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The Byzantine life of the Buddha

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THIS paper sheds light on the evolution of the narrative nucleus of the life of Buddha from Eastern versions to the Georgian Christianization, formalization, and authorial attribution of the Byzantine era up to the success of the Story of Barlaam and Joasaph and its apologists in the modern age. What emerges is a 'philological novel' that reveals how the study of textual tradition can touch the heart of cultural exchange and, in this case, illuminate the intricate relations between East and West in the syncretic, linguistic, cultural, and religious crucible that was Byzantium. As the original source of all of the Christianized stories of Buddha and ultimate mediator of earlier Buddhist, Persian, Arabic, and Georgian versions, this 10th century Byzantine text presents a uniquely cosmopolitan DNA, resulting in a fascinating genesis between the Caucasus and Mount Athos.

The Story of Barlaam and Joasaph recounts the tale of an Indian prince who, influenced by the teachings of an anchorite, flees the palace where his father had imprisoned him to protect him from the evils of the world, abandons his royal destiny, and sets off on his own mystical-hermetic journey. That the story mirrored that of the Buddha was already recognized by scholars at the end of the 19th century, but the various stages and mediations were unravelled definitively only in recent years. It is now possible to fully appreciate both the true narrative qualities of the text and the allusive, philosophical richness of the various trajectories of the story, which has fascinated and influenced scores of writers over the centuries from Jacobus de Voragine to Gui de Cambrai and Boccaccio, Shakespeare to Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca, Tolstoy to Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Hermann Hesse.

Teheran, 1883, year 1261 of the Hegira. While the British and Russian Empires fight over control of the Per-

sia's borders and the fragile sovereignty left to the Shah Nasser ad-Dîn and the Qajar dynasty, a lithographer issued the first edition of the *kitab Kamal-ad-din*, an ancient book from the Fatimid Caliphate by the learned Shia scholar, Ibn Babuya.[1]

The Teheran edition preceded by only six years that of another ancient Arabic work, also lithographic, of similar content: the *kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf*, published in Bombay in the year 1266 of the Hegira, or between 1888 and 1889.[2]

Both works tell the Islamic-Ismaili version of the story of the Buddha. Both introduced the story of a teacher and hermit, alongside the figure of the bodhisattva. Both had the prince Buddha die in Kashmir. But the first version inspired a revelation in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a charismatic Punjabi Muslim who considered himself the messiah of the Second Coming promised in the scriptures, the Rightly Guided One, who would direct Islam and all religions back to original purity.[3] In the Kamal-ad-din, the Buddha was not called Budasaf, or Bodhisattva,[4] as in the *Bilawhar wa Budasf*: he was called Iudasaf. The Rightly Guided One wanted to read Iuzasaf and believed this was an Arabic variant of the name Jesus (which normally is either *Isa* or *Yassou*: the latter is the Arab Christian name of Jesus, while *Isa* is the Muslim version used in the Koran).

Further, he revealed the connection with the name Yus Asaf, inscribed in a crypt in Srinagar in Kashmir, on a tomb of Buddhist or Hindu origin, which had been reoriented towards Mecca at the time of the Islamic invasion of the area in the 14th century.

On the basis of this revelation, Ghulam Ahmad founded the Ahmadiyya movement, also known as Qadianism (from Qadyan, the Punjabi city where the venerated *masih* was born, lived, and preached). This Islamic sect is still very much followed today,[5] though repeatedly repudiated by orthodox Islam. Christian confessional literature has also been fascinated by the doctrine of the 'Indian Jesus', eliciting, naturally, persistent debate.[6]

The Indian Jesus of the Islamic Ahmadi's beliefs may seem just an isolated example of delirious syncretism, or even a mere eccentric fantasy. Quite the opposite, it finds solid, though perhaps unwitting, inspiration in the ancient history of these three religions. In order to explore the very beginnings of Buddhist-Islamic-Christian syncretism as revealed in the work we are dealing with today, the so-called *Barlaam and Joasaph*, dating from the 10th century, we have to make not only a chronological but also a geographic detour. In the words of William Butler Yeats, we have to sail to Byzantium.

Byzantine civilization, reservoir for eleven centuries of cults and cultures, creeds and religions, was naturally syncretic from the beginning of its history. It was in politics, since the Byzantine state was already *in nuce* the product of the fusion of Greek thought, Hellenistic power doctrines and the Roman juridical-administrative tradition. It was in philosophy, if we consider that the ability to precisely combine the tenets of late Platonism – its neo-Pythagorean, Orphic, and Chaldean contaminations and their gnostic deviations – with the new Christian faith, had made possible the construction of what is still the theological edifice of Christianity.

And it was in literature. A continuous flow of verses and songs in all the languages of the known world, of stories and legends, found their way into the ruts of the great network of late Roman roads and followed the itineraries of the major routes by which the Byzantine empire maintained contact with the other great empires around the globe: from the Persian to the Chinese, passing through the Kushan empire, the Gupta, the kingdom of Gandhara, the tolerant Seleucid empire, the immense, peaceful Mongolian empire.

Established out of the borders of Diocletian's *pars orientalis*, the Byzantine empire was the product of late Imperial Roman provincial policy and its imposing road network. The great military routes exploited by Roman imperialism were also the exchange routes of 'cultural goods' according to Fernand Braudel,[7] and their dual function remained unchanged for the entire eleven centuries of the life of Byzantium. For the empire, those roads were so many open doors on the macro-system of the medieval world. Two great gateways delimited the immense territory of Byzantium: the one opening to the north-east into Central Asia and the other opening to the south-east across Mesopotamia into the Indo-Iranian Great Orient.[8]

The latter, the Desert Road, is of greater interest to us here. From the mountains north of Mesopotamia, or the eastern banks of the Black Sea across the Caucasus, its gateway opened on the ancient expanses of Sogdiana and Bactria, on Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It was the migration route of the Athenian academics to the court of Chosroes after Justinian closed the Greek philosophy schools; the route of Platonic syncretism, then mysticism and Jewish and Islamic aniconism; the route of music and hymnography, then Aristotelianism, perhaps the greatest importation of ancient books under the iconoclast emperor Theophilos. It was the gateway through which, several centuries after the Persians, the Avars, and the Arabs, the Osmani Turks

would pass to invade Constantinople. And it was the gate through which the *Thousand and One Nights* disseminated in the *Sintipa*, the *Pancatantra* transposed in the *Kalila wa Dimna*, then the *Stephanites and Ichnelates,*[9] and especially the very life of the Buddha, Christianized in what we call the Barlaam and Joasaph,[10] arrived in Byzantium through a series of Chinese box re-elaborations and translations.

In order to summarize the complex migrations and camouflaging of the life of the Buddha without tormenting our readers, we have to return to the two Arabic books published in the 1880s, one in Teheran, the other in Bombay. The earliest mention of the kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf can be found in the *index librorum* of the first history of Arabic literature, the *kitab al-Fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadim, written in Baghdad in 987-88. If we are certain that the kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf derives from one of more Persian versions, and the date of composition of the kitabal-Fihrist establishes without doubt the *terminus antequem*, it is, therefore, probable that the first translation from Pahlavi, or Middle Persian, can be traced to Ibn al-Muqqafa (d.759) and/or his students: thus, to the 8th century.[11] Furthermore, more than one Arabic work on the legend of the Buddha, all originating from the Persian, is mentioned in the kitab al-Fihrist.

Through the mediation of Ismaili Islam, the legend of the education of the bodhisattva arrives in the Byzantine multicultural, intercultural, Christian koiné. From the kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf, and perhaps also from the kitab Kamal-ad-din,[12] Arab versions themselves taken from Persian sources, derives a work in the Georgian language that is their faithful translation: the *Balavariani*, a book that functions as a link between the 'Oriental' and Christianized traditions of the life of the Buddha.[13]

The first scholar to systematically postulate an Iranian-Islamic connection, apart from the intuitions present in the writings of Hermann Zotenberg, was Ernst Kuhn,[14] who hypothesized (correctly) that the first intermediary was a Pahlavi translation of the Sanskrit text, but who posited (erroneously) that a Syriac segment constituted the second segment, from which the Greek text was supposedly translated and from which, via the Arab-Christian edition (for all intents and purposes, derived from it), the Coptic, two Armenian versions and the first Latin version originated.

After the discovery at the beginning of the 20th century of the fragment of the Turkish version (discovered in 1909 by the great German explorer of Central Asia, Albert von Le Coq, that the form Budasf reconnected to an Arabic link), Kuhn's hypotheses would be rectified and the equally landmark studies of the Bollandist Paul Peeters in 1931 and in 1957 of the British David Marshall Lang, one of the Cambridge spies in the service of Her Majesty on the Caucasian front, would develop Kuhn's first attempt at systematic reconstruction.

Lang – first an official in the Second World War, then vice-consul at Tabriz and keen observer of the Armenian question, scholar of Bulgarian culture and holder of the chair of Georgian language during the Cold War, straddling the United States and the Soviet Union, and finally head of the Royal Asiatic Society of London – is another illustrious exponent of the adventurous, eccentric *lignée* of intellectuals seduced by the extraordinary case of the Christianization of the life of the Buddha.

If Fr. Paul Peeters was the first to postulate with documentation the existence of a Georgian source, excluding not only the possibility of a Syriac ancestry, as well as Armenian and Coptic models,[15] it was Lang who established the existence of two contemporaneous Georgian versions (9th-10th centuries), one *brevior* and one *maior* (the Jerusalem exemplar of the *Balavariani*), identified in the latter the source of the Georgian brevior version as well as the Greek reworking, and more importantly demonstrated the connection between the Balavariani and the Arabic *Bilawhar*, which in turn derived from the Pahlavi version.[16]

According to D.M. Lang,[17] in the contemporary form of the Arabic text, are elements from other Buddhist books, extracts from which, interpolated in the prototype of the Bombay edition (and, moreover, present only in the second half,) might not have been present in the Arabic model of the Balavariani when it was used by the Georgian translator.[18]

However, there is no doubt that the sequence of facts, the 'genetic sequence' of the various and, for their intrinsic vocation, non-canonized versions of the life of the Gautama Sakyamuni, is repeated identically in the narrative Chinese box which, from the Persian to Islamic versions, was disclosed in the Balavariani, and which resulted in transmission to the Barlaam and Joasaph, the work written by an aristocratic young Georgian monk on the Holy Mountain of Mount Athos, in the monastery of Iviron, i.e., 'of the Iberians', after the end of the Arab domination (mid-7th to mid-10th centuries) in the small Caucasian dominion he came from: Iberia,[19] the ancient name for Georgia, which had just been unified and declared independent within the Byzantine sphere of influence.

The son of a dignitary at the court of Prince David, Euthymius was born around 955 and as a child had been sent to the imperial court at Constantinople as a hostage, together with other sons of noble Georgian birth. In the capital, he was given the sophisticated education that the Polis offered the multi-ethnic élites who came there to study and, in particular, especially to foreign hostages, methodically beguiled and co-opted in the student life of the descendants of the best families.[20] The young, aristocratic Circassian hostage was so well-educated in that *paideia* and, at the same time, so conscious of his place at a crossroads of cultures, and that the exchange, translation or transfer from one language to another, was such a vital mechanism of the unique and variegated civilization shaped by Byzantium out of the encounter of different ethnicities and cultures, as to make it the aim of his life's work.[21]

It was, after all, the mission he was destined to carry out for both of his countries, a mission at once literary and moral, political and religious. He became an extraordinary cultural mediator and, therefore, the perfect example of an intellectual of the Byzantine Commonwealth. In the Iberian monastery founded with his father, John, on the new Holy Mountain of Athos, Euthymius dedicated a good part of his life to translating the key texts of philosophy, theology, and Greek literature into the language of his native land.[22] And, in at least one case, the opposite: to translating from Georgian into Greek a work of great use to the soul, as was, indeed, the Balavariani, and to rewriting and reshaping it into what we call the Barlaam and Joasaph.

An extraordinary narrative patrimony, with its cargo of mature, sophisticated structural solutions, travelled from the East to Byzantium and from Byzantium to the West, and became available to European authors and readers. And Byzantium confirms its unusual historical vocation in playing a role in mediation and cultural transmission, in the vertical sense (diachronic) as a vehicle of the ancient Greek inheritance, as well as the horizontal sense (synchronic). Frontier metropolis, open door on the Orient, Byzantium remains the bridge between two worlds until the fall of the empire.[23]

But it is also true that, 'in the end, when the Buddha became a Christian saint, it was only after he had first been reborn as a Muslim mystic', as François de Blois wrote,[24] underscoring the central role of Islamic mysticism and its Sufi components in the assimilation of Indo-Buddhist elements corresponding to more inward-looking and devotional characteristics of Islam, such as individual piety (*ibadah*) and asceticism (*zuhd*).

In 1870 at the Royal Institution of London, Friedrich Max Müller gave a lecture 'On the Migration of Fables' in which he summarized the Barlaam and Joasaph for his listeners as follows: A king in India, an enemy and persecutor of the Christians, has an only son. […] an astrologer predicts that he will rise to glory; not, however, in his own kingdom, but in a higher and better one; in fact, that he will embrace the new and persecuted religion of the Christians. Everything is done to prevent this. He is kept in a beautiful palace, surrounded by all that is enjoyable; and great care is taken to keep him in ignorance of sickness, old age, and death. After a time, however, his father gives him leave to drive out. On one of his drives he sees two men, one maimed, the other blind. He asks what they are, and is told that they are suffering from disease. He then inquires whether all men are prone to disease, and whether it is known beforehand who will suffer from disease and who will be free; and when he hears the truth, he becomes sad, and returns home. Another time, when he drives out, he meets an old man with wrinkled face and shaking legs, bent down, with white hair, his teeth gone, and his voice faltering. He asks again what all this means, and is told that this is what happens to all men; that no one can escape old age, and that in the end all men must die. Thereupon he returns home to meditate on death, till at last a hermit appears and opens before his eyes a higher view of life, as contained in the Gospel of Christ.[25]

In the same lecture, Max Müller compared the structure with that of the *Lalita Vistara Sutra* or 'Sutra of Extensive Play', a sutra whose date is disputed, though not post-3rd century C.E.,[26] and whose versions both in Sanskrit and Tibetan, like the Barlaam and Joasaph, include only the first part of the Buddha's life before his apostleship.

In the Lalita Vistara – the life, though no doubt the legendary life, of Buddha – the father of Buddha is a king. When his son is born, the Brahman Asita predicts that he will rise to great glory, and become either a powerful king, or, renouncing the throne and embracing the life of a hermit, become a Buddha. His father wants to prevent this. He therefore keeps the young prince, when he grows up, in his garden and palaces, surrounded by all kinds of pleasures which might turn his mind away from contemplation to enjoyment. More especially he is to know nothing of illness, old age, and death, which might open his eyes to the misery and unreality of life. After a time, however, the prince receives permission to drive out; and then follow the Four Drives, so famous in Buddhist

history. The places where these drives took place were commemorated by towers still standing in the time of Fa Hian's[27] visit to India, early in the fifth century after Christ, and even in the time of Hiouen Thsang,[28] in the 7th century.

Max Müller concludes: The early life of Josaph is exactly the same as that of the Buddha.[29] […] No one, I believe, can read these two stories without feeling convinced that one was borrowed from the other.

The royal birth. The prophecies of the court astrologers, according to which the child would become lord of a great kingdom. The reaction of the father, who misunderstands the spiritual nature of the realm prophesized, confines his son to the palace isolated from the outside world, surrounding him with an infinite number of safeguards so his purity is not contaminated by knowledge of suffering. The genius of the young prince is such that he can never get enough of the teachings of the tutors hired by his father. His experiences outside the palace and the discovery of the three major aspects of the human existential condition – sickness, old age and death – reveal that death is the law of birth. The resulting disillusionment and awareness of his precarious and transitory state. The encounter with a hermit who is indifferent to life and death: Barlaam in the Christianized version, where the character of a monk is already present, takes on a greater role in the Georgian and Islamic versions as already outlined in the ancient Buddhist sources.

The abdication of the throne. The painful pursuit of the spiritual, the temptations, the struggle with the magician and the force of evil, Mara for the Buddha, Satan for Joasaph. The night flight to embrace the ascetic life and pursue the spiritual search which brings the bodhisattva to illumination and Joasaph to revelation. The father's conversion. This sequence of elements, more easily recognizable as such in the earliest figurative evidence from India, but nevertheless present in the sacred writings of Buddhism and sufficiently consolidated at least from the 1st century B.C.E., constitutes the first part of the life of the Buddha. In the Oriental tradition, it will be followed by the narration of his personal search of the Way, his travels, his preaching and, finally, as we have already seen, by his death.

The chain of facts and circumstances, archetypes and symbols, was so strong and persuasive as to remain essentially unchanged in the variety of transitions and linguistic, literary, and cultural mediations that separate the Greek text from the original Sanskrit text, through the process of dismantling, reassembling, and renovating the narrative machine that transported the incomparable, the elect, the one set apart (*eklektos*) so that he might flower pure and strange like a plant in a greenhouse, the one sick with desire, languishing in 'search of a man who could speak a new word to him,' the troubled prince, the adolescent philosopher who by destiny had received the gift of wonder.

The same sequence of events would be reproduced and reworked in western literature beginning with this first impression of the Buddhist footprint in the Byzantine mould. The story of the bodhisattva Joasaph would be one of the most popular texts of the global Middle Ages. From the Greek text it would pass into Church Slavonic, then into Russian and Serbian. In the East, Euthymius's version would be translated into Amharic, Armenian, Hebrew and Classical Syriac. The West would see Occitan, Old French, Middle High German, English, Spanish, Bohemian, and Polish versions. The Christian interpretation of the sayings and actions of Prince Siddhartha would resound in every European language with a 'circulation probably never before achieved by any other legend.'

According to the audacious myth created at the end of the 19th century out of the Islamic Ahmadiyyani heresy, just as the Christian Jesus secretly left Palestine for the East following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great and taking on the guise of a Buddhist preacher, likewise the Buddha travelled the West incognito or *entravesti*, under the false name Joasaph-Iudasaf-Budasaf, which, in reality, as we have seen, is related etymologically to his own.

Through the Latin translations, his story reached the Provence of the Cathars and Albigensians, influenced by eastern Manichaeism.[30] It appears in the *chansons de geste* up through the most famous of the medieval epics dedicated to him, in *langue d'oïl*, the *Balaham et Josaphas* by Gui de Cambrai,[31] to the theatrical versions such as the *Miracle de Barlaam* or the *Mystère du roy Advenir*, to the Middle High German poems such as the famous 'Barlaam und Josaphat' by Rudolf von Ems.[32] The life of the Buddha freed itself from Latin in the *fabliaux*, in popular mysteries, and ballads and May festivals. It astonished the public in piazzas. It was transmitted to Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum*[33] and to the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus da Voragine[34] and thanks to these popular works spread throughout the West. It crossed the northern borders of Europe up to the Netherlands, saw several Scandinavian versions, moved onto the British and Celtic Isles and dampened the terrain in which the English adaptation of the Legenda Aurea, printed by William Caxton at Westminster in 1483 and later brought by him to Shakespeare's stage, would take root.

In the meantime, Castilian, Portuguese and Catalan versions had appeared. If, already by the 14th century, the sequence of events and situations, archetypes and symbols in the life of the Buddha had been reproduced in certain important texts and, particularly, in neo-Latin drama, the reworkings and readaptations would find their greatest fortune during the *Siglo de Oro*.

In the age of the Counter-Reformation, beginning with the meticulous French translation and, especially, the scholarly Latin edition by the de Billy brothers, the story of Buddha-Joasaph, in addition to arriving in Poland, Holland, and at Port-Royal, would gain renewed fortune in Spain, where Lopede Vega would write his *Barlán y Josafá*,[35] the connection through which the young prince, isolated from the world and lost in a dream, would find his most complete western portrait in Calderónde la Barca's *La vida es sueño*.

In orthodox Great Russia, a long tradition gently pushed the Barlaam and Joasaph toward Tolstoy. As we see in his *Confession* (1882), he comes to know of the 'life of prince Joassaf (the story of the Buddha)' and 'the parable of the traveller in the well' by reading the *Cet´iminej*, *The Great Meaion Reader*, the imposing mid-16th century Orthodox encyclopaedia of saints' lives. Tolstoy confesses that the Russian menologion became his preferred reading and the Barlaam and Joasaph taught him to read other saints' lives 'aside from the miracles,' in other words 'understanding them as parables aimed at expressing a thought', and 'revealed the meaning of life to him.'[36]

But, as mentioned above, it would be through Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* that the story of the life of the Buddha – this legend of a thousand faces, this speck in literary space containing a multiplicity of other specks, just like Borges's Aleph, would transmit itself to 19th and 20th century Western European literature, and find in the *finis Austriae* still another, perhaps unwitting, interpreter in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, until we meet the last Joasaph in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*.

Endnotes

1. Abû Ga'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Husain b. Musa al-Qummi al-Saduq, originally from Khurasan, later resident in Baghdad, where he included among his disciples a number of Iranian scholars, was one of the pre-eminent collectors of Shia Islam traditions: see especially, M. Hidayet Hosain, s.v. *Ibn Babuya*, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vols. I-IV, first edition, Leiden, 1913-36; on the 19th c. Teheran cf. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. I, Leiden, 1967, p. 54; the standard modern edition of Ibn Babuya's text is A. A. al-Ghaffari, *Kamal-ad-din wa tamam al-ni'ma fi itbat al-ghayba wa kasf al-hayra*, Teheran, 1985, pp. 577-637.

2. On the Bombay edition of this 'book of Balawar and Budasaf full of wisdom in its exhortations and parables' cf. Sezgin, *Geschichte* cit., p. 54; E. Kuhn, *Barlaam und Josaphat. Eine bibliographisch-literargeschichtliche Studie*, in 'Abhandlungen der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-philologische Klasse', vol. XX (1893), pp. 1-88: 13; see also B. Hemmerdinger, *Saint Jean Damascene, Barlaam et Joasaph: l'intermédiaire arabe*, in 'Byzantinische Zeitschrift', vol. LXIV (1971), pp. 35-36; further information in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. VI/1. *Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria). Einführung*, ed. R. Volk, De Gruyter (*Patristische Texte und Studien*, 61), Berlin-New York, 2009 (from now on cited as Volk, *Einführung*), p. 29 and notes 129-30. The standard modern edition of the *Bilawhar* is D. Gimaret, *Kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf*, Dar el-Machreq, Beyrouth, 1972; see the French translation, also by Gimaret: *Le livre de Bilawhar wa Budasf selon la version arabe ismaélienne*, Droz, Gand-Paris, 1971.

3. Proof that the *Kamal-ad-din* and not the *kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf* was Ghulam Ahmad's source is due to the work of Norbert Klatt. See N. Klatt, *Lebte Jesus in Indien? Eine religionsgeschichtliche Klärung*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 1988, p. 40, note 78 and p. 57, notes 128-30.

4. Although readily deducible, the fact that *Budasaf* derives not from the name *Buddha* but – correctly, since we are dealing here with his path to enlightenment – from *bodhisattva*, had been understood by scholars from F. Max Müller on. See 'On the Migration of Fables', in Id., *Selected Essays on Language, Mythology and Religion*, Longmans, Green, & Co., New York, 1881, p. 546 ('only putting the name of Joasaph or Josaphat, i.e., Bodhisattva.')

5. On Ghulam Ahmad cf. e.g. J. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003; S. Ross-Valentine, *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at: History, Belief, Practice*, Hurst & Co., New York, 2008; for an introduction on the denomination, see I. Adamson, *Mirza Ghulam Ahmad von Qadian: Der Verheissene Messias und Mahdi*, Der Islam, Frankfurt, 1992.

6. Cf. the tense debate in Volk, *Einführung*, pp. 156-57, who, contesting primarily the etymological identification of the two names (taken into consideration not only by Max Müller but also, and more importantly, in late 19th and 20th century ecclesiastical literature, then apparently banned by scholars at the end of the century: cf. G. Grönbold, *Jesus in Indien. Das Ende einer Legende*, Kösel, München, 1985, p. 52: ('Anyone who would care to maintain today that the name on the tomb in Kashmir is the name of Jesus places her/himself outside all rational discussion and should resign her/himself to being considered crazy.') takes issue with an orientation which is still alive in the literature (cf. for example H. Kersten, *Jesus lebte in Indien. Sein geheimes Leben vor und nach der Kreuzigung*, Ullstein, München, 1994(2), but see R. Heiligenthal, *Der verfälschte Jesus. Eine Kritik moderner Jesu-sbilder*, Primus, Darmstadt. 1997, pp. 105-8).

7. F. Braudel, *Civilta e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, 2 vols., Einaudi, Turin, 2002, vol. I, p. 228. On the circulation of 'cultural goods' along the trade routes – largely the same as the military roads – as 'prized goods which could be exchanged at critical points', and, in particular, on the connection between the development of commercial activities and the spread of the 'constellation of works contained in the images of two names, Barlaam and Josaphat', cf. A. Piras, '*Mercanzie di racconti. Echi di una novella buddhista nel Boccaccio'*, in *Intersezioni*, vol. XXXI, 2 (2011), pp. 269-85, esp. pp. 273 to 282-84.

8. For the definition of 'gateways', see A. Guillou, *La civilisation byzantine*, Arthaud, Paris, 1974, pp. 21-22. On the 'Desert Road', see *ibid.*; cf. also N. V. Pigulewskaja, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien*, Akademie, Berlin, 1969

9. For an overview of the first two works, the *Book of Sindbad* – in the Byzantine version:

Biblos tou Syntipa – and the *Stephanites kai Ichnelates* by Symeon Seth, as the *Barlaam and Ioasaf*, in the European 'literary revolution' of the 13th century that 'inaugurates the season of the *fabliaux* and the novelle and prepares the way for Boccaccio and Chaucer', see E. V. Maltese, *La novella bizantina tra Oriente e Occidente*, in *Impero Romano d'Oriente* (online publication), p. 2; E. V. Maltese, *La migrazione dei testi: il caso di Bisanzio*, in Id., *Dimensioni bizantine. Tra autori, testi e lettori*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alexandria, 2007, pp. 233-46.

10. Where the life of the Buddha is transformed in *speculum principis*, that is, like the *Pañcatantra*, in a series of narrations that should exemplify, namely *ad usum principis*, the aims and methods of good governance.

11. Cfr. Volk, *Einführung*, p. 99, note 8.

12. The manuscript of the *Kamal* preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France is one of the four used by Daniel Gimaret for his edition of the *Bilawhar*. On the quality and richness of the *Kamal-ad-din*, 'portal of Indian and Iranian material' (Piras, *Mercanzie di racconti* cit., p. 274), and its uses for scholars, see S. M. Stern e S. Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories in an Arabic Version*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971; Z. Matar, *The Buddha Legend: A Footnote from an Arabic Source*, in *Oriens*, vol. XXXII (1990), pp. 440-42; the introductions to Gimaret's French translation, *Le livre de Bilawhar wa Budasf* cit., and D. M. Lang's, *The Wisdom of Balahvar: A Christian Legend of the Buddha*, Allen & Unwin, London-New York, 1957; in addition to Gimaret's introduction, pp. 11-20, to his above-mentioned edition of the *kitab Bilawhar wa Budasf*. Blois, *On the Sources of the Barlaam Romance* cit., p. 26, proposes a genealogical tree (*A Tentative Genealogy of the Book of Barlaam and Josaphat*) of the early Islamic-Persian relations and their major offshoots, from which we glean the importance of the Arabic *recensio brevior* version, cited by Ibn Babuya (m. 991), in the formation of a Manichaean offshoot revealed in the Uyghur fragment discovered in the Turpan oasis in Chinese Turkestan, present-day Xinjiang, by A. von Le Coq and first edited by him and by other Manichaean manuscript fragments linked to *Barlaam and Joasaph* brought to light by the international archaeological expeditions of the early 20th century: see W. B. Henning, *Persian Poetical Manuscripts from the Time of Rudaki*, in Id., *Selected Papers*, vol. II, Téhéran-Liège, 1977, pp. 559-74 (originally in *A Locust's Leg. Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., London, 1962, pp. 89-104). Vis-à-vis previous scholars (for example, Lang, Henning, aAsmussen, and Klimkeit), Blois, *On the Sources of the Barlaam Romance* cit., pp. 20-23, modifies the Manichaean element in the elaboration, underscoring its role as mediator and transmitter of material already used in Islamic settings, which the copyists, who wrote the above fragments, along with Ibn Bâbûya, drew on. In particular, the neo-Persian fragment, written in Manicaean, not Arabic, script and identified for the first time by Henning, *Persian Poetical Manuscripts* cit., and belonging without doubt to the same line as the *Barlaam and Joasaph*, attests to the versatility of the scribes educated in linguistically and culturally heterogeneous settings like those of Samarkand and Bukhara. Another fragment from the 10th century, in Manichaean script and in a style imitating the poet Rûdakî, shows the chameleon-like adaptability of Manichaeism in adopting Islamic language to dissimulate its own doctrinal teachings. Therefore, for this evidence we cannot speak of a Manichaean origin, but only of the broad, inter-denominational circulation of edifying stories, with the assimilation and inflection of a strong, prophetic, and personalised component from religions that, like Islam and Manichaeism, drew on a common Abrahamic and Judeo-Christian *humus*.

13. The *Balavariani* did not originate in Palestine, nor, as we read in the *inscriptio* of the Greek romance, in the 'Holy City', i.e. Jerusalem (even if, the present *codex unicus*, the Georg. 140 of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which actually postdates the Greek version, was copied in the Georgian monastery of the Holy Cross), but in the Caucasus, and from there was taken to Byzantine territory, in all probability directly to Mount Athos, by John/Abulherit, father of Euthymius, the author of *Barlaam and Joasaph*. See I. Toral-Niehoff, *Die Legende 'Barlaam und Josaphat' in der arabisch- muslimischen Literatur. Ein arabistischer Beitrag zur 'Barlaam-Frage'*, in *Die Welt des Oriens*, vol. XXXI (2000-2001), p. 127 and note. On Euthymius's father's first name cf. Volk, *Einführung*, p. 77, notes 396-97. Still today the great library of Iviron Monastery holds approximately 1,500 parchment manuscripts in Georgian: the first of these date from the personal initiative of the first hegumen, who, in addition to collecting texts, organized a scriptorium for their reproduction and the works of his son, who, largely at Iviron put to work the fruits of the linguistic, literary, philosophical, and theological knowledge he had acquired in Constantinople.

14. In *Barlaam und Josaphat* cit., as mentioned above.

15. Peeters, *La première traduction latine* cit.

16. See Lang, *The Life of the Blessed Iodasaph* cit. His English translation of the *Balavariani*: *The Balavariani (Barlaam and Josaphat). A Tale from the Christian East*, translation from the ancient Georgian by D. M. Lang, introduction by I. V. Abuladze, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1966 would be published ten years later with an introduction by Ilia Abuladze, formerly editor of the manuscript (*Balavarianis K'art'uli redakciebi*, Tiflis, 1957).

17. D.M. Lang, 'The Life of the Blessed Iodasaph: a New Oriental Christian Version of the Barlaam and Ioasaph Romance', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XX (1957), pp. 389-407: 394.

18. See *ibid.*, pp. 396-98.

19. Or Caucasian Iberia, to distinguish it from Spain. By the mid-7th century, Iberia had become subordinate to the Califfate and an emir was installed in Tblisi. After a period of struggle between the end of the 9th and middle of the 10th centuries, it was unified and declared independent within the Byzantine sphere of influence in 975. For this reason, the *terminus ante quem* for the Arab translation of the life of the Buddha, most likely compiled during the period of the Emirate of Tblisi, dates from that year.

20. According to the *Lives of John and Euthymius,* his father educated him and taught him Georgian and Greek after having ransomed him and taken him with him to the small, Asiatic monastery on Mount Olympus where he had taken orders. Father and son then, before 969, moved to the Athanasius's Lavra on Mount Athos. See B. Martin-Hisard, *La 'Vie de Jean et Euthyme' et le statut du monastère des Ibères sur l'Athos*, in *Révue des Etudes Byzantines*, vol. XLIX (1991), pp. 67-142. Euthymius's biography is outlined in Volk, *Einführung*, pp. 77-87; on his indefatigable activity as translator, see esp. p. 81. As recounted in the *Lives of John and Euthymius* (rr. 532-36 Martin-Hisard), Euthymius's father probably encouraged him to translate texts from Greek into Georgian, to enrich his nation's culture patrimony. See, the autographed *kolophon* at the end of the translation of John Climacus's *Scala Paradisi*, cited in Volk, *Einführung*, p. 79.

21. As we read in the *Lives of John and Euthymius,* the latter 'worked day and night without stopping to extract the sweet honey from God's books', and translated 'so many divine works that no one could count them all.' Martin-Hisard, *loc. cit.*

22. According to the sources, there are no less than one hundred and sixty translations from Greek into Georgian attributed to Euthymius. However, those from Georgian into Greek number only a few, according to the *Life of John and Euthymius*, in part, legendary, written in 1044-45 by the Georgian Athonite monk Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, also known as George the Hagiorite, who mentions only two titles: the *Balahvari* – in other words, the *Barlaam and Joasaph* – and the *Abukuray*, a hagiographic novel connected to the former at several points.

23. Inversely, on admixtures 'from the West to the East of a variety of Greco-Hellenistic,

Biblical and New Testament forms, themes, motifs, and plots, together with excerpts from Indian and Buddhist stories' like those of the *Pancatantra*, the *Kalila wa Dimna,* and *Barlaam and Joasaph*, wrought in the great crucible of Manichaeism, cf. Piras, *Mercanzie di racconti* cit., pp. 272-73.

24. In *On the Sources of the Barlaam Romance, or: How the Buddha Became a Christian Saint*, in D. Durkin-Meisterernst *et al.* (eds.), *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mitteliranischer Zeit*, Reichert, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 7-26: 24. On the primacy of Muslim culture both as a focus, in general, of the spread of ancient culture in the Medieval period and, in particular, in the transaction of textual intersections from East to West of 'this work which is sacred to more than twenty peoples speaking some thirty languages and practicing ten different religions' that is the *Barlaam and Joasaph*, cf. also Piras, *Mercanzie di racconti* cit., pp. 277-79 e 280-81, and notes.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 540-41.

26. The dates put forth for this sûtra, part of the so-called Northern Canon, vary from the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE; cf. P. L. Vaidya (ed.), *Lalavistara Sutra*, The Mithila Institute, Darbhanga, 1958.

27. Between 399 and 414 the Chinese Buddhist monk Fa Hian' (also: Faxian, Fa-hsien) travelled at length through the Chinese region now known as Xinjiang, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka, in search of Buddhist texts; cf. *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms. Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of His Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline, translated and annotated with a Corean recension of the Chinese text by James Legge*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1886.

28. In the 7th century, the great Chinese writer and philosopher Hsüan-tsang (also: Xuánzàng, Sanzang) travelled across India to study Buddhism; he also discovered the two colossal statues at Bamiyan, destroyed by the Afghan Taliban in 2001, which he describes as 'decorated with gold and magnificent jewels.' His life, written by the monk Hui-li, is available in Stanislas Julien's French translation: Hui-Li, *Histoire de la vie de Hiouen-Thsang et de ses voyages dans l'Inde: depuis l'an 629 jusqu'en 645*, Impr. impériale, Paris, 1853 (repr. Charleston 2011) or in S. Beal's English translation: *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang, translated from the Chinese of Shaman (monk) Hwui Li by Samuel Beal*, Kegan Paul, London, 1911 (repr. New Delhi, 1973).

29. Max Müller, 'On the Migration of Fables', cit., p. 540.

30. The prose version of the *Barlaam and Joasaph* in Occitan was published by F. Heuckenkamp, *Die provenzalische Prosa-Redaktion des geistlichen Romans von Barlaam und Josaphat, nebst einem Anhang über einige deutsche Drücke des xvii. Jahrhunderts*, Niemeyer, Halle 1912; cf. also R. Lavaud and R. Nelli (eds.), *Le roman spirituel de Barlaam et Josaphat*, in *Les Troubadours*, vol. I. *Jaufré, Fla-menca, Barlaam et Josaphat*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2000, pp. 1071-221.

31. *Barlaam und Josaphat. Französisches Gedicht des 13. Jahrhunderts von Gui de Cambrai*, *nebst Auszügen aus mehreren andern romanischen Versionen*, eds. H. Zotenberg and P. Meyer, Litterarischer Verein, Stuttgart, 1864 (photostat. Amsterdam, 1966), pp. 335-46; on the author, see J. Sonet, *Le roman de Barlaam et Josaphat. Recherches sur la tradition manuscrite latine et française*, 2 vols., Bibliothèque de L'Université, Louvain-Namur-Paris, 1949, vol. I, p. 447; E. C. Armstrong, *The French Metrical Versions of Barlaam and Josaphat, with Special Reference to the Termination in Gui de Cambrai*, Champion, Paris, 1922, p. 4; and E. G. Ouellette's new theory, *A Comparative Study of the Three French Versions in Verse of the Story of Barlaam et Josaphaz*, Ph. D., University of Oklahoma, 2001, p. 27.

32. Rudolf von Ems, *Barlaam und Josaphat*, eds. F. Pfeiffer, F. Söhns e Heinz Rupp, De Gruyter, Berlin 1965. On the later German versions, see S. Calomino, *From Verse to Prose: The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend in Fifteenth-Century Germany*, Scripta Humanistica, Potomac, 1990.

33. Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum quadruplex sive Speculum majus*, Douai, 1624, vol. IV (fotorist. Graz 1964); on Vincent of Beauvais and the reception of his work, see *Vincent de Beauvais: intentions et réceptions d'une œuvre encyclopédique au Moyen Âge*, Papers of the 14th Meeting on the Institut d'études médiévales (April 27-30, 1988), Bellarmin, Paris, 1990.

34. Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, ed. G. P. Maggioni, 2 vols., Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, Florence, 1998. The edited edition of the *Barlaam and Joasaph* in vol. II (CLXXVI, *De sanctis Barlaam et Iosaphat*) is inserted in the context of the liturgical year and the Roman missal.

35. O. de la Cruz, *El Barlaam y Josafat de Lope de Vega*, in 'Anuario Lope de Vega', vol. V (1999), pp. 73-82; M. Silva, *El Barlaam y Josafat de Lope de Vega y su fuente. Estudio de reelaboración para el teatro*, in G. Rossaroli de Brevedan (ed.), *Pervivencias de Barlaam e Josafat en la literatura hispánica*, Ediuns, Bahía Blanca (Argentina), 1998, pp. 75-101.

36. L. Tolstoy, *The Confession* (1882), chap. 14; cf. also Tatiana Sklanczenko, The Legend of Buddha's Life in the Works of Russian Writers, in 'Études Slaves et Est-Européennes', vol. IV (1959-60), pp. 226-34: 230.