

Caspar Luyken's Illustrated Bible among the Serbs and Bulgarians in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Abstract: The engraving of the *Finding of Moses* from Caspar Luyken's Amsterdam (1694) and Nuremberg (1708) bibles served as a model for Teodor Kračun's painting for the small iconostasis of the Orthodox cathedral in Sremski Karlovci (1780), for the Viennese printer J. G. Mansfeld's frontispiece of Dositej Obradović's *Poem of the Deliverance of Serbia* (1789) and for Dimitar Zograf's fresco in the vault of the exonarthex of the Rila Monastery (1843). Three different versions of the original copper engraving reveal how Luyken's Bible was used in support of the cause of religious revival and national liberation of the Serbs and Bulgarians in the Habsburg and Ottoman empires respectively in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth.

Keywords: Caspar Luyken's illustrated Bible, *Finding of Moses*, Vienna, Teodor Kračun, Sremski Karlovci, Joseph Georg Mansfeld, Belgrade, Dositej Obradović, Rila Monastery, Dimitar Zograf

What we know of the engraver and book illustrator Caspar Luyken or Luikeny (Amsterdam, 1671–1708) is little other than basic biographical facts.¹ He was the son of a well-known and distinguished engraver and printer, Jan Luyken (Amsterdam, 1649–1712). The father outlived the son by a few years and was twice his age when he died. Jan, also known to have been a poet, was described as *holländische Callot*, which best reflects the popularity of his prolific graphic work.² Caspar was occasionally referred to as Gaspar, and mistakenly as Jan's younger brother.

At first Luyken the Younger worked for his father. In 1698, an already accomplished master of his trade, he moved to Nuremberg to join an even more famous engraver and publisher, Christoph Weigel. In 1703 he moved to Vienna, and in 1707 returned to Amsterdam, where he died a few years later. That his death was not only premature but also unexpected seems obvious from the fact that he got married in 1705.

What has earned Caspar Luyken a place in all lexicons of the painters and engravers of any significance is the fact that he independently engraved

¹ J. Landwehr, *Emblem Books in the Low Countries 1554–1949: A Bibliography* (Utrecht 1970), xlv–xlv, 371.

² H. A. Müller, *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon: Leben und Werke berühmtesten Bildenden Künstler* (Frankfurt am Main 1922), vol. III (Lhérie–Quittry), 64.

and signed 1,187 folio-format prints for the Amsterdam edition of the illustrated bible *Historiae celeb. Veteris et Novi Testamenti* (1694),³ known as the painters' manual of the Luykens, father and son, and that he cut another thirty-six together with his father.⁴ Unlike Luyken the Elder's recognizable slender figures, modelled after the works of contemporary painters, Luyken the Younger uses a more vigorous burin work, making his figures stand out prominently against the background. In 1698 in Regensburg, Christoph Weigel printed Luyken's most popular seventy-two engravings from the Amsterdam Bible. To the second and enlarged Nuremberg edition (1708), Caspar contributed 1,700 folio-format prints.⁵ In keeping with common practice, there is at the bottom of each print the reference, in capital letters, to the corresponding biblical text, as well as the biblical text in Latin and German.

Although Caspar Luyken's lavish Dutch-German bible is known in Serbia from the prints kept in Vienna (a private collection and the Albertina),⁶ it has not received too much scholarly attention. Its great popularity in Austrian artistic circles has been noted,⁷ and as far as its influence on Serbian baroque painters is concerned, a dozen more Luyken's prints have been identified as having been used in the last decades of the eighteenth century as models⁸ for icons painted by the best Serbian baroque painters, to mention but *Dimitrije Bačević* and his iconostasis in the monastery of Jazak (1769), *Teodor Kračun* and the iconostasis in the choir loft in the Serbian Orthodox cathedral of Sremski Karlovci (1780), *Jakov Orfelin* at Obrež (1778), *Stapar* (1790) and *Kupinovo* (1792), or *Teodor Ilić Češljarić* at Mokrin (1782) and *Bačko Petrovo Selo* (1793). Luyken's Old Testament scenes used as models were *Abraham's Sacrifice*, *The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek*, *The Burning Bush* and *The Finding of Moses*, while the New Testament scenes were *The Beheading of St John the Baptist*, *The Annunciation*, *The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man*, and *Christ and Nicodemus*.

³ A. von Wurzbach, *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon auf grund archivalischer forschungen bearbeitet* (Vienna & Leipzig 1910), vol. 2 (L-Z), 73-74.

⁴ E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, dessinateurs et graveurs* (Paris 1956), vol. 5, 669.

⁵ H. Vollmer, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart begründet von Ulrich Thieme und Felix Becker* (Leipzig 1929), 488.

⁶ Ibid.; see also M. Jovanović, "Ilustrovane Biblije iz biblioteka u Beču i Minhenu", *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta X-1* (Belgrade 1968), 300, fig. 3.

⁷ Jovanović, "Ilustrovane Biblije", n. 3.

⁸ Lj. Stošić, *Zapadnoevropska grafika kao predložak u srpskom slikarstvu XVIII veka* (Belgrade 1992), 66-68, 95-102, and figs. 67-70, 73-74 (with a French summary: *La gravure occidentale comme modèle dans la peinture serbe du XVIII^e siècle*).

Unlike the other Serbian painters of the epoch, Teodor Kračun cannot be said to have literally reiterated or copied graphic models, especially when it comes to his best work, the icons for the iconostasis of the Metropolitan's Court Chapel of St George painted in 1780, now in Sremski Karlovci Cathedral. Yet, his use of drawing and glazes has led art historians to conclude that these icons "followed their possible graphic models more strictly" than his other works.⁹ Trained at the Imperial and Royal Academy in Vienna, Kračun's icon of the Finding of Moses — the most frequently reproduced religious painting of Serbian baroque¹⁰ — reveals the extent to which he was influenced by the concept of Caspar Luyken's print.

All figures in the composition, except for the girl with folded arms in the background — Miriam, Moses' elder sister — matches Luyken's engraving both in terms of postures and gestures and in details of clothing, jewellery and hairstyle, even in the staged setting of a royal garden.¹¹ Major modifications made by Kračun amount to placing the baby Moses into a wooden chest with the open lid instead of a bulrush basket, and to introducing two black figures — a lady-in-waiting and a page with a parasol, and a hazy silhouette of Sremski Karlovci overlooking the Danube with the Serbian Orthodox cathedral in the background. If he paid most attention to the two girls from the princess's retinue surrounding the child on the bank of the Nile by denuding and inspiriting them in the style *galant* of French rococo (the girl with the spread-out towel looks like a figure from a painting of Watteau's), two exotic black figures¹² offer some other emblematic features typical of the age of baroque, such as the open parasol. It is a solar and royal attribute of Far Eastern origin which, if placed in the hands of or around black servants, enhances the symbolism of binary relationships. The assumption that Kračun was well-aware of the parasol as an allegorical substitute for the Oriental baldachin is corroborated by the fact that the parasol, rather than providing shade for the person holding it, is pointed in the direction of the pharaoh's daughter. The rod of a parasol, especially of a

⁹ O. Mikić, *Teodor Kračun (? – 1781)* (Novi Sad 1972), 14.

¹⁰ M. Jovanović, *100 dela srpske umetnosti* (Belgrade 2004), 80–81.

¹¹ Stošić, *Zapadnoevropska grafika*, 67.

¹² A. Maubert, *L'exotisme dans la peinture française du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris 1943); Lj. Stošić, "The Black Arab in Serbian Literature and Art", in *The Black Arab as a Figure of Memory, Interpretations* vol. 3, *European Research Project for Poetics & Hermeneutics* (Skopje 2009), 269, 275 and 280, where special attention is paid to dichotomies directly contrasting the "Black Arab" or the chimney sweep to white snow, white parasol, blazing fire, pure gold or the sun. In Kračun's painting, the white parasol in the hands of the little page is shadowed by the cape of the dark-skinned court lady, which produces the favourite baroque effect of chiaroscuro.

Caspar Luyken, *The Finding of Moses*, copperplate engraving (Nuremberg, 1708)



white parasol, symbolized the cosmic axis associated with the God-chosen ruler. Thus, the bearer of imperial or royal dignity was always surrounded by slaves holding raised parasols to protect him from the destructive effects of the sun, discretely suggesting to those in attendance that the true sun was not above but under the parasols.¹³ The replacement of the oval basket with a rectangular wooden chest was also to redirect attention from the symbol of the mother's womb to the symbol of future renewal and knowledge under divine protection — the literal finding of the Ark of the Covenant or Salvation.¹⁴

Compared to Luyken's engraving, Kračun's *Finding of Moses* repeats its composition pattern, while introducing slight modifications dependent on the different painting technique and his knowledge of baroque symbolism. The relocation of the biblical scene from the Nile to the Danube should be understood as an allegorical transfer of the prerogatives of dignity,

¹³ A. Gerbran & Z. Ševalije, *Rečnik simbola*, s.v. "Suncobran" (Novi Sad 2004), 904–905.

¹⁴ Ibid. s.v. "Kovčeg", 411–414.



Teodor Kračun, *The Finding of Moses*, icon, Sremski Karlovci
Orthodox cathedral (1780)

power and fate from the chosen people of Israel led by Moses to the Serbian people in the Habsburg Monarchy under the guidance of the Metropolitan of Karlovci, Mojsije (Moses) Putnik (1728–90). As God-chosen protector of the Orthodox faith in a Roman Catholic empire, he was supposed to emulate his Old Testament predecessor and namesake.¹⁵ With these clear political and religious intentions, Serbian Metropolitan Mojsije played an important, if not decisive, role in the selection and use of the graphic model, probably procured in Vienna. Bishop Mojsije had been appointed administrator of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci after the death of Metropolitan Vikentije (Vicentius) Jovanović Vidak (d. Dalj, 18 Feb. 1780), but was not elected metropolitan until the Assembly held in Sremski Karlovci on 10 June 1781. Considering that Kračun had died in April that year, the *Founding of Moses* and the entire iconostasis for the Metropolitan's Court Chapel must have been painted in the last year of Kračun's life, between the Feb-

¹⁵ J. Todorović, *Entitet u senci: mapiranje moći i državni spektakl u Karlovačkoj mitropoliji* (Novi Sad 2010), 61.

ruary of 1780 and the April of 1781, when Putnik still held the office of administrator.

Less than a decade after Kračun, the Viennese engraver Joseph Georg Mansfeld (1764–1817)¹⁶ cut an allegorical copperplate, *The Liberation of Serbia*, for the frontispiece of Dositej Obradović's little book titled *The Poem of the Deliverance of Serbia (Pesna o izbavljenju Srbije, 1789)*. Mansfeld belonged to the second generation of yet another family of engravers and printers. Together with their father, he and his brothers were among Vienna's most distinguished printmakers. From 1770, Mansfeld the Elder (Johann Ernst), in partnership with the printer Joseph Lorenz von Kurzbök (1736–92), was privileged for printing Serbian books. He was a skilled type designer, and the history of Viennese book printing remembers him for the beauty of the so-called Mansfeld-Kurzbök typeface.¹⁷ His son Joseph Georg, or Mansfeld the Younger, was a renowned Austrian painter and engraver. He never left Vienna, where he started a school of lithography in 1815.¹⁸

The Liberation of Serbia, signed Jos. G. Mansfeld, is a typical example of the rococo-baroque style tempered with elements of classicism. This solemn war composition was printed by Kurzbök as the frontispiece of Dositej Obradović's abovementioned twenty-strophe patriotic poem published as a separate six-page booklet. Referring to the ongoing Austro-Ottoman war (1788–90), the scene shows mythological personifications (Serbia, Minerva and Fama) and historical figures (Emperor Joseph II and Field Marshal G. E. Laudon).¹⁹ Initially, the war started by Austria in alliance with Russia in order to seize the Ottoman European possessions was successful and in 1789 Belgrade was taken from the Ottomans. Before long, however, the fortunes of war changed and Austria suffered defeat (Treaty of Sistova, 1791).²⁰ The campaign ended with the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (1790). Considering that the engraving was intended for Dositej's panegyric written in Belgrade in 1789, it should be read as an expression of wishful thinking rather than reality.

¹⁶ D. Davidov, *Srpska grafika XVIII veka* (Novi Sad 1978), 233, fig. 391 (with a German summary: *Serbische Graphik des XVIII. Jahrhunderts*); V. Konjikušić, "Marginalije uz srpsku grafiku XVIII i XIX veka", *Sveske Društva istoričara umetnosti SR Srbije* 18 (1987), 70–71.

¹⁷ A. Mayer, *Wien Buckdrucker Geschichte* (Vienna 1887), vol. II, 43.

¹⁸ V. Kraut, *Grafika u doba klasicizma*, vol. VIII of *Klasicizam kod Srba* (Belgrade 1966), 10–11.

¹⁹ Davidov, *Srpska grafika*, 408–409.

²⁰ Lj. Čubrčić, *Od kaludjera do prosvetitelja* (Belgrade 2004), 27.



Joseph George Mansfeld, *The Liberation of Serbia*,
copperplate engraving, frontispiece of Dositej Obradović's
Poem of the Deliverance of Serbia (Vienna, 1789)

As the beginnings of Serbian book illustration are marked by the use of imported clichés for vignettes and prints, it comes as no surprise that the already mentioned *Finding of Moses* from Luyken's illustrated Bible was used as a model for Dositej Obradović's booklet. Mansfeld the Younger probably found it in the stock of prints available in Kurzbök's well-supplied printing house. It is the illustration of the well-known story from the Book of Exodus (2:1–10), an account of how the pharaoh's daughter, in company with her attendants, went to the Nile to take a bath and came across a beautiful foundling baby left in a basket. She took him in and named him Moses. Later on, by the will of God, he became the rescuer of the Jewish people, leading them out of Egypt and taking them to the Promised Land. He is considered an Old Testament prefiguration of Christ.²¹

Instead of the Egyptian princess shown with one foot striding forward, Mansfeld the Younger shows a feminized figure of the Emperor Joseph II in a wig, but cuirassed and cloaked as an ancient Roman general. On his right is Field Marshal Laudon, commander-in-chief of the Austrian army, shown in military uniform with a ribbon across his chest and the long boots typical of the period. Like the angel rescuing St Peter from prison, he is taking the shackles off the arms of the woman kneeling in front of him, the heroine of the allegorical narrative. It is the personification of Serbia in the figure of a girl clad in Roman dress, with the shield bearing the imagined coat of arms of Triballia²² or Serbia (boar's head pierced with an arrow) resting against her thighs. The figure fully matches Luyken's handmaiden of the pharaoh's daughter who, her sleeves rolled up, supports the oval basket with the baby on the bank of the river. The engraving of Mansfeld the Younger shows two more allegorical figures, Minerva (Wisdom) and Fama (Fame), one standing with a spear in her hand, the other hovering above next to a tall palm tree and blowing dark clouds back to Turkey with a trumpet. Next to the personification of Serbia, in the foreground suggesting the river bank, are symbols of the defeated Ottoman Empire washed ashore: a turban, a flag, a broken spear with the crescent and a cannon barrel. As the silhouette of the Belgrade fortress, with its outlying settlement and the victorious Austrian flag with a double-headed eagle,²³ is clearly recognizable in the background, the whole scene is a fairly accurate depiction of late eighteenth-century Belgrade viewed from the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. That Mansfeld's engraving faithfully accompanied Dositej's

²¹ L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétienne* (Nendeln-Lichtenstein, 1974), vol. II, 201.

²² H. Žefarović & T. Mesmer, *Stematografija. Izobraženije oružij iliričeskib* (Novi Sad 1972, 1st ed. Vienna 1741), 38b.

²³ *Pesme, pisma, dokumenti*, vol. 6 of *Sabrana dela Dositeja Obradovića*, ed. M. Stefanović (Belgrade 2008), 151.



Dimitar Zograf, *The Finding of Moses*, fresco, Rila Monastery (1843)

verses may be seen from the references to and illustrations of the Danube and Sava rivers, the glorious Belgrade, the notorious Turkish shackles, cannons, turbans and other emblems now lying in dirt, as opposed to the praiseworthy double-headed eagle, brave Laudon and the salute *Vivat Josif Vtori* to the wished-for ruler of Serbia.²⁴ Stating at the beginning of his ode that the liberation of Serbia was his “desire ever since his youth”, and interspersing it with autobiographical details, Dositej disappointedly finds that under the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade²⁵ the Austrians ceded Serbia to the Turks. In a paroxysm of enthusiasm, he almost likens his favourite enlightened ruler, Joseph II, for his wise statesmanship and enlightened reform, to God rescuing his people from a cultural dark age.²⁶

A prominent centre of Slavic literacy, spiritual and cultural life, the Rila monastery in Bulgaria, ravaged and restored several times, played an important role during the period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. The

²⁴ Ibid. 10–12.

²⁵ Dositej Obradović was born in present-day Ciacova in the Romanian Banat in 1739, and died in Belgrade in 1811.

²⁶ J. Deretić, *Dositej i njegovo doba* (Belgrade 1969), 169–170.

decoration of the monastery church dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin was entrusted to the painters of the schools of Samokov and Bansko, the Hristov brothers (better known as Dimitar Zograf and Zahari Zograf), Dimitar Molerov, and their many assistants.²⁷ Most of the frescoes in the exonarthex were painted in the national revival style by Dimitar Zograf in 1840–47.²⁸ While Molerov's father Toma Vitanov (Vishanov) was trained at the Academy in Vienna, where he absorbed baroque trends which he then introduced into Bulgarian traditional religious painting, Dimitar Zograf's son Stanislav Dospevski, and Hristo Tsonev received their training in Russia.

One section of the vault of the open narthex of the Rila monastery church shows eight scenes from the life of Moses radially arranged around God the Saviour, painted in 1843 by Dimitar Zograf. One of the scenes, the *Finding of Moses*, followed the model of Caspar Luyken's print. Relying on the chosen model, Dimitar Zograf placed recognizable structures from the Rila Monastery enclosure in the background, such as Hrelyu Tower on one side of the Rilska River, and three smaller domed structures on the other. The latter were built on the model of the similar structures in the Athonite Monastery of Hilandar.²⁹ All seven female figures have a deeply tanned countenance, and the one of the princess's three handmaidens who holds the end of her dress is shown as a young girl, not as a young woman. All figures are stumpy as a result of the limited available surface for the painting. Compared to Luyken's engraving, the landscape is a very realistic rendition of the lush vegetation of Rila Mountain, on the slopes of which the monastery was founded in the tenth century. The insistence on the episodes from the life of the Old Testament prophet Moses, including his rescue from the river, must have had something to do with the popularity of miraculous cures³⁰ with water in the Rila Monastery and the healing powers of the relics of its patron saint, St John (Ivan) of Rila. As a centre of manuscript copying and religious painting, the Rila Monastery was one of the strongest regional spiritual beacons for the Orthodox Christians during the centuries of Ottoman rule.

Luyken's engraving of the *Finding of Moses* was used as a model not only by the best Serbian and Bulgarian religious painters of the eighteenth

²⁷ I. Bozhilov & L. Prashkov, *Bŭlgarski manastiri*, 4th ed. (Sofia 2004), 63–64.

²⁸ L. Vlahova & E. Genova, *24 stenopisa ot Rilsia Manastir* (Sofia 1983), 14; M. Koeva, *Rila Monastery* (Sofia 2006), 62–79.

²⁹ I. Gouérgova, "Le monastère de Rila et Hilandar", in *Huit siècles du monastère de Chilandar*, ed. V. Korać (Belgrade 2000), 467–475.

³⁰ E. Bakalova, "The Life Cycle of St. Sava in Rila Monastery", in *Huit siècles du monastère de Chilandar*, 492.

and nineteenth centuries, in their respective cultural centres, Sremski Karlovci and Rila Monastery, but also by the Viennese engraver J. G. Mansfeld in his print of the *Liberation of Serbia* glorifying the war achievements of the Emperor Joseph II. These seemingly different themes were based on the Old Testament symbol of the Ark of Salvation or the Covenant as an attribute of the God-chosen leader of Israel, Moses, who delivered his people from enslavement in Egypt and took them to the Promised Land. In the struggle for religious and national liberation of the Serbs and Bulgarians in the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, Luyken's print of the Rescue or Finding of Moses was a rare graphic model equally usable in the religious and profane art of the Balkan peoples.

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