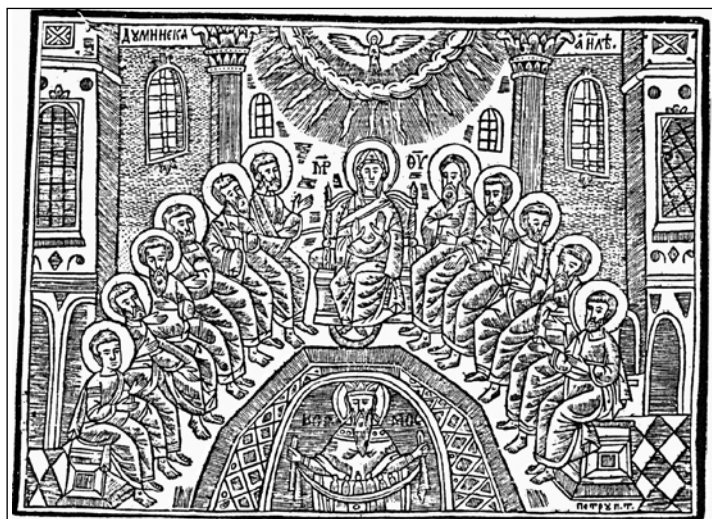


Fig. 4. Petru Papavici, Pentecost, *Penticostar*, Blaj, 1768

Сл. 4. Петру Папавици, Педесетница, *Penticostar*, Блај, 1768

- **The Virgin with Child (Hodegetria)** by Vlaicu, *Ceaslov*, 1751 (image executed after a copy of the icon from the Monastery of Nicula, which is said to have shed tears on February, 4, 1694¹⁰. It was painted on panel by Luca from Iclodul Mare in 1681.);

- **Descent into Hell** by Sandul Tipograf, *Apostol*, 1767 (this illustration has many things in common with the one signed by Ioanichie B(akov) and dated to 1700, in the *Penticostar* of Buzău from 1701. It

¹⁰ Idem, *Xilogravurile lui Vlaicu de la Blaj (1751-1752)*, in *Acta Musei Napocensis*, XX, 1983, p. 832-833; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 61-63.



Fig. 5. Ioanichie Bakov, Pentecost, *Penticostar*, Buzău, 1701

Сл. 5. Јоанићи Баков, Педесетница, *Penticostar*, Бузау, 1701

was taken again in the *Apostol* of Buzău from 1704. The theme frequently appeared in wall paintings and in decorations of metal book covers in the Romanian Principalities¹¹);

- **The Incredulity of Saint Thomas**, dated to 1768, **The Holy Women at Sepulchre**, **The Healing of the Paralytic**, **Jesus and the Samaritan Woman**, **The Healing of the Man Born Blind**, **Ascension**, **The Vision of Peter of Alexandria**, **Pentecost**, **The Sunday of all Saints**, by Petru Papavici Râmniceanu, *Penticostar*, 1768 (the respective themes had previously appeared in the *Penticostar* of Buzău from 1701, some of them bearing the signature of Ioanichie Bakov, most of them recurring in the *Penticostar* of Bucharest from 1743. The illustrations of the two *Penticostar* – Buzău and Bucharest – and those in the *Penticostar* of Râmnic from 1743 are related. Petru Papavici Râmniceanu showed preference of the models of Râmnic, some of them being signed by Popa Mihai Typographer of Râmnic; as to **The Holy Women at Sepulchre**, Papavici appealed to both the woodcut of Râmnic and to that of Buzău or Bucharest. **Pentecost** is anyhow done after the illustration of Buzău or of Bucharest only, but woodcuts used in Ukrainian books from Kiev: *Penticostarion*, 1631, and *Evangelhie Ucitelinoe*, 1637, were at the basis of these illustrations)¹²;

¹¹ Idem, *Gravorii*, in *Apulum*, XIII, p. 725; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 80.

¹² Idem, *Gravorii*, in *Apulum*, XV, p. 710-711; idem, *Receptarea xilogravurii ucrainene la Blaj*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, IV, 1994, p. 99-100; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 87-91; idem, *Pagini de artă românească*, Blaj, 1998, p. 45; T. N. Kameneva, A.A. Guseva, *Ucrain-*



Fig. 6. Petru Papavici, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, 1773, *Strastnic*, Blaj, 1773

Сл. 6. Петру Папавици, Улазак Христов у Јерусалим, 1773, *Strastnic*, Блај, 1773



Fig. 7. Ilia, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, *Apostol*, Lviv, 1639

Сл. 7. Илија, Улазак Христов у Јерусалим, *Apostol*, Лавов, 1639

- **Christ's Entry into Jerusalem**, dated 1773, by Petru Papavici Râmnicăanu, *Strastnic*, 1773 (even if the theme is repeated in the Romanian books, it is obvious that the engraver of Blaj appealed to the work signed by Ilia in the *Apostol* from Lviv, 1639)¹³;

- **Saint Nicholas**, by Petru Papavici Râmnicăanu, *Acatistier*, 1774;

- **Saint John Chrisostom, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Great (the Dialogue)** by Petru Papavici Râmnicăanu, *Liturghie*,

schie cnighi chirillovskoï peciati, XVI-XVIII vv. *Catalog izdanii*, Vîpusc I, 1574 g.-I polovina XVII. v., Moskva, 1976, p. 25-27, fig. 548, 547, 549, 551, 552, 417, 553, 418, 554.

¹³ Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *Receptarea xilografurii ucrainene*, p. 101-102; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 94-95; idem, *Pagini*, p. 47-48; T.N Kameneva, A.A. Guseva, *op. cit.*, p. 28, fig. 699.



Fig. 8. Petru Papavici, Saint Demetrius, *Minologhion*, Blaj, 1781

Сл. 8. Петру Папавици, Свети Димитрије, *Minologhion*, Блај, 1781

Fig. 9. Mihai Ramniceanul, Saint Demetrius, *Antologhion*, Ramnic, 1737

Сл. 9. Михаи Рамницеанул, Свети Димитрије, *Antologhion*, Рамниц, 1737

Fig. 10. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, *Minologhion*, Blaj, 1781

Сл. 10. Ваведење (Улазак Богородице у храм), *Minologhion*, Блај, 1781

Fig. 11. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, *Praznicini Minei*, Venice, 1538

Сл. 11. Ваведење (Улазак Богородице у храм), *Praznicini Minei*, Венеција, 1538

1775 (the similarity of these illustrations to those in the *Liturghier*, printed at Kiev in 1620, 1629 and 1639 is conclusive; the images from Kiev are very similar to those in the *Liturghier* printed at Striatyn in 1604¹⁴);

¹⁴ Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *Receptarea xilografurii ucrainene*, p. 102, 111; idem, *Gra-vorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 98-99; idem, *Pagini*, p. 48-49; T. N. Kameneva, A. A. Guseva, *op. cit.*, p. 19, 24, 28, fig. 406, 407, 408; p. 14, fig. 357, 358, 359.

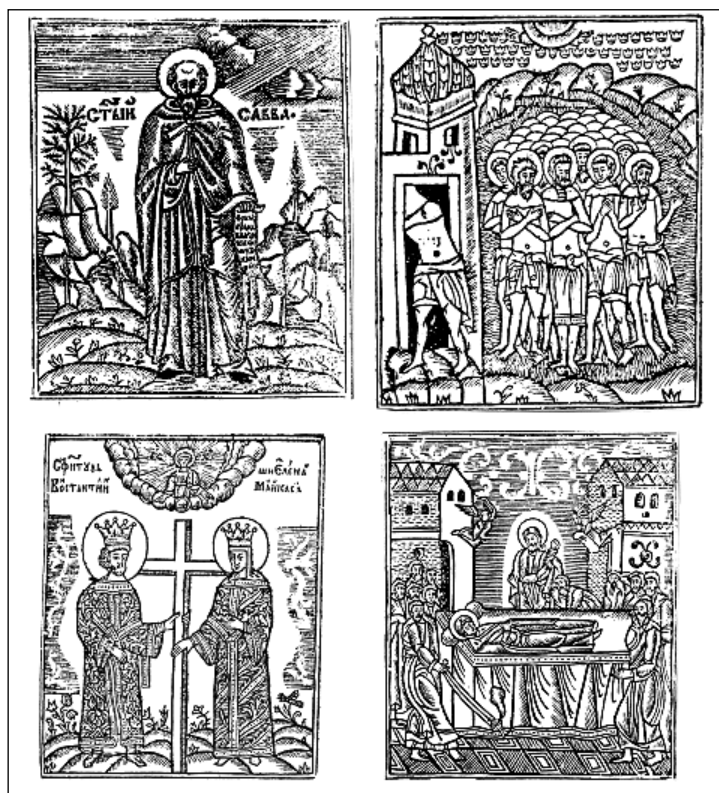


Fig. 12. Saint Sava,
Minologhion, Blaj, 1781

Сл. 12. Свети Сава,
Minologhion, Блај, 1781

Fig. 13. The 40 Martyrs,
Minologhion, Blaj, 1781

Сл. 13. 40 мученика,
Minologhion, Блај, 1781

Fig. 14. Constantine and
Helen, *Minologhion*, Blaj,
1781

Сл. 14. Константин и
Јелена, *Minologhion*,
Блај, 1781

Fig. 15. The Dormition of
the Virgin, *Minologhion*,
Blaj, 1781

Сл. 15. Успење
Богородице,
Minologhion, Блај, 1781

- Allpious Simeon the Stylite, Birth of the Virgin, Saint Demetrius, Synod of Angels, dated to 1779, by Petru Papavici Râmnicéanu, *Minologhion*, 1781 (the models of these woodcuts were the illustrations in the *Antologhion* of Râmnic from 1737, executed by Mihai Râmnicéanu, who dated *The Synod of Angels* to 1736¹⁵);

- The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, Saint Andrew, Saint Sava (+532), Saint Theodosius, Pious Anthony, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Presentation of Christ in the Temple, The 40 Martyrs, Saint George, Constantine and Helen, Transfiguration, The Dormition of the Virgin – all these illustrations are assigned to Petru Papavici Râmnicéanu, *Minologhion*, 1781 **The Entrance of the mother of God into the Temple** was copied after that from *Praznicini Minei* printed at Venice in 1538 in the famous typography managed by Božidar Vuković¹⁶. **Saint Andrew** followed the model of a simi-

¹⁵ Cornel Tatai-Baltă, in *Apulum*, XV, p. 720; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 100-102.

¹⁶ Idem, *Un model venețian pentru o xilogravură de la Blaj (1781)*, in *Ars Transilvaniae*, XXII, 2012, p. 127-131; idem, *Caleidoscop artistic*, Alba Iulia, 2013, p. 19-25; Dejan Medaković, *Grafica srpskih stampanih kniga XV-XVII-veka*, Beograd, 1958, p. 133-134, 204-205, 240, Pl. 45/1.

lar woodcut which decorated *Antologhion* printed at Lviv in 1638 and 1643¹⁷. The other illustrations were executed after the ones existing in the *Antologhion* of Râmnic from 1737¹⁸;

- **The Trinity (The Three Visitors at Mamre)** – attributed to Petru Papavici Râmnicănu, *Octoih*, 1783 (a similar representation can be found in *Octoih*, Râmnic, 1750, which followed the model of a woodcut from the *Octoih* of Buzău from 1700);

- **Saint John of Damascus** by Dimitrie Finta, *Octoih*, 1792 (the analogy of this figurative image with the one that decorate the *Octoih* of Râmnic from 1706, whose stereotyped plate was reused in the subsequent editions of the *Octoih* of Bucharest from 1709, 1720, 1730, 1731, 1736 and 1746 and of Târgoviște, 1712, is obvious¹⁹).

Stylistically in the religious woodcuts of Blaj, the following elements of Byzantine tradition are to be noted: a certain concern to stylize, decorative effects and symmetry; the frontal position of the personages and their hieratic and hierarchic rendering; the isocephaly; the landscape and architectures are more or less conventional; the compression of plans or the reduced perspective; the clothes etc.

The sources of inspiration of the above-mentioned engravings can be found – as it was shown above – in the religious books printed on the Romanian territory (Râmnic, Bucharest, Buzău and so on) or abroad (Kiev, Lviv, Venice – in the typography belonging to Božidar Vuković).

The abundance of oriental and occidental writings in the well supplied libraries of Blaj could offer the engravers a direct and permanent contact with the graphic achievements. Blaj has always been receptive to the great spiritual and cultural values spread in different regions of Europe.

The presence of Byzantine elements in the decoration of the writings of Blaj is justified if we take into account that the majority of Romanians belong either to Orthodox or to Greek-Catholic rites.

Not accidentally, a part of the woodcuts executed by the gifted craftsmen of Blaj were, in their turn, models for several engravers who worked afterwards in the typographies of Buda (today in Hungary), Sibiu, Brașov, the Monastery of Neamț, Bucharest etc.²⁰.

¹⁷ Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *Receptarea xilogravurii ucrainene*, p. 112; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 105-106; idem, *Pagini*, p. 50; T. N. Kameneva, A. A. Guseva, *op. cit.*, p. 27, 30, fig. 650.

¹⁸ Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 103-109.

¹⁹ Idem, in *Apulum*, XXI, p. 257; idem, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*, p. 111-112; idem *Reprezentarea Sfântului Ioan Damaschin în Octoihurile românești vechi*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, VIII-IX, 1998-1999, p. 255; idem, *Interferențe cultural-artistice europene*, Blaj, 2003, p. 20-21.

²⁰ See particularly: Cornel Tatai-Baltă, *Gravorii în lemn de la Blaj*; Anca Elisabeta Tatai, *Xilogravura de la Sibiu (sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea-începutul secolului al XIX-lea)*, Alba Iulia, 2007; eadem, *Tradiție și inovație în tehnica și arta ilustrației cărții românești tipărite la Buda(1780-1830)*, Alba Iulia, 2010; eadem, *Din istoria și arta cărții românești vechi: gravura de la Buda (1780-1830)*, Cluj-Napoca. 2011.

Корнел Татаи-Балта, Анка Елизабета Татаи
ДРВОРЕЗИ ВИЗАНТИЈСКЕ ТРАДИЦИЈЕ У СТАРО-РУМУНСКИМ СПИСИМА
ШТАМПАНИМ У БЛАЈУ (1750.-1830.)

Блај, смештен у срцу Трансилваније, наметнуо се у румунској историји као важан верски, културни и политички центар. У другој половини XVIII века и током првих деценија XIX века, у овој типографији, наставили су своје делатности надарени и вредни дуборесци као што су Влајку (Vlaicu), Јоанитиу Ендреди (Ioanițiu Endrédi), Сандул Типограф (Sandul Tipograf), Petru Papavici Râmnicăanu (Petru Papavici Râmnicăanu), Димитрије Финта (Dimitrie Finta) и други анонимни дуборесци из различитих делова Трансилваније, Влашке и Молдавије. Они су украшавали верске књиге малим рамовима у облику листа, илустрацијама, илустрацијама на почетним странама књиге, виџетама и другим украсима. Зато је у чувеном граду који лежи на ушћу Тарнаве установљен један од најважнијих центара румунских дрвореза из Трансилваније, као један од најзанимљивијих и задивљујућих центара на читавој територији коју су насељавали Румуни.

Важно је напоменути да чак и ако су неки од дрвореза из Блаја иконографски и стилски под утицајем Западне уметности (нарочито касне готике, ренесансе и барока) може се такође приметити истрајност иконографских тема специфичних за византијско - балканску и византијско - руску традицију. Споменућемо следеће међу њима: Богородица Одигитрија са дететом, од Влајкуа, Цеаслов (Vlaicu, Ceaslov), 1751.; Силазак у пакао, од Сандула Типографа, Апостол (Sandul Tipograf, Apostol), 1767.; Свете жене на Гробу, Вазнесење, Визија Петра Александријског, Педесетнице, Penticostar, 1768. потписао Петру Папавици Рамницеану (Petru Papavici Râmnicăanu); Улазак Христов у Јерусалим, Strastnic, 1773. (потписао Петру Папавици Рамницеану); Свети Никола, Acatistier, 1774. (потписао Петру Папавици Рамницеану); Симеон Столпник, Рођење Богородице, Синод анђела, Minologhion, 1781. (потписао Петру Папавици Рамницеану); Ваведене, Свети Сава, Свети Антоније, Сретење, 40 мученика, Константин и Јелена, Преображење, Успење Богородице, Minologhion, 1781. (сви дрворези у релевантној књизи приписују се Петру Папавици Рамницеану); Три Посетиоца Мамре, Octoih, 1783. (приписују се Петру Папавици Рамницеану); Свети Јован Дамаскин од Димитрија Финта (Dimitrie Finta), Octoih, 1792. итд.

Стилски посматрано, у религиозним дрворезима треба напоменути следеће елементе византијске традиције: извесна проблематика стилизовања, декоративни ефекти и симетрија; фронтални положај ликова и њихов хијерархијски приказ; „iso-cerphali“ (постављање глава фигура на исти ниво); пејзаж и архитектура су више или мање конвенционални; компресија планова или редукована перспектива итд.

Извори инспирације за горе поменуте гравуре могу се пронаћи у религиозним књигама штампаним на територији Румуније (Рамниц (Râmnic), Букурешт (București), Бузау (Buzău), итд.) или у иностранству (Кијев, Лавов, Венеција - у типографији која припада Божидару Вуковићу).

Обиље оријенталних и западних списа у чувеним библиотекама Блаја могло је понудити граверима директан и сталан контакт са графичким достигнућима. Блај је увек било отворен за велике духовне и културне вредности које су биле распрострањене по различитим областима Европе.

Присуство византијских елемената у украсима списа из Блаја оправдано је ако се узме у обзир да већина Румуна припада или православној или грчко-католичкој верисповести.