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A Copy by Israhel van Meckenem of the *Luke the Evangelist in Circle* Engraving by Master E. S. in the University Library of Budapest

The copper engraving Inc. 1051, kept in the Manuscript Archives of the University Library of Budapest, is a significant relic not only from the perspective of the history of art but also of philology and palaeography (fig. 1). The engraving, which presumably was attached to the inner side of the front or the back cover of an incunabulum, was removed during the first restoration campaign of the library's incunabulum collection around 1881, under the directorship of Sándor Szilágyi.¹ Described first by Simon Meller in 1912² and then by Max Lehrs in 1934³, but not illustrated and mentioned as untraceable by Hollstein in 1986⁴, the engraving in question appears to be a copy by Israhel van Meckenem after Master E. S.

The incunabulum to which the engraving was attached can no longer be identified. The plate was printed on a piece of paper the dimensions of which are 127 x 191 mm. The horizontal diameter of the engraving measures 120 mm, but the upper part is fragmentary. The paper bears no water-marks. Pollution and tears, as well as the creases in the page indicate continuous usage. A fragmentary inscription is legible around the circular engraving in Latin and Hebrew letters. The inscription around the engraving is made up of three main units. The Hebrew inscription on the upper-right part is “בְּרִתּוֹ לְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ”, the Latin name of Bartholomeus written with Hebrew letters (fig. 2). The Hebrew inscription on the upper-left part is “ט י כ ד ל מ נ ן”, nine letters from the middle of the Hebrew alphabet (fig. 3). The Latin inscription on the lower-left part is “Tot tibi [...] pro facti”, the meaning of which is uncertain (fig. 4).⁵ Also the strip above

the head of the evangelist originally must have worn an inscription. There are three lines in Latin in the lower-right part of the verso side. The mixture of *textualis* and *cursiva* fonts “of the Latin inscription is not earlier than the middle of the 16th century”.⁶ The Hebrew inscriptions are presumably the work of a skilled Christian Hebraist from the 16th or 17th century.⁷ Some of the details of the engraving were actually coloured by a later hand. The cap and the belt of the evangelist are emphasised with red, his mantle, pouch, book and halo, and the horns, the wings and the tail of the bull with brown.

The engraving separated from the inner side of an incunabulum represents the *Luke the Evangelist in Circle* composition. The work is a copy by the prolific printmaker Israhel van Meckenem after the series showing the four evangelists in circles of the significant engraver, Master E. S. (Lehrs 86) (fig. 5).⁸ Israhel van Meckenem probably trained with Master E. S. in South Germany, and may well have been with him at his death c. 1467/1468, since he acquired and reworked some of the master's plates.⁹ Another 157 of van Meckenem's “own” prints were also copies of ones by Master E. S.¹⁰ Comparing it with the four known sheets in Dresden, Basel and Vienna,¹¹ the Budapest engraving appears to be a copy of the four prints.

from “factum” then “so much ... of (...pro) of (your) deed”. The completion of ...pro is still questionable. While there are a few possibilities, none seem to fit the context (“stupor” – by disgracing, “scalpro” with a chisel, “cupro” – with copper; the following are even less likely: “apro” – with a wild boar, “capro” – with a goat). “pro” might also mean praepositio – in this case the sentence however cannot end with “facti”, but rather must conclude with the word modified (“for...your deed”).

1. I would like to thank Éva Knapp for making it possible for me to study the engraving. I am grateful to Holm Bevers for his comments on the first version of this essay. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Edit Madas, Rita Kopecky, and Tamás Visi for their invaluable help in the interpretation of the Latin and Hebrew inscriptions.
2. MELLER, Simon: A német és németalföldi rézmetszés a 15. században. In: *A Magyar Szépművészeti Múzeum grafikai osztály kiállításai 3.* Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 1912, p. 12, cat. 63
3. LEHRS, Max: *Geschichte und kritischer Katalog des deutschen, niederländischen und französischen Kupferstichs im 15. Jahrhundert*, Vol. 9. Wien: Gesellschaft für Vervielfältigende Kunst, 1934, Nr. 226, p. 217
4. FALK, Tilman (ed.); KORENY, Fritz (Comp.): *Hollstein's German engravings, etchings and woodcuts: ca. 1400–1700. Vol. 24. Israhel van Meckenem*. Amsterdam: Hertzberger, 1986, Nr. 226, p. 97
5. According to Rita Kopecky, based on “facti”, the Latin inscription can be interpreted in two ways: 1. if we derive the meaning from “facio” then “so many ... (something masculine which may be counted) was made for you (+ ...pro)”; 2. if we derive the meaning

6. In the view of Edit Madas.
7. According to Tamás Visi the author was undoubtedly a Christian Hebraist who knew the Hebrew language well. Visi draws this conclusion because his tracing is steady and his letters graceful. He therefore must have practiced writing in Hebrew a great deal – most likely he wrote in Hebrew extensively when he was learning. It is unlikely that the author was a converted Jew – he writes his letters above the aiding lines as customary in manuscripts with Latin letters and not underneath as done by Jews. Such reflexes rarely change with conversion.
8. LEHRS, Max, op.cit., Vol. 2, Nr. 86, p. 156; HUTCHINSON Jane C. (ed.): *The Illustrated Bartsch 8. formerly vol. 6 (part 1). Early German artists*. New York: Abaris Books, 1980, p. 66, Nr. 67; HÖFLER, Janez: *Der Meister E. S. Ein Kapitel europäischer Kunst des 15. Jahrhunderts*. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2007, Tafelband, Nr. 84–87
9. GEISBERG, Max: *Der Meister der Berliner Passion und Israhel van Meckenem: Studien zur Geschichte der westfälischen Kupferstecher im XV. Jahrhundert*. Strassburg: Heitz, 1903, pp. 91–97
10. METZGER, Christof: Multiplikator des Ruhmes. In: RIETHER, Achim: *Israhel van Meckenem (um 1440/45–1503): Kupferstiche – der Münchner Bestand*. Katalog zur Ausstellung der Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung, München. München, 2006, pp. 39–47
11. Basel, Kunstmuseum, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Aus K.6.47; Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Nr. A 414; Vienna, Albertina, Grafische Sammlung, Inv.-Nr. DG1926/715; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek



Fig. 1. Israhel van Meckenem: *Luke the Evangelist in Circle*. Engraving after Master E. S. Budapest, University Library, Inc. 1051

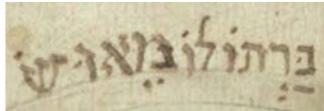


Fig. 2. Hebrew inscription on the upper-right part (Detail of Fig. 1)

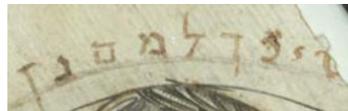


Fig. 3. Hebrew inscription on the upper-left part (Detail of Fig. 1)



Fig. 4. Latin inscription on the lower-left part (Detail of Fig. 1)

The two variants afford an interesting insight into the work methods of Israhel van Meckenem. The Budapest copy differs from the four prints. The various elements missing in the Budapest version and present in the other copies



Fig. 5. Master E. S.: *Luke the Evangelist in Circle*. Engraving (Lehrs 86)

figure kneels to the left and he rests the book on his right knee. In the Dresden version the long mantle covers the right shoulder and hangs down on the ground from the left. In our picture the drapery is identical in the smallest details, but the border of the mantle stretches beyond the circular frame. Again, in the Dresden version, the bull stands on the right, and in the background on the left a precipitous cliff rises from the lawn. About seven foliage plants are scattered along the ground. In the Budapest version the bull stands on the left, but his left wing is missing, as are the cliff and the foliage plants.

With this sequence in mind, several further changes become comprehensible, providing a glimpse into Israhel van Meckenem's procedure as he copied this composition. On both versions a halo frames the head of the evangelist and the bull. In the Budapest print, the halo of the evangelist is empty; in the Dresden version, in turn, the halo is filled with rays. Furthermore, in both versions a strip flutters above the halo of the evangelist and the bull. The strip in the Budapest print stretches beyond the round frame, while in the Dresden copy the strip only touches the frame. Lastly we may note that the Budapest composition is not only reversed but also turned 25 degrees clockwise.

indicate that the Budapest engraving represents a copy of Master E. S.'s composition by Israhel van Meckenem. A detailed comparison of the two variants demonstrates this unambiguously. In the Dresden version Luke the Evangelist is skilfully depicted kneeling on the rocky ground in profile, turned to the right. He wears a liripipe on his head and carries writing materials in his belt. He is depicted while writing his Gospel, which he rests on his left knee. In the Budapest engraving, the composition is the same, but reversed: the



Fig. 6. Master E. S.: *Mark the Evangelist in Circle*. Engraving (Lehrs 85)



Fig. 7. Israhel van Meckenem: *Mark the Evangelist in Circle*. Engraving after Master E. S. (Hollstein 225)

The history of the copy must be somewhat as follows. Israhel van Meckenem had been at work on copying *Luke the Evangelist in Circle*. It is reasonable to suppose that he had not yet modelled the figure of the evangelist and was working on the bull when he thought of changing and lightening the composition. The main scheme remained the same, of course, but the structure became more airy without plants and rocks.

A similar method of copying Master E. S. appears in the *Mark the Evangelist in Circle* engraving by Israhel van Meckenem, here illustrated for comparison (figg. 6 and 7): The composition is the same, but reversed; the rocks of the foreground are missing; the halo of the evangelist is empty. In this case the copy is not identical in every detail: one can notice differences in the drapery and in the hair of the saint.¹²

All in all, one can conclude that the engraving inserted into the inner side of the cover pages of the incunabulum in the University Library of Budapest can be identified as part of the oeuvre of Israhel van Meckenem. The comparison with the four copies of *Luke the Evangelist in Circle* by Master E. S. proves conclusively that our engraving is a copy of them. Naturally the Budapest version can never rival the Dresden / Basel / Vienna copies in their completion.

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Luca Evangelista, una copia di Israhel van Meckenem dall'incisione del Maestro E. S.

L'incisione in rame conservata presso il Dipartimento dei Manoscritti della Biblioteca Universitaria di Budapest con la segnatura inc. 1051 fu presumibilmente ritrovata alla fine dell'800 all'interno della rilegatura di un incunabolo.

La composizione circolare rappresenta l'Evangelista Luca e risulta essere una copia eseguita dal prolifico incisore Israhel van Meckenem da un originale del Maestro E. S.

Israhel van Meckenem probabilmente studiò nella bottega dell'incisore noto come Maestro E. S., attivo nel Sud della Germania, anche negli anni 1467–1468 quando questi morì. Rispetto al modello l'immagine non solo è disposta in controparte ma anche girata di 25 gradi in senso antiorario. Lo schema principale è rimasto invariato ma è stato semplificato in alcuni elementi come le piante, le rocce, e si notano differenze nel panneggio e nei capelli del santo. L'autrice ha confrontato il foglio di Budapest con gli originali noti del Maestro E. S., conservati nelle collezioni di Dresda, Basilea e Vienna.

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Eine Kopie des Kupferstichs *Der Evangelist Lukas im Rund* des Meisters E.S. von Israhel van Meckenem in der Universitätsbibliothek Budapest

Meister E. S., der nur in seinen Werken (wohl ursprünglich etwa 500 Kupferstiche) nachweisbar ist und um die Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts am Oberrhein lebte, war einer der produktivsten und einflussreichsten deutschen Graphiker seiner Epoche. Noch umfangreicher ist das Werk Israhel van Meckenems (um 1430/40–1503 Bocholt). Er war wahrscheinlich Schüler des Meisters E. S.; bei einem Großteil seiner Stiche handelt es sich um Kopien nach Vorlagen des Meisters E. S. und anderer deutscher Stecher.

Die Autorin berichtet über einen Kupferstich, der zum Bestand des Handschriftenarchivs der Budapester Universitätsbibliothek gehört und gegen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts aus dem Innendeckel einer Inkunabel herausgelöst wurde. Nach einer Beschreibung des Blattes einschließlich philologischer und paläographischer Hinweise wird im Vergleich mit vier bekannten Blättern gleichen Sujets des Meisters E. S. in Dresden, Basel und Wien nachgewiesen, dass es sich bei dem Budapester Blatt um eine von Israhel van Meckenem gefertigte, in Details vereinfachte Kopie handelt. (DL)

12. GEISBERG, Max: *Verzeichnis der Kupferstiche Israhels van Meckenem*. Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 58. Strassburg: Heitz, 1905, p. 13;
FALK, Tilman, op. cit., Nr. 225, p. 97