

Самуїлъ Прѣкъ Глѣнь Помаза Дѣла Нщартво:



КНИГИ ПЕРВЫИ ЦАРСТВЪ ПОЧИНАЮТЬ
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 СКОМЪ, СКОРИНИНЫМЪ БЫЧОМЪ
 ИЗЪДАВНЯГО ГРЯДЯ ПОЛОЩЕНЫ • БОГЪ КО
 ЧТИ, ИЛЮМЕРЪ ПОБОЛИТЫМЪ КНЯЗЕНИЮ:

Francis Skaryna: *Samuel the Prophet of the Lord anoints David King* (I Kings).

The Engravings of Francis Skaryna in the *Biblija Ruska* (1517-1519)

BY

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Although the name of Francis (Francišak) Skaryna¹ is widely known in Byelorussia, little was heard of him in Western Europe until recent times. Writer, translator, printer, engraver, botanist, philosopher and physician, he lived to achieve high distinction in Central and Eastern Europe at the time of the Renaissance. His proficiency and learning earned him the regard of John King of Denmark, Albert King of Prussia and even Ferdinand Hapsburg, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, each of which he served during his life-time.

It was doubtless the originality of his intellectual and cultural orientation which made him something of an anomaly in the eyes of succeeding generations of Slavists. This may explain why his work has remained neglected for so long. On the one hand Skaryna appears as a typical Renaissance humanist, deeply imbued with a love of classical learning and Western art-forms, increasing his knowledge at the Universities and Courts of Italy and the German Empire. On the other, he emerges as a Byzantinist, caught up in the traditions of the Eastern Church, and clearly influenced by the scribal art of the Old Slavonic copyists. Though born in the city of Połack, in a country situated between Poland and Russia, and successively subjected to the domination of both states, Skaryna fails to fit into the cultural pattern of either nation.

A few Slavists of the XIXth century perceived that Skaryna's writings ought properly be classified among the standard works of the Byelorussian literary tradition.² The main task of reconstructing his life and work has fallen principally on the writers of the Byelorussian revival in the early part of the XXth century such as Ja. Karski, M. Ščakacichin, V. Pičeta, M. Aleksjutovič and more recently by Symon Braha.

¹) Most Soviet sources have it that his name was initially George. The whole question of the nomenclature of Dr. Skaryna has been the object of an exhaustive study by S. Braha (С. Брага, Пытаньне імя Доктара Скарыны, *Запісы БНІМ*, кн. IV, München 1966, бб. 184-216).

²) R. P. Lescoeur, *La Persecution de l'Eglise en Lithuanie*, Paris 1873, p. 99; P. Керрен, *Материалы для истории просвещения в России*, СПб, 1825; V. Pičeta, *Белоруссия и Литва XV-XVI вв.*, Москва 1961, стр. 661-662, 673. N. Jančuk, *Нарысы па гісторыі беларускай літаратуры*. Старадаўны пэрыяд, Менск 1922.

Francišak Skaryna was born in the North Western region of Byelorussia at some time between 1485-1490.³ He was the son of Lucas Skaryna, a merchant of Połack, a city which at that time was the most important centre of trade between the watersheds of the Dniepr and the Dźvina, and a meeting-point of many nations and cultures. Whether he was baptised into the Catholic or the Orthodox faith is a question still hotly debated in circles where these considerations take on a political significance. Whatever his confession — and from the positions he held it seems more likely that he was, or became a Catholic⁴ — he seems to have been of a tolerant frame of mind, for his life's endeavour was directed towards objects beneficial to both persuasions. As the diarist Todar Jeŭlašeŭski writing in 1604, observed: "In that time, the difference of religion was no obstacle to friendship, and therefore that age seems to me to be golden by comparison with the present times, when even among people of the same faith hypocrisy reigns, and where they are of different faiths, they do not even expect tolerance, sincerity and good manners."⁵

It has been suggested that Skaryna was first educated in Połack by the Bernardine monks, who had opened a church in that city in 1498. Certainly he must have acquired some knowledge of the Latin tongue, for in 1504 he is recorded as having paid a registration fee⁶ of 2 *groszy* at the University of Kraków, where familiarity with Latin was the *sine qua non* for pursuing a course of studies.⁷ In 1506 he graduated with a degree of Bachelor of the Free Arts, and went to Copenhagen. There he entered the service of John King of Denmark as his private secretary.⁸ After persuing studies in Italy, and obtaining his doctorate in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Padua in 1512, Skaryna appears to have settled for a time in Prague. From 1517-1519 he published his famous translations of the *Bible* into the Middle-Byelorussian (or Ruthenian) language. In 1520 he returned to the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vilna where he established a printing press in the Mansion-House of the then Lord Mayor, Jakub Babič. In 1525 he printed his translation of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and a collection of prayers of the Eastern Church — *Malaja Padarožnaja Knižica (Liber viaticus)*. At about this time he married Margaret Adviernik, daughter of a burgher of Vilna; she was to give him two sons, Francis and Simeon. Doubtless his family responsibilities led him to seek some more lucrative employ than that

³) Je. Karskij, *Белоруссы*, т. I, Warszawa 1903, стр. 411.

⁴) I. N. Goleniščev-Kutuzov: Гуманизм у восточных Славян, (Украина и Белоруссия), Москва, 1963, стр. 22.

⁵) Дневник Новгородскаго подсудка Феодора Евлашевскаго, *Кіевская Старица*, т. XIV, Киев 1886, стр. 129.

⁶) In the Register of Students at Kraków University for the year 1504 there is an entry: "Franciscus Luce de Ploczko 2 gr." *Album studiosorum Univeritatis Cracoviensis*, t. II (1490-1551), Kraków, 1892.

⁷) It may have been in Kraków that Skaryna came into touch with the publications of Fiol, though there is no firm evidence to support the theory either that Fiol was still alive at that time, or that his press was still active. (A. Anuškin, *Во славном месте Виленском*, Москва 1962, стр. 27).

⁸) S. Braha, *Географічная лякалізацыя жыццяпісу доктара Скарыны*, *Запісы БІНІМ*, кн. III, New York, 1964, 66. 19-21.

ЦАРЬСТВО
 ЦАРЬ ДАВІДЪ ИГРЕЛЕТЬ ВЪГОСЛАВЕСЯ КИВОТЪ ГДЕНЫ
 ЦАРИЦАЖЕ МИХОЛА ВІДА ИПОГОРДЕ ИБЕ НЕПЛОДАНА



ДТОРЫЙ КНИГИ ЦАРЬСТВО ПОЧИНАЮТЬ
 СЯ • ЗЪПОЛНЕ ВЫЛОЖЕНЫ НАРЪСЬ
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 СКОМЪ СКОРИНИНЫМЪ СЫНОМЪ СПОЛОЦЬНА

*King David plays upon the Psaltery before the
 Ark of the Lord — (IInd. Book of Kings)*

of a printer of books for in 1530 Skaryna removed to Krolewiec (Königsberg) to enter into service with Albert King of Prussia.⁹ Albert, who had strong evangelical leanings and who maintained a close correspondence with the great German reformer Martin Luther, had a high opinion of the Byelorussian translator of the Bible who was now his personal physician. Nevertheless Skaryna was not destined to stay long in East Prussia. In the late 1520's his fortunes appear to have suffered a decline, partly, it has been surmised, as a result of the great fire which ravaged a large part of Vilna and may have destroyed his printing press, and partly as a result of litigation over his brother's business in

Poznan and his wife's property in Połack. As a result of this litigation his goods were confiscated, and Skaryna entered the service of John the Catholic Bishop of Vilna. His private troubles did not cease, for in 1529 he was committed to prison in Poznań, Poland for a period of 10 weeks, probably on account of debts incurred in litigation over his brother's affairs. It must have been with some relief that he accepted a post offered to him by Ferdinand I, King of Bohemia — that of Royal Gardener and Botanist. In Prague Skaryna is thought to have been instrumental in laying out the gardens of the Hradčany Castle, and he continued in his functions until his death, which occurred some time before 1554.¹⁰

Various other achievements have been ascribed to Skaryna. It has been suggested that he travelled to Moscow to distribute his books, but that the Tsar had his Bible publicly burned as being contaminated with Roman Catholicism. It has also been supposed that he visited

⁹) S. Егана: Геаграфічная лякалізацыя..., б. 23 ff; I. N. Goleniščev-Kutuzov, op. cit., стр. 22.

¹⁰) V. V. Vladimirov, Доктор Франциск Скорина, переводы печатные издания и язык. СПб., 1888 стр. 45; V. Picheta, Белоруссия и Литва, XV-XVI вв., Москва 1961, стр. 657 ff.

Wittenberg in Germany and conversed with the Reformer and translator of the Bible Martin Luther.¹¹ There is much speculation in all these theories, but Skaryna's exploits were so many and varied, that one would not be surprised to learn that they were based on fact.

Yet leaving intriguing conjectures aside, Skaryna's achievements are striking enough. Admittedly his original writings are sparse enough, and show no particular literary merit or profound philosophical content; nevertheless they do reveal an engaging picture of a diligent and learned man, deeply attached to his native land of Byelorussia (*Ruś*), and his own "glorious city of Połack",¹² devoting his life's work to the service and enlightenment of his people. Through his translation of the Bible he hoped to give them an insight into every field of science and human achievement, — grammar, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and history.¹³ For those who could not read, and to help those who could not understand, he went to immense pains to illustrate his translations of the Bible with lively and entertaining wood-engravings.¹⁴

Coming as it did some eighteen years before the publication of Luther's German version and some fifty years before the earliest book in Russia, Skaryna's translation into Byelorussian was not only an unprecedented occurrence in the East Slavic world — it was also a significant event in the general field of European culture. The life and work of this remarkable man are also of particular value in revealing how close to the mainstream of West European civilisation Byelorussia stood in the early XVIth century, despite its apparent geographical remoteness.¹⁵ Certainly no other East Slavic land could at that time boast of a figure having the universal learning and many-sided talent of a Francis Skaryna.

It is curious to note that, despite the considerable interest shown in the work of Skaryna since the beginning of the present century, little attention has been focussed on the one activity in which he excelled, and of which he was an undoubted master, that of an engraver.¹⁶ The place of Skaryna in West-European art has yet to be

¹¹) S. Vraha: Географічна лякалізацыя ..., б 23 ff.

¹²) Книги первый Царьствъ починаються. Зуполне выложены на руський языкъ, скорининымъ сыномъ изъ славнаго града Полоцька. Книги первый Царьствъ, *Біблія Руска*, Прага 1517-1519).

¹³) F. Skaryna, Предьслово доктора Франьциска Скорины с Полоцька во всю библию рускаго языка, *Біблія Руска*, Прага 1517-1519; *Хрэстаматыя на старажытнай беларускай літаратуры*, скл. А. Коршунаў, Мінск, 1959, б. 173-174.

¹⁴) Кто бы пакъ mezi простыми людьми братии моеи хотел яснее разумети яковым обычаем былъ храмъ оудѣлан Кивот Стол Светилник Требник и ризы жреческие, тое все вымалованое нижеи знаидеть [Ф. Скорина, *Исходъ*, Прага, 1519, 4 б.]; Положил еси всехъ книгахъ обрадци храму господьня и сосудовъ его и дому царева... а то для того абы братия моя Русь люди посполитые, чтучи могли лепей разумети) F. Skorina, Третий книги царьствъ, Прага, 1518, 1196).

¹⁵) For other parallels in the field of early Byelorussian literature see: A. Nadson, Western influences on Byelorussian literature in the XVth and XVIth centuries, *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. I. London 1966, pp. 80-91.

¹⁶) But see: V. V. Stasov, Рецензия на книгу Ровинского Русские гравёры, (Отчет о седьмом присуждении гр. Уварова), СПб, 1864. A. Florovsky, Чешская библия в истории культуры и письменности. *Sbornik Filologičny*, Sv. XII,

ЦАРЬСТВО
 ОБРАЗЪ ДВОХ ХЕРУВИМОВЪ ВЪЮДИТОВНИЦИ



*The Cherubim above the Mercy-Seat (IIIrd Book
 of Kings)*

assessed, but one is led by a study of his work to the conclusion that there were few wood-engravers of his like in the early XVIth century.

At the time when Skaryna began studying type-cutting and engraving the art was not yet one hundred years old. It began as a simple art-form, outlines and shapes being drawn in bold, thick strokes, and hollows and recesses in the design being represented by black blocking. In its early stages the medium of wood-engraving did not lend itself to the expression of nu-

ance and delicacy. When shading was introduced to show perspective and depth, it took the form of simple parallel shading lines. Cross-hatching, which was a means of varying shading, was a slow and tedious process for the engraver, involving the cutting out of a great number of minute lozenges into the printing surface. Nevertheless it represented a technical advance, and was already in relatively wide use in Skaryna's time.

As to graphic representation, the early engravers were unable to avoid a certain stiffness and lack of roundness in depicting the human form. Background was not considered of much importance and was frequently rudimentary. Perspective, and effects of light and shade were more often than not, totally lacking, and artists even at the turn of the XVIth century did not trouble themselves overmuch about such matters.

What they really sought to achieve was a firm, clear and simple kind of drawing, conventional but convincing. Of course naturalistic realism suffered. The representation of flowing water or cloud effects, tended to be stiff, even wooden. Thus in the "Witches Kitchen" by

Hans Baldung of Strassburg dated 1510, the column of steam rising from a pot was depicted in so naive a manner as to suggest a tree stripped of its bark. In the same way flowing water in Wohlgemuth's engraving of the basin in Solomon's Temple is suggested by a series of conventionalised lines, with no attempt being made to depict the irregular, swirling effect of a spouting fountain.

Thus at the time when Skaryna was embarking upon his artistic career, the wood engraving in Western Europe, with a few exceptions, was angular — almost Gothic, conventional and unrealistic in character.

The mass of Skaryna's artistic production dates from between the years 1517 and 1519, when he was living in Prague. There can be little doubt, however, that the preparation for his monumental task of designing and cutting type-faces and engraved wood-blocks must have commenced some time before.¹⁷ It is most unlikely that he received any guidance from existing Slavonic sources, at least insofar as woodcuts are concerned. There was virtually nothing he could draw upon. Of the few Slavonic publications of Sviatapolk Fiol which had been printed in Kraków in 1491, only the *Osmoglasnik* was embellished with an engraved plate — a woodcut of the Crucifixion, which was but a copy of an engraving in a contemporary German Bible.¹⁸ Any experience which Skaryna acquired must of necessity have been gained from sources abroad.

At the time of the Byelorussian humanist's sojourn in Prague, there were in Nuremberg and Augsburg — scarcely 200 km from the Bohemian capital, several flourishing schools of wood-engraving. One of these was conducted by Michael Wohlgemuth (1434-1519), and attended by many artists who subsequently distinguished themselves, including the great German Master, Albrecht Duerer. There is indeed a possibility that Skaryna, who attained such a degree of excellence in his work, may have come into contact with, if not actually attended, one of the most proficient *ateliers* in South Germany, perhaps that of Wohlgemuth himself.¹⁹

The whole question of Skaryna's artistic training was considered by Vladimirov, who underlined the following significant facts. The paper used by Skaryna in the printing of his *Biblija Ruska* bore the watermark of the Augsburg factory of Johann Schoensperger (1481-1523). This already suggests a possible link between Skaryna and one of the most vigorous centres of wood-engraving in Northern Europe. But another significant fact emerges. The decorative motifs, and some of the engravings of Francis Skaryna's Bible, show a marked resemblance with editions published in Nuremberg by the Kolberger family. The latter had printed an illustrated Bible in 1483, but more important still the *Postilla* of Nicholas Larain (1481), and the illustrated *Chronicle*, sometimes referred to as the Nuremberg Chron-

¹⁷) Anuškin suggests that the preparatory period covered the years 1512-1517. He advances the interesting theory that Skaryna returned to Vilna for a time to study old Ruthenian manuscripts to serve as typographical models for his own work. (A. Anuškin, op. cit. p. 30).

¹⁸) V. Vladimirov, op. cit. pp. 24-27.

¹⁹) Ibid. p. 76

ЦАРЬСТВО
 РМД
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Solomon converses with the Queen of Sheba

icle and published there by Hartman Schadel in 1493.²⁰ Many of the 200 odd engravings in this work were executed by Michael Wohlgemuth. The similarity between some of Wohlgemuth's woodcuts and those of Skaryna, both as to subject and to treatment, led Vladimirov to the conclusion that the latter was influenced by the former.²¹ This may indeed have been the case. It is quite likely that a copy of Schadel's *Chronicle* came into Skaryna's hands during his stay in Prague, perhaps through that very Kolberger fa-

mily which supplied him with the paper for his Bible. It was common practice for Renaissance engravers to imitate or adapt the works of other artists, and this was done even by great Masters such as Duerer, Holbein, Altdorfer and Baldung. A further possibility comes to mind, that Skaryna may actually have visited Nuremberg or Augsburg for the express purpose of learning the techniques of type-cutting and engraving. It is true that he had opportunities of acquainting himself with typography in Italy, particularly in Venice, where books in Slavonic had been printed for use in the Balkans. His woodcuts however, belong quite plainly to the South German school of engraving, and reveal virtually no Italian influence. One thing is clear: an artist of Skaryna's excellence and technical skill can hardly have been self-taught, and a period of training in a South German school is certainly a plausible explanation for many features of his art. His route from Copenhagen to Padua in about 1509-1510 may have passed through Augsburg or Nuremberg. Again between the years 1512-1517 he may have visited the South German Schools on his way

²⁰) It is not without interest to note that the paper used for the printing of the Nuremberg Chronicle and the Postilla was made by Schoensperger. His paper was valued for its strength and whiteness (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit. 72, n. 1).

²¹) Vladimirov, op. cit. p. 76.

to Prague.²² There he may have studied with some unknown master, or even perhaps with Wohlgemuth himself, who was living until 1519.

Whoever served as his model, one thing remains strikingly obvious, namely that he embodies the very best traditions of South German wood-engraving. But although he drew inspiration from his models, he was no slavish imitator. Even allowing for the years which separate Wohlgemuth's work in the Nuremberg Chronicle and Skaryna's publications in Prague, and the general improvement in engraving techniques there is little common ground between the two artists, except in the choice of subject-matter. Out of a total of 45 engravings by Skaryna, only about a dozen relating to the construction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, depict subjects already treated by Wohlgemuth. The rest of his output is either inspired from other sources, or are his own compositions.²³

The most fruitful period of Skaryna's activity as an engraver extends over a very brief period of time — the two years from 1517-1519 which he spent in Prague.²⁴ Although he must have spent some considerable time prior to this preparing his work, either in Bohemia or elsewhere, the sum of his achievements is truly astonishing. To translate almost the whole of the Old Testament into Byelorussian was in itself a formidable task, but when in addition one recalls that he also organised and executed the technical side of the work, including type-cutting and setting as well as engraving blocks, astonishment verges on incredulity. How was it possible for one man to complete such a monumental undertaking in the space of three or four years? He may of course have enjoyed the assistance of other Byelorussians working in Prague. Skaryna's self-portrait shows, in addition to his own device or mark, two small shields one bearing the monogram "T.D." affixed to the sides of his chair. As this mark appears elsewhere, it is quite likely that it was the device of an assistant or pupil. This may account for the varying quality of the woodcuts.²⁵

Skaryna's activity as an engraver, rather than as a typeset designer or cutter, manifested itself not only in his woodcut illustrations representing specific scenes from the Bible; it is also apparent in the many decorative half-plates and illuminated initials which are found here and there, breaking the monotony of successive pages of plain print.

These are perhaps the least interesting examples of Skaryna's art,

²²) Браха, Геаграфічная лякалізацыя ... бб. 19-21.

²³) In fact, no precise sources for Skaryna's thematic illustrations have yet been traced.

²⁴) During this time he printed virtually the whole Old Testament. He continued printing in Vilna where in 1525 he published the Апостол (Acts of the Apostles), and a curious little book of prayers of the Eastern Church — *Малая падарожная книжца (Liber viaticus)*. The former contains no engravings, and the latter, a work of extreme rarity, does not have more than four. (Cf. Ščaka-cichin, *Книжные аздобы...* p. 221).

²⁵) A third monogram comprising the letters "M. Z." appears in the bottom left-hand corner of the Skaryna portrait which has led to some speculation as to the identity of the artist responsible for this fine engraving (Cf. note 64 *post*).



Doctor Francišak Skaryna

as they are purely formal compositions of figures and patterns, garlands of leaves, urns and arabesques. The larger decorative plates usually include a shield bearing his coat of arms or printers mark, with or without supporters, framed in a pattern of flowers or leaves.²⁶ Another recurring heraldic motif is the interlaced monogram made up of the Slavonic letters "ТД", which is sometimes found in conjunction with Skaryna's own device of the sun charged with the crescent moon. This may have been a coat of arms, though such heraldic distinctions were not widely used in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania prior to the Union with Poland.²⁷ On

the other hand it may have been simply a design adopted by Skaryna as a printers mark. A somewhat similar composition is to be found in Schadel's Nuremberg Chronicle to illustrate passages which recite the occurrence of an eclipse of the sun, as for the birth of Alexander the Great. It may be that Skaryna, who seems to have had a bent towards astronomy,²⁸ was attracted by this astral device, which may have evoked circumstances surrounding his own birth or times.²⁹ Certain half-plates and other decorative motifs show the Skaryna device supported by cupids or sphinx-like figures. Other depict the same arms, supported by

²⁶ Vladimirov, op. cit, p. 76.

²⁷ Whether these, and other devices appearing on shields throughout Skaryna's work, are coats of arms is an open question. Similar monograms were widely used as printers, or tradesmen's marks in Western Europe, and were commonly displayed on shields. Such marks or devices were not infrequently incorporated in a regular grant of arms.

²⁸ Skorina, Предъсловие... во всю библию; Хрэстаматыя..., б. 174.

²⁹ М. Ščakacichin, Калі радзіўся Францішак Скарына, *Польмя*, № 5, Менск 1925, бб. 148-152.

two hairy male-figures crowned with oak-leaves. All these motifs, particularly the latter, are clearly derived from German models, and Vladimirov once again suggests the Nuremberg Chronicle as Skaryna's source.³⁰

The title-page to his *Biblija Ruska* is a very handsome composition indeed, beautifully balanced, with a heavily blocked frame in black ornamented by flowery white arabesques. There are indications however, that this was not the work of an experienced hand: parts of the frame show omissions and mistakes, and it may have been the work of an assistant or pupil. It is odd that the rather indecisively drawn Skaryna device should be treated on the same level as the "TD" mark and that they should feature side by side on title-page.

If Skaryna's engraved illustrations and ornaments undoubtedly reveal South German influences, his illuminated initials derive from the scribal art of Mediaeval Byelorussia.³¹ Some letters he may occasionally have copied from German or Czech originals, particularly those which are the same in the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, and in which the shape of the letter itself is formed by leaf-scrolls and floral motifs.³² Others however, such as the exclusively Slavonic capital letters, in which the decoration is an incidental, recall the illuminated manuscripts of an earlier age. Intwined in the form of the letter are found all kinds of curious figures — human forms, fish, birds, foxes, wolves, a goat, a bison and many varieties of flowers and foliage. Some of the letters are white on a black or shaded background, others are shaded on a white background in black. Although some of these letters may not be attributable to Francis Skaryna, and may be the work of assistants, or even of foreign craftsmen they reveal the fertile and imaginative minds of those who designed and printed this book.³³

It is, however, on his illustrations to the various books of the Old Testament, that his merit as an artist must rest. No other printed book in any Slav language had appeared with such a wealth of woodcuts. Fiol's Kraków *Osmoglasnik* had but a single engraving, a representation of the Crucifixion, which was but a copy of a previous work.³⁴ In Skaryna's *Biblija Ruska* there is a total of 40 engravings, of which 29 are original compositions and 11 are illustrations based

³⁰) Vladimirov, op. cit., 76.

³¹) V. Čapko, Беларускі першадрукар Георгій Скарына, Менск 1956 б. 18; M. Aleksjutovič, Скарына, яго дзейнасць і сьветапогляд, Мінск, 1958, б. 92; Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 73.

³²) Vladimirov, op. cit., 74.

³³) Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 73, Among the suggested "Czech" elements in the decorative capital letters in the *Biblija Ruska* is the letter »П« of the Preface to the Bible which shows the crowned lion of Bohemia (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 77). Little inference can be drawn from this one way or the other.

Vladimirov also discovered that the rather unusual lettering spelling out the name of Skaryna in his own self-portrait, 'was somewhat similar to a "West-Russian" manuscript note dated 1518 annexed to a manuscript Kievan psalter dated 1397. He noted further similarities between certain scripts of *Litoŭskaja Metryka* in or about the year 1485 (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit. p. 75).

³⁴) Vladimirov, loc. cit.

on detailed descriptions found in the Scriptural texts.³³ Vladimirov gives the following list of the engravings in Skaryna's Bible in chronological order:³⁶

- 1) The Book of Job: Job on his bed of suffering is tormented by a demon, whilst his friends stand by and remonstrate with him (No text).³⁷
- 2) Proverbs: The Judgment of Solomon, with the text: "The judgment which Solomon gave to two women quarrelling over the two children."
- 3) Joshue bar-Sirach: Doctors in disputation before a scribe seated at a desk (No text).³⁸
- 4) Doctor Francis Skaryna.
- 5) Ecclesiastes: "The Queen of Sheba converses with Solomon the King." In the foreground are a group of exotic animals including a most appealing elephant with a trumpet-shaped trunk, and a camel.³⁹
- 6) The Song of Songs: A figure of Christ, above the clouds and attended by two Cherubim, places a crown on the head of the Beloved one. (No text)
- 7) Wisdom. Christ seated on a globe, holds a book in one hand and with the other hand raised in blessing. Before him is the figure of Skaryna, kneeling, with hands uplifted to receive the blessing. (No text)
- 8) Ist Kings: "Samuel, the Prophet of the Lord, anoints David King." The young David kneels before Samuel, by a throne, his harp on the ground before him. About him is gathered a throng of courtiers and townfolk, against the background of Gothic and Renaissance buildings.⁴⁰
- 9) IInd Kings: "King David plays upon the psaltery before the Ark of the Lord: Queen Michol mocks him and is struck barren." On the left is a walled city from the battlements of which Michol leans out to mock David as he enters the gates, dancing and playing his harp. Behind him a train of burghers bear the Ark into Jerusalem against a background of hills and woods.⁴¹

³⁵) Čapko, op. cit., p. 22.

³⁶) Vladimirov, op. cit., pp. 77 ff.

³⁷) This is the earliest, and one of the poorest engravings in the whole *Biblija Ruska*. Nevertheless, the features and the clothing of Job's comforters are reasonably well drawn (Cf. G. P., Беларуская гравюра у дрэве, *Божым Шляхам*, No. 92, London 1965, b. 8).

³⁸) Another early work of dubious quality, though an improvement on *Job* (Cf. G. P., op. cit., *BIII*, No. 102, London 1967, p. 22).

³⁹) There is still a kinship in style between this woodcut and *Job*, though a greater skill is apparent in the later work. There is more variety in the figures, and the folds of their garments are more flowing and natural (Cf. G. P. op. cit., *BIII*, No. 94, London 1966, b. 15).

⁴⁰) One of the best works in the entire *Biblija*, though by no means unrelated in style to *Solomon and Sheba*. There is a great wealth of detail in the costumes and faces of the bystanders, which are depicted with great finesse (Cf. G. P. op. cit., *BIII*, No. 89, London 1965, b. 10).

⁴¹) An engraving of outstanding, almost gem-like quality (Cf. G. P. op. cit., *BIII*, No. 88, London 1965, b. 5).

- 10) IIIrd Kings: "King Solomon builds a Temple to the Lord God in Jerusalem." He stands beside a late-Gothic structure whilst a builder points out a stone-raising device above Solomon's head. Elsewhere, stone-masons dress the building-blocks.⁴²
- 11) The Temple built by Solomon.
- 12) The Cherubim above the Mercy-Seat.
- 13) The Cedar-wood Palace of Solomon the King.
- 14) The two gate-posts before the Temple.
- 15) The Sea of Brass.
- 16) The moving Water-vessels.
- 17) Solomon converses with the Queen of Sheba.
- 18) IVth Kings: "Nabuchodonosor the King of Babylon⁴³ overcomes Jerusalem." Two rival armies contend for the city before it's gates; on the right the horsemen of Israel give way before the onslaught of the Babylonians.⁴⁴
- 19) Joshua: "Joshua son of Nava leads the people of Israel across the Jordan."
- 20) Judith: "Judith the Widow strikes off the head of Holofernes the Chief." She is shown holding a sword in one hand and dropping the severed head of her husband into a bag held by her handmaiden. In a tent on a couch is the headless body of Holofernes, and beyond a line of trees lies a walled city.⁴⁵
- 21) Genesis: The Holy Trinity is shown in the form of a figure with three faces.⁴⁶ Below, a band of angels drive off the hosts of Satan with arrows. This engraving is of inferior workmanship.
- 22) The six days of creation. The engravings are grouped together on a single page.⁴⁷
- 23) Exodus: "The daughter of Pharoah takes the infant Moses from the river."
- 24) The Ark of the Covenant .
- 25) The Mercy-Seat.
- 26) The *Menorah* or Candelabra.
- 27) The *Trebnik*.

⁴²) Cf. G. P. op cit., *BIII*. No. 88, London 1965, b. 5.

⁴³) These engravings are a series based on Wohlgenuth's furnishings of the Temple, and are of high quality. Vladimirov does not itemise them in his list. (Cf. G. P. op. cit., *BIII*. No. 94, p. 11; No. 95, p. 14; No. 101, p. 11; No. 102, p. 12, London 1966-1967).

⁴⁴) Cf. G. P., op cit., *BIII*. No. 89, London 1965, b. 75.

⁴⁵) Notwithstanding the Skaryna device displayed in this engraving, Ščakačichin tentatively attributes this work to a Czech master or school. However, this engraving is identical in style to other accepted Skaryna engravings. It is a work of the highest quality (Cf. G. P., op. cit., *BIII*. No. 92, London 1965, b. 8).

⁴⁶) This manner of representation of the Trinity later penetrated into Byelorussian iconography (cf. Stasov, op. cit., p. 30).

⁴⁷) A similar style of grouping the Days of Creation on a single plate may be seen in the Venetian Bible of 1498, and several German Bibles of the period (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 80).

- 28) The vestments of the Temple priests.⁴⁸
 29) Leviticus: "The Lord God speaks with Moses."
 30) Numbers: "The people of Israel with their armies stand before the Ark of the Lord." Representatives of the tribes of Israel kneel before the Ark holding banners with various devices.⁴⁹
 31) Deuteronomy: "Moses shows to the people of Israel the Tablets of the Law."
 32) Ruth: "Ruth, the foremother of King David, gathers gleanings." She is depicted in a rural background of some charm, working among the reapers in a wheatfield.⁵⁰
 33) Judges: "The mighty Samson tears apart a lion on the way."⁵¹
 34) Esther: "Queen Esther comes before Ahasuerus the King." She stands before him accompanied by her ladies in waiting. The King is seated on a throne under a shield bearing the Skaryna arms.⁵²
 35) The Lamentations of Jeremiah: "Jeremiah the Prophet of the Lord weeps as he looks over Jerusalem." Jeremiah, smitten with grief, stands to the right, with the city above him in the background, all aflame.⁵³
 36) Daniel: "Avvakum brings food to Daniel sitting among the lions."⁵⁴

The engravings in Skaryna's *Biblija* may be classified into three groups: works which may unquestionably be ascribed to Skaryna himself, in that they incorporate his device or printer's mark (the sun charged with a crescent moon) into the design; engravings, whether original compositions or copies, which, though unsigned, may safely be attributed to him;⁵⁵ and lastly works of doubtful authorship, which are sometimes of inferior quality, both in design and in execution.⁵⁶

The engravings which can without hesitation be ascribed to Skaryna are, despite their reduced scale, marvellously detailed. His feeling for composition was often masterly, and he had a fine sense of group-

⁴⁸) The source for these five engravings is probably the works of Schaedel and Liran (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 80).

⁴⁹) The banners were identified by Vladimirov as follows: The letter "W"; a double-headed eagle (Holy Roman Empire); a Tree (City of Augsburg); a Crown (City of Cologne); three horns (the mark of the printer Jerome Wietor); a Sun and Moon (Skaryna's arms) and the monogram "TD" (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 80).

⁵⁰) Cf. G. P. op. cit., *БИЛ*. No. 102, London 1967, p. 12.

⁵¹) A similar engraving is to be found in the Luther Bible of 1534 (Cf. Vladimirov, loc. cit.).

⁵²) It is interesting to compare this engraving with that of *Judith*; there are marked similarities, though *Judith* is by far the finer work. Both engravings bear Skaryna's mark, yet Ščakacichin suggests a Czech master as the author. (Cf. Ščakacichin, *Книжные аздобы ... бб. 202-203*).

⁵³) The view of the city of Jerusalem is probably modelled on similar representations in the Nuremberg Chronicle (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 82).

⁵⁴) Cf. Доктор Францішак Скарына, *БИЛ*. No. 104, London 1967, b. 5.

⁵⁵) Mainly on account of the marked unity of style.

⁵⁶) М. Ščakacichin, *Книжные аздобы ... бб. 194-195*. А. Лис, Микола Шчакаціхін, Мінск 1968, б. 49.

ing figures. This quality is particularly apparent in three of his best woodcuts — *David playing on the psaltery before the ark of the Lord* (II Kings), *Nebuchodonosor, King of Babylon overcomes Jerusalem* (IVth Kings) and *Samuel the Prophet of the Lord anoints David King* (I Kings). In the first work, a superbly drawn King David, majestically bearded and crowned leads a procession of Renaissance burghers, bearing the Ark in the likeness of a Gothic reliquary, beneath the towered and battlemented walls of Jerusalem, against a background of distant forests and mountains. There is a jewel-like finesse in this engraving which fully justifies Stasov's comparison of Skaryna with "the best German engravers of that time for the fine draughtsmanship, strength and harmony of his woodcuts."⁵⁷ In the *Storming of Jerusalem*, Skaryna depicts a battle scene at the gates of a very Gothic Jerusalem, with tier upon tier of gables and spires rising up on a hill in the background. The Babylonians on prancing steeds press back the cavalry of the Israelites, and the impetus of their advance is suggested by a wedge of horsemen sweeping across the foreground, clearing a pathway through the defending forces to the gateway of the city.

Although the engraving entitled *Samuel the Prophet of the Lord anoints David King* (I Kings) is not signed by Skaryna, its exceptional quality and meticulous attention to detail leaves little doubt as to its authorship. The patriarchal figures of Samuel and his attendant priest pour oil from a vessel over the head of a youthful David. The onlooking crowd of colourfully arrayed gentry and *landsknechte*, despite their seemingly nonchalant postures focus attention on the anointing ceremony. In the great variety of human forms and faces, Skaryna reveals his powers of observation and his knowledge of anatomy — acquired, perhaps, in the course of his medical studies in Italy.

The illustrations to the Book of Judith and to the Book of Esther are strikingly similar in their representation of the two Jewish heroines. Technically however, *Judith the widow strikes off the head of Holofernes the Chief* is the better engraving, although both are signed by Skaryna. Judith, dressed in a magnificently pleated gown and close-fitting cap holds the severed head of Holofernes, ready to drop it into a bag held open by her lady-in-waiting. Wielding a sword in the other hand, her figure dominates the scene. Behind her, through the curtains and rich drappings of a tent, the headless body of Holofernes is seen, sprawled across a bed. In the background, beyond a line of trees, rise the towers and stepped gables of a walled city.

These engravings, and others such as the *Likeness of the Two Cherubim* (III Kings) — a work far superior to a similar composition by Altdorfer made some 15 years later — show Skaryna's complete mastery of the human form, and his preoccupation with life and movement.⁵⁸

⁵⁷) Stasov, op. cit., p. 32; also Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 82.

⁵⁸) Capko, op. cit., p. 20. His view however, that the background was given greater importance than the human figures in Latin Biblical illustrations, is somewhat exaggerated.

This preoccupation finds further expression in his drawing of animals. Mention has already been made of Skaryna's almost whimsical treatment of the birds, beasts and fish, which entwine themselves round his decorative capital letters. In his engravings he depicts lions (*Daniel in the lions den*: Book of Daniel), an elephant, a camel and a giraffe (*Solomon entertains the Queen of Sheba*: III Kings, though Skaryna's authorship is not certain), horses (*Nabuchodonosor, King of Babylon, overcomes Jerusalem*), cattle (*The Sea of Brass*: III Kings), and even a moth (*Doktor Francisk Skaryna*: IV Kings). Of these, the most proficient representations are those which appear in works which can definitely be attributed to Skaryna. His *Sea of Brass* is, perhaps, one of his most revealing works. It is an unsigned woodcut in a series illustrating the building and furnishing of the Temple by Solomon as related in the IIIrd Book of Kings. His source was probably the same as that followed by Altdorfer in 1533, the engravings by Wohlgemuth in the Nuremberg Chronicle. Some five woodcuts in this series were adapted to illustrate the Book of Exodus, and the other six appear in the Third book of Kings, illustrating the building and furnishing of the Temple. Skaryna's copies are certainly more felicitous than the originals he follows, but they are not particularly revealing, with the exception of the woodcut of the *Sea of Brass*. The interest of this illustration lies in the contrast between the basin and its contents on the one hand, and the supporting oxen and spouting faucets on the other. The drawing of the basin itself is poor, and is devoid of ornamentation, and even a proper sense of perspective. The static surface of the water is sketchily drawn and quite unrealistic. But when the artist goes on to depict moving, living things, such as the supporting oxen, or flowing water, his interest seems to revive. Each ox is beautifully observed, and finely drawn. Their muscles stand out convincingly, the structure of their hooves is accurately represented, and their heads are correctly proportioned from every angle. Similarly the twisting flow of the water from the curious taps at the base of the sea of brass is clearly the result of a close and scientific scrutiny of such a phenomenon. This contrast between static and moving forms tells us much of Skaryna's character. As a doctor of medicine and a botanist it was life which interested him. When depicting human or animal life, or the movement of inanimate objects such as clothing or water, he gives of his best. Michael Wohlgemuth never surpassed him in the harmony and realism of his work, and even Altdorfer's engravings fail to achieve the excellence of the better works of his Byelorussian predecessor.

Of course Skaryna's technique presented flaws. His sense of perspective was frequently defective, though this was not considered to be a serious fault among the engravers of his day. Many of the Nuremberg masters such as Hans Schaufelein, Altdorfer, Sebald Beham and even Hans Baldung Gruen were often weak when it came to dealing with perspective. At that time the important thing for the artist was to give a convincing representation of the principal figures forming the subject of his engraving; the rest was a matter of detail.

On the other hand, his style of shading suggesting roundness or

depth was relatively advanced for his time. Although he principally made use of close parallel lines to suggest shadow or contour, he introduces considerable variety of tones by altering the closeness and texture of those lines. Very occasionally he made use of cross-hatching, which only came into general use some considerable time after the publication of Skaryna's Bible.

If all the engravings do not achieve the high standards of *Samuel the Prophet of the Lord anoints David King, or David playing the psaltery before the Ark of the Lord*, this may be because at the time of their engraving, Skaryna was less proficient as a draughtsman than he was in his later works, or because they were done by assistants or pupils under his supervision. There are a considerable number of these engravings of doubtful authorship, some of better quality than others.⁵⁹ Among the fine works is the engraving of *Ruth* gleaning under the benevolent eye of Booz. Although lacking the precision and realism of the signed works of Skaryna, it has considerable interest and colour. There is a nice balance between the triangular expanse of the wheatfield, and the group of five figures reaping and gleaning. The features of the latter lack the precision of Skaryna's other works, and there is a technical lapse in that the reapers appear to be left-handed. The engraver has however managed to evoke a rustic scene of some charm. He has also attempted to vary the texture of his shading by the use of cross-hatching.

In the illustration to the book of *Joshue ben-Sirach* (Ecclesiasticus), there is a curious disparity of treatment between the relatively well-drawn figures, and a particularly uninspired background. A scribe is shown seated at a desk, writing, whilst a group of doctors, learned in the Law, discuss or expound some obtuse point of Jewish ethical teaching before him. Their faces and clothes are sufficiently well depicted to suggest they were drawn by Skaryna himself. The columns and arches in the background, as well as the scribe's desk, are sketchily outlined and shading takes the form of hasty, disjointed lines and cross-hatching. It may well be that the blocks were cut by an assistant, at least in part. On the other hand, it may have happened that Skaryna did not maintain a consistently high standard in his work, or that certain subjects failed to retain his interest sufficiently for him to give of his best.⁶⁰ That this might indeed have been the case is suggested by the indifferent quality of the signed engraving of *Esther* before Ahazuerus.⁶¹

One or two of the unsigned woodcuts in the *Biblija Ruska* are frankly poor both in design and execution. In the plate illustrating the Book of *Job* it is hard to believe that the figures of Job and his comforters were drawn by the same hand as that which produced *Samuel anointing David*. The distorted body of Job is shown lying in a somewhat improbable posture on a bed as the devil torments

⁵⁹) Ščakacichin has perhaps gone further in questioning Skaryna's authorship than the facts warrant.

⁶⁰) It should not be forgotten that *Joshue* was one of earliest of the engravings in the *Biblija*.

⁶¹) This work bears Skaryna's mark (Cf. n. 52 *supra*).

him. There is an almost conscious disregard of perspective in the layout. The faces of the by-standers are weakly drawn, and their attitudes are wooden.⁶² Yet such lapses are the exception rather than the rule. There could have been little enough to interest Skaryna in the illustrations of the Temple and Palace of Solomon, yet he succeeded in providing lively touches to an otherwise rather dull and functional plate. In the *Palace of Solomon built of cedar-wood* the artist follows closely the description contained in the IIIrd Book of Kings, yet he places curious figures at the open windows, and adorns the battlements with lions heads and entertaining gargoyles.

The most widely-known, and certainly one of the most proficient engravings in the *Biblija Ruska*, is his own portrait, of which two variants exist. In it Skaryna is shown in his study, seated at his desk before an open book with a pen in his right hand. Over his desk there hangs an embroidered cloth embellished with his coat of arms or device, a sun charged with a crescent moon. His face is clean-shaven and his hair is cut short at the neck. He wears a cap and a gown with full sleeves. There is an open book to his right, propped up on a lectern, from which he appears to be copying. Behind him, on his chair, two carved lions support heraldic shields, one bearing the "TD" monogram. To his left is a book-case, with shelves filled with weighty tomes. About him are numerous articles — a *sphera mundi*, an hour-glass, cushions, a jug, a carrier-bag of woven rushes, and a candlestick with a reflector, before which a moth flutters in the light. The entire composition is infused with the spirit of the Renaissance, both through the realistic representation of Skaryna himself and by the evocative character of the objects with which he surrounds himself. It is a remarkable instance of the penetration of Western forms into East Slavonic art. The authorship of the Skaryna portrait has been the subject of some dispute, and Ščakacichin suggested that it was not the work of Skaryna himself, but that of an engraver whose monogram "M.Z." appears in the bottom left-hand corner of the woodcut. Whether any particular significance can be attached to the monogram is doubtful, in view of the fact that Skaryna's own device is given greater prominence here than in any of the other engravings attributed to him. Moreover, two other monograms, or printers marks, appear on the heraldic shields adorning the back of his chair including the frequently encountered "TD" motif. The high standard of Skaryna's signed works certainly render the theory of a self-portrait plausible. Whoever executed it must have been fully conversant with Cyrillic letters and numerals, for both appear on the engraving. The idea of two or more Byelorussian, or even East Slavic engravers working simultaneously in Prague, seems a little improbable, though it cannot be excluded entirely.

Nevertheless Ščakacichin sees strong Czech influences in the portrait of *Doktor Francisk Skorina* and in a whole group of the Old Testament engravings, including *Christ and the Beloved one* (Song of Songs, 1518), *Joshua son of Nava leads the people of Israel across*

⁶²) Once again, this is an early work, the first in point of time (Cf. Vladimirov, op. cit., p. 77; also n. 37 *supra*). Skaryna may not yet have achieved proficiency.

the Jordan (Joshua, 1518), *The six days of Creation* (Genesis, 1519), *The Holy Trinity* (Genesis, 1519), *Judith the Widow strikes off the head of Holophernes the Chief* (Judith, 1519), *The daughter of Pharaoh takes the infant Moses from the river* (Exodus, 1519), *Moses shows to the people of Israel the Tables of the Law*, (Deuteronomy, 1519), *The mighty Samson tears apart a lion on the way* (Judges, 1519), *Queen Esther comes before Ahasuerus the King* (Esther, 1519), *Jeremiah ... weeps as he looks over Jerusalem* (Jeremiah, 1519), and *Avvakum brings food to Daniel* (Daniel, 1519). In these engravings he finds such a unity of style, that they must of necessity be the work of a single master, or at least of a strictly disciplined school, possibly Czech.⁶³

Ščakacichin's theory, though certainly plausible — what was more natural than for Skaryna to rely on the assistance of local craftsmen? — presents serious flaws. If, as he supposes, the master "M.Z." whose monogram appears on the engraving of *Doktor Francisk Skorina*, or his school, was responsible for a whole series of woodcuts in the *Biblija Ruska*, it is curious that no other work appeared bearing his monogram, whether in that Bible or elsewhere. Indeed, both the plates of *Queen Esther* and *Widow Judith* bear the device of Francis Skaryna; so does the engraving of *Daniel*. There seems to be no reason why any artist should display another man's mark on his own work, or why he should have limited his activity to a single publication.⁶⁴ It is also hard to observe much unity in style between the *Holy Trinity* on the one hand, and *Judith* or *Doktor Francisk Skorina* on the other. There is, on the contrary, a considerable kinship between the treatment of the costumes and scenery in *Judith*, and for example, another engraving with Skaryna's mark, *King David plays upon the psaltery*. Similarly there appears to be a common source for the views of Jerusalem in *Jeremiah* and *Nabuchodonosor*, which may be traced to the Nuremberg Chronicle.

⁶³) Ščakacichin, Книжные аздобы ..., б. 194-195.

A. Lis, op. cit, b. 50-51. Two different versions of the Skaryna portrait are to be found in the *Biblija Ruska*, one in the book of Ecclesiasticus, which is an early work, and the other in the IIIrd Book of Kings, an engraving of superior quality.

⁶⁴) It is strange that the initials "M.Z." in the Skaryna portrait should have aroused such interest, whereas "T.D.", and the initials E. S. M. L. (Cf. Книги четвертый царствъ *in fine*) have been passed over. Whilst it is true that there is no certainty that Vladimirov is right in his assumption that the device is in fact a monogram "T.D.", the frequency with which it appears throughout the Bible, and the importance accorded to it, lead one to suppose that if indeed Skaryna had an assistant, this must be his mark.

Rovinsky suggested that "M.Z.", and not Skaryna, was the author of the portrait, and that he was perhaps Martin Zagel or Zasinger, otherwise Matthew Zweikopf. Some connection with Skaryna might be inferred from the fact that Zagel or Zweikopf was a pupil of Wohlgemuth and worked in Nuremberg and Munich. There is some similarity between the monogram of Zagel-Zasinger and the "M.Z." in the Skaryna portrait, but no greater than with that of another German engraver Matthew Zink (1498-1586). Moreover Zagel seems to have been born between 1430 and 1450, and to have ceased all activity in about 1510 (Cf. J. Parsavant, *Le Peintre Graveur*, Vol. I, pp. 99, 212, 313, Vol. II, Leipzig 1860 pp. 169-72; Nagler, *Kuenstler Lexicon* Bd. XXII, Munchen 1852, pp. 176-180); Bryan, *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, Vol. V, London 1905, pp. 406-407).

In effect, there is scant evidence to support the theory of two or more masters at work on the Skaryna Bible. Czech influence there may well have been, both on Skaryna himself, and on the work of his assistants. But such an influence cannot definitely be attributed to the existence of a Czech Master or School working with Skaryna. The most plausible explanation is surely that Skaryna, himself an unequal artist, was assisted by one or several subordinates, either Czech, or East Slav, who engraved blocks to designs by him, or completed blocks on which he himself had done some work.

Much has been written about German, Italian and Czech influences on Skaryna's work, so much so that some authorities have doubted whether his engravings can properly be considered as coming within the scope of East Slav culture at all. Disregarding the powerful influence of Byelorussian scribal techniques and art on Skaryna's typography, one discerns many distinctively Byelorussian features in his engravings. These are particularly noticeable, not so much in the scenery of hills and mountains which often form such a picturesque background to his subjects, but in the costumes and dress of the characters he depicts. These are all in the fashion of the early Renaissance, and had little enough in common with the long gowns and tunics of XVIth century Muscovy. They were by no means uncommon in Byelorussia, however, as other contemporary engravings show.⁶⁶ Some costumes are more typical than others, such as the figure with the fur *šapka* half hidden in the crowd of onlookers in *Samuel the Prophet of the Lord anoints David King*, or the Byelorussian soldiery engaged in battle with the armies of Babylon arrayed and armed in the Muscovite fashion in the engraving of *Nabuchodonosor the King*.⁶⁷

The houses and churches which appear in the views of Jerusalem and other cities, are generally supposed to have been imitated from those depicted in the Nuremberg Chronicle. There are, however striking resemblances between the architecture of the Temple in *King Solomon builds a Temple* (IIIrd Kings) or *Nabuchodonosor* (IVth Kings), with its combination of decorated Gothic spires and buttresses with narrow round-arched windows, and that of such late-Gothic churches as St. Anna's and the Bernhardine convent in Vilna. The great gate of Jerusalem in *Nabuchodonosor* also bears a close resemblance to one of the city gates of Vilna (now destroyed), and the step-gabled houses in *Judith* are Baltic rather than South German in style. Whether these similarities are intended or merely coincidental is hard to determine. Suffice it to say that having introduced Byelorussian costumes into his engravings, it seems consistent that he should have dealt similarly with styles of architecture. Skaryna's preoccupation was to render the Bible more real and living to his

⁶⁶) See for example the Portrait of V. Ciapinski (1540-1603) in his Евангелия of 1580 с; Хрэстаматыя ..., p. 196.

⁶⁵) Whoever Skaryna's supposed assistants may have been, they seem to have lapsed into oblivion, without leaving any other record of their passing. Not so Skaryna, who continued to cut wood engravings in Vilna until 1525.

⁶⁷) Cf. Braun, Grodno, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, Koeln 1576.

readers through his engravings. This he endeavoured to do by adapting scenes to a contemporary environment and giving them a local colour, and the lasting popularity of his books in Byelorussia and throughout the East Slavic world is a measure of his success.

Although Byzantine or Church-Slavonic influence was strong, both on the language of Skaryna, and on the form of his typography, there is little evidence of any Byzantine tradition in his engravings. Most of the subjects he chose to illustrate were scenes from the Old Testament, and as such they had not attracted much attention from the Eastern Orthodox iconographer, who sought particularly to depict scenes from the life of Christ, and of the Apostles and Saints. It must not however be imagined that Skaryna's art was something alien to the character of Byelorussian iconography. Already as early as the XVth century Western art-forms had penetrated the older Byzantine traditions, and their influence was being felt even in the conservatively-minded monasteries. The composition of the subject and the postures of the characters remained stylised, but the faces and bodies of the saints lost the severity and abstraction of the ancient models, to become rounder and more realistic in shape. XVth and early-XVIth century icons such as Prince Jury Mścisłaŭski's St. Onufrius, and the frescoes of Andrejka in Lublin and Kraków show many features of Gothic art. When Skaryna depicts *The Holy Trinity* (Genesis) as a figure with three faces, — a purely Western usage — he did what Byelorussian iconographers had done before him, and helped to establish a new tradition which ultimately spread over the East Slavic world.

The figure of *Christ* (Wisdom) seated on a globe, holding a book in one hand and raising the other in blessing, is a theme familiar to both Gothic and Byzantine art. The custom of including the figure of some lay-person in a religious picture, such as a patron or the artist himself was quite general in Western Europe, and by no means unknown in Byelorussia as early as the XVth century. Thus in the icon of *St. Onufrius* previously referred to, the artist shows Prince Jury Mścisłaŭski kneeling before the Saint, whose hands are raised in a gesture of prayer. The practice was to become widespread in the late-XVIth and in the XVIIth centuries.

On the Frontispiece to his edition of the *Akafisty* (Vilna 1525), Skaryna gives a small but interesting woodcut of *The Virgin and Child*. At first sight there is nothing particularly striking about this illustration. A classical Madonna is shown crowned and seated, holding the infant Christ in her left arm, and a sceptre in her right hand. It is, however, interesting to note that Skaryna's Virgin closely resembles such ancient and popular Byelorussian icons of the Theotokos as *Mienskaja Maci Boža*, and the *Białynickaja*. Whether Skaryna had such models in mind when he made this engraving is by no means certain, but it does appear that he was working within a well-established tradition of Byelorussian ecclesiastical art.

The number of Skaryna's *Biblija Ruska* which have survived the passage of time remains very small, and this renders any comprehensive study of his engravings extremely complex. Copies of some of

his works may be found in the West in London, Cambridge, and Prague. The most complete collections are certainly in Moscow and Leningrad. Unfortunately, they are not readily available for study. A good series of reproductions of Skaryna's engravings was published by Scakacichin in 1925. A far smaller series has been republished in the journal *Bożym Ślacham* from 1965 to 1967.⁶⁸ Since Scakacichin's work is almost as inaccessible as the original books of the *Biblija*, the latter collection, which includes some 17 illustrations and one frontispiece in reproductions of varying quality, is the only one readily available.

The place of Skaryna in the field of European art has yet to be assessed. The role he played in the diffusion of Renaissance art and learning in Byelorussia was a capital one. Not only did he stimulate others to emulate his activities in the field of printing; he also gave a great impulse to the development of wood engraving in Byelorussia. Although none of his followers, with the possible exception of Ciapinski, ever achieved his high standards, they were able to produce works of great freshness and charm. His heritage is one which his "brothers of Rus" contemplate with considerable and justifiable pride.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Supra* n. 37-45, 50 & 54.