FILIP MOLDOVEANUL – THE FIRST ROMANIAN-LANGUAGE TYPOGRAPHER IN SIBIU

Erich Agnes Terezia
Prof. PhD., Valahia University of Târgoviște

Abstract:The city of Sibiu, during the XVI-th century, underwent two important events: the Lutheran reform and the establishment of the first printing house in Transylvania, with the Saxon scholars struggling to enforce the reform and the printing art starting to be embraced by the city's masters and the chancellery employees. Here was the place where Filip Moldoveanul, also known as Philip the Painter (Maler) was mentioned in 1521, as one of the liaisons of the Sibiu Chancellery to the Romanian Countries. As the Saxon University of Sibiu had decided, in 1543, that all the inhabitants, regardless of their social position and national affiliation, should receive the new faith, Filip Moldoveanul printed in 1544 ***Catehismul românesc*** *('Romanian catechism'), which is considered to be the first Romanian book. As for where the* ***Catechism*** *appeared, there have been several opinions throughout the time which will be presented in this paper. The volume ornaments generally follow the wood engraved frontispieces as well as the large initials which appear in Macarie's books printed at Dealu Monastery. A novelty is that Filip Moldoveanul engraved a new cliché in wood and put the emblem of Sibiu on the frontispieces (a crown and two crossed swords top ends down).*

Keywords: Filip Moldoveanul, Romanian catechism, printing, Sibiu, typographic ornaments

The city of Sibiu, located on the traders' route between the Occident and the Orient, is the place where Filip Moldoveanul, also known as Philip the Painter (Maler) was mentioned in 1521, as one of the liaisons of the Sibiu Chancellery to the Romanian Countries. The connections Sibiu had with Moldavia and Wallachia were increasingly strong during this age and more and more Romanians were employed at the chancellery of the Sibiu magistrate. In addition to translating letters from Slavonic and Romanian, they were sent on diplomatic missions. Thus, Filip Moldoveanul is mentioned as an envoy on 1537, 1538 and 1539 missions, sent to Radu Paisie, the prince of Wallachia. Other times, he was sent by the city magistrate either with gifts or in order to find news about the movement of Turkish troops. It is impossible, during these journeys, not to have had discussions about the typographer Dimitrie Liubavici from Târgoviște, who, under Radu Paisie's rule, carried out his printing activity in a system that he himself patronised.

During this time, Sibiu underwent two important events: the Lutheran reform and the establishment of the first printing house in Transylvania, with the Saxon scholars struggling to enforce the reform and the printing art starting to be embraced by the city's masters and the chancellery employees. It is believed that the printing house from Sibiu was founded by the magistrate Theobaldus Gryphius, a doctor of medicine and licentiate in the art of printing, a member of the family of renowned typographers Griff from Reutlingen.[1] The first book printed in Sibiu, in 1529, was Thomas Gemmarius' *Gramatica Latină* ('Latin Grammar'), and in 1530 the printing press issued doctor Sebastian Pauschner's *Tratat împotriva*

[1] Sigismund Jako. *Tipografia de la Sibiu și locul ei în istoria tiparului românesc din secolul al XVI-lea.* In: "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj", year VII, 1964, passim.

BDD-A27418 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:59 UTC)

ciumei(‘Treatise on Plague’), printed by Lucas Trapoldner. In 1534, the first paper mill in the country was founded at Orlat, near Sibiu, which proves that demands for paper were larger and larger, both for use in the magistrate’s chancellery and for the printing house that operated in the city.

The city charters reveal that Filip Moldoveanu was paid to write and interpret Romanian letters (“*scribendis literis olachicalibus; interpretatoris literarum walachicalium; pro laboris literarum olachicalium; scriptura et lectura litterarum olachicalium*”).[2] In addition to being a calligrapher and interpreter, he also learned the art of printing, engraving of letters and xylography, at the same time as the magister Lucas Trapoldner. As the Saxon University of Sibiu had decided, in 1543, that all the inhabitants, regardless of their social position and national affiliation, should receive the new faith[3], Filip Moldoveanul printed in 1544 **Catehismul românesc** (‘Romanian catechism’), which is considered to be the first Romanian book. In the financial records of the city of Sibiu, dated July 16, 1544, the following expenses are mentioned: “*În aceeași zi, după hotărârea domnilor, membrii sfatului orășenesc s-au dat magistrului Filip Pictor pentru tipărirea catehismului românesc bacșiș 2 florini*” (‘That same day, following the lords’ decision, the members of the city council paid the magister Filip the Painter 2 florins for printing the Romanian catechism’). Another piece of information regarding the same **Catehism românesc** is to be found in a 1546 letter belonging to the Saxon priest Adalbert Wurmloch from Bistrița, addressed to a friend in Silesia: “*S-a tradus Catehismul în limba română și s-a tipărit la Sibiu, cu litere sîrbești, care seamănă cu cele grecești. Mulți dintre preoți au îmbrățișat această carte, socotind-o sfîntă, alții însă o disprețuiesc.*”[4] (‘The Catechism was translated into Romanian and was printed in Sibiu, in Serbian letters which resemble the Greek ones. Many priests embraced this book, deeming it holy, but some others despise it’).

We may conclude from the above that the Saxon municipality of Sibiu, under the influence of the Lutheran doctrine, arranged to have the **Catechism** translated and printed in the language known to the people. The same letter of priest Wurmloch also includes a passage in which he makes a picturesque description of Vlachs: “*Se află în Transilvania un popor pe care-i numim valahi, ei citesc evanghelia și epistolele lui Pavel nu în limba lor, ci într-o limbă străină, pe care o numesc sîrbească. Această limbă n-o înțeleg cei neînvățați, decît dacă le-o tarduce preotul lor*” (‘There are some people in Transylvania we call Wallachians, who read the gospel and Paul’s epistles not in their own language, but a foreign one they call Serbian. The uneducated cannot understand this language unless their priest translates it to them’). In conclusion, in 1546, the Romanian priests who read the gospel in church in Slavonic would also translate the passages into Romanian so that the people could understand. Before the appearance of the **Catechism**, the Romanian language had been introduced in the Romanian churches from Transylvania not under the pressure of the Reform, which required that the “sacred” language should be replaced with the vernacular, but out of necessity, the translation being annexed at the end of some parts of the liturgy, especially when reading the Gospel or the Apostle.

As for where the **Catechism** appeared, there have been several opinions throughout the time. Thus, according to P. P. Panaitescu, Sibiu cannot be considered to be the place of appearance because in 1544 there was no printing house in this city and the isolated issuance of this print was not followed by any other book.[5] In the absence of a printing office in Sibiu, it was suggested that this book may have been printed in Brașov, where Honterus had founded

[2] Arnold Huttmann; Pavel Binder. *Contribuții la biografia lui Filip Moldoveanul, primul tipograf român*. In: “Limbă și literatură”, 1968, vol. XVI, p. 160.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 164.
[4] P.P. Panaitescu. *Începuturile și biruința scrisului în limba română*. București: Editura Academiei R. P. R., 1965, p. 121.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

BDD-A27418 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:59 UTC)

a printing house as early as 1529.[6] But this Braşov-based printing works would bring out writings in Latin characters, while the Romanian **Catechism** was printed in Slavonic letters. Such printing works could not be improvised, particularly for printing one single book. At that time, however, there was at Târgovişte a printing house which used Latin characters[7] - that owned by Dimitrie Liubavici. Dan Simonescu states, regarding Filip the Painter (Maler) mentioned in the financial records of Sibiu, that the small amount of money he had received could not cover the expenses for printing the book, but it was only in reward of a favour done in connection with this print. On the other hand, Filip was not a typographer; his title of "magister" corresponded, in 14th-century Transylvanian towns, to that of prothonotary (who held a permanent position in the city chancellery). Dan Simonescu concludes that Filip Pictor was a liaison of Sibiu to Wallachia and he arranged for the printing of the **Catechism.**

Following the printing of the **Catechism**, Filip Moldoveanul went on to print a **Slavonic Tetraevanghel** 'Four Gospels' in 1546, in fact a reissue of that printed by Macarie in 1512. It had been ordered by Moldavians as well, hence the emblem of Moldavia printed on page 289 of the book. The text may have been requested by Prince Petru Rareş himself or by his metropolitan Teofan I, who was known to have elevated scholarly preoccupations, as a passionate lover of the religious book. The emblem of the city of Sibiu, the triangle of the lotus flower[8] with the two crossed swords top ends down and a crown above is printed four times in the text, which clearly points to Sibiu as the printing location.

The epilogue of the work mentions both the printing date and the typographer's name: "*eu Filip Moldoveanul m-am trudit a săvârşi această carte… în anul 7054 dela Naşterea lui Hristos 1546… s-a sfârşit această carte, în luna iunie 22 zile*"[9] ('I, Filip Moldoveanul, have toiled to finish this book 22 days in the month of June').

This print completes the biography of the first Romanian typographer, pointing to his Moldavian origin, while the xylographs show why he was called Pictor 'Painter' Maler. The repeated occurrence of the emblem of Sibiu at the beginning of the text of each gospel and the representation of the Moldavian emblem on the last page (one occurrence only and in an unimportant position) prove that the significance of the two coats of arms was different. That of Sibiu referred to the owner of the printing works or the city that financed the printing, while the second, of Moldavia, seems to point to the typographer's place of origin. The work stands out through beautifully engraved letters, the tasteful lay-out of the text, neat and clear printing, which proves that this was not a first attempt at printing, but a continuation of an already initiated practice. The volume ornaments generally follow the wood engraved frontispieces as well as the large initials which appear in Macarie's books printed at Dealu Monastery. A novelty is that Filip Moldoveanul engraved a new cliché in wood and put the emblem of Sibiu on the frontispieces (a crown and two crossed swords top ends down).[10] At the end of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John, below the text, there are their symbols. At the end of the gospels, on an entire page, there is Christ's face, while near the right foot of the portrait there is Filip Moldoveanu's monogram. At the end of the Gospel According to Matthew, the portrait is represented on the full page, while at the end of the Gospel of Luke, below the large xylograph, the symbol of Luke the Evangelist is placed, while the emblem of Sibiu is set at the beginning of the Gospel According to Matthew. The initial **M** which also

[6] V. Molin. *Interpretări noi în legătură cu Catehismul de la Sibiu*. In: "Mitropolia Ardealului", V, 1960, nr. 1-2, pp. 36-54.
[7] D. Simonescu. *Catehismul sibian*. In: "Arhiva românească", X, 1945-1946, pp. 88-98.
[8] During the Middle Ages, the triangle of the lotus flower was the emblem of the Province of Sibiu (the former Comitatus Cibiniensis, later on *Şapte scaune săseşti* 'the Seven Saxon Seats').
[9] I. Bianu; D. Simonescu. *Bibliografia Românească veche: 1508-1830*. Tom IV. Bucureşti: Atelierele Grafice Socec, 1944, p.2.
[10] L. Demény; L. Demény. *Xilogravurile lui Filip Moldoveanul*. In: "Carte, tipar şi societate la români în secolul al XVI-lea". Bucureşti: Editura Kriterion, 1986, p. 276.

BDD-A27418 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:59 UTC)

represents the emblem of Sibiu is to be noted.[11] In the text, one can notice the presence of an ornamented initial represented in the Baroque style, a Latin I rendered as a two-legged candleholder, its body covered with small leaves. This capital letter was thought to have originated from the printing press of Sibiu because it would never come up again in Romanian prints. The model of Filip Moldiveanu's engravings is not yet known, but he seems to have made them himself. The engravings are accompanied by texts in Slavonic written in Cyrillic letters which were engraved in wood along with the picture. Therefore, we should rule out the possibility that a cliché from a print with Latin letters might have been used.

In 1550, Filip Moldoveanul borrowed 100 florins from the city authorities, which he returned in 1552, as shown by the city's financial records. He used the money to print a new work, hire apprentices and purchase paper from the Braşov mill, as proved by the watermark. Thus, he issued the first bilingual book for Romanians **Evangheliarul slavo-român** ('The Slavic-Romanian Gospel Book') (1551-1553).[12] The Romanian part appears to have been translated from Slavonic, while the presence of some Transylvanian regional words and expressions suggest that the translation may have been done in Transylvania, probably under Lutheran influence as well. Unlike the 1546 **Tetraevanghelslavon**, the **Evangheliarulslavo-român** has no mention of the location or the person who made the book. The identification element was the shape of the letters, that "M with feet" and the initial **M** that imitate the crown of Sibiu, which only appear in the prints of Filip Moldoveanul and are not to be found in any other 16th-century printing office. Another important element used by specialists to date the print was the watermark of the paper Filip Moldoveanul used, paper which was produced in Braşov, at the mill founded in 1546 by the merchants Hans Fuchs and Johannes Benkner; this confirms the assumption that printing was done in 1551-1553.

Starting with 1555, Filip Moldoveanul no longer appeared in the records of the city of Sibiu, so we may assume he had probably died by that time, and his place in the city chancellery was taken by "Filius Philippi pictoris" until his death in 1573. In 1555, the position of notary would be filled in by Lucas Trapoldner's son, Emanoil Trapoldner.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bianu, I.; Simonescu, D. Bibliografia Românească veche: 1508-1830. Tom IV. București: Atelierele Grafice Socec, 1944.
2. Demény, Layos.; Demény, Lidia. Xilogravurile lui Filip Moldoveanul. In: "Carte, tipar și societate la români în secolul al XVI-lea". București: Editura Kriterion, 1986.
3. Huttmann, Arnold; Binder, Pavel. Contribuții la biografia lui Filip Moldoveanul, primul tipograf român. In: "Limbă și literatură", 1968, vol. XVI.
4. Jako, Sigismund. Tipografia de la Sibiu și locul ei în istoria tiparului românesc din secolul al XVI-lea. In: "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj", year VII, 1964.
5. Molin, V. Interpretări noi în legătură cu Catehismul de la Sibiu. In: "Mitropolia Ardealului", V, 1960, nr. 1-2.
6. Panaitescu, P.P. Începuturile și biruința scrisului în limba română. București: Editura Academiei R. P. R., 1965.

[11] L. Demény. *Xilogravurile lui Filip Moldoveanul*. In: "Studii şi cercetări de istoria artei", Seria artă plastică, 16 (1969), nr. 2, pp. 229-241.
[12] *Evangheliarul slavo-român de la Sibiu*.Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1971.

BDD-A27418 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:59 UTC)