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THE BARLAAM AND JOASAPH NOVEL – THE VOYAGE OF INFLUENCES AND IMAGES



Abstract: *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel illustrations are being mentioned by the art historians on a regular basis, but hardly ever researched as a corpus of images, with its internal logic and rules. One of the reasons could be the fact that the representations originating from this edifying story spread through a vast geographical territory and even vaster period of time. However, the analysis of one part of this corpus, namely the corpus of medieval examples from the Byzantine Commonwealth and Europe, imposes itself as quite necessary.*

The voyage of *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* - known from over 140 manuscripts, the earliest fragments of the text dating from the 8th century¹ - looks very much like a water stream, meandering through centuries and cultures, sometimes vanishing for a while, but only to surprisingly emerge in a new place, taking a somewhat different appearance. One of the questions to be answered about this wandering novel is where, when and why did the representations originating from *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* appear?

This novel was often a part of different linguistic and literature researches and many of its linguistic aspects were analyzed inside out². Art historians (me-

¹ J.C. Hirsh, *Barlam and Iosaphat - a Middle English life of Buddha* - edited from MS Peterhouse 257, Oxford 1986, XVII.

² The diffusion of this text is very broad: there are Manichean fragments, Middle Persian, Persian, Arab, Georgian, Greek, Latin, Oigur, Ethiopian, Hebrew, and texts in almost all of the medieval languages of Europe. For the bibliography concerning the Barlaam and Joasaph texts see: R. Volk (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, 6/1. Historia animae utilis Barlaam et Iosaph (spuria)*, Einführung von Robert Volk (Patristische Texte und Studien 61). — Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 2009. For the Latin and French versions see: J. Sonet., *Le*

dievalists, byzantinists, orientalists) mention it on a regular basis but hardly ever research it as a corpus of images, with its internal logic and rules. One of the reasons could be the fact that the representations originating from the Barlaam and Joasaph story spread through a vast geographical territory and even vaster period of time, which renders comprehensive research of this corpus very difficult and sometimes even redundant. However, the analysis of one part of this corpus, namely the corpus of medieval examples from the Byzantine Commonwealth and Europe, imposes itself as quite necessary. At the same time, it raises many questions but it also brings us to a number of useful conclusions and it gives a possibility to refresh and rectify some of the inherent opinions. In this text, the focus will be on the portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph and on the illustration of their novel.

An overview of text researches

Let us make a very succinct overview of the exciting progression of discoveries concerning the rather surprising origin and many redactions of this text. The story of saint Joasaph and Barlaam was well-known in Europe, many manuscripts existed and versions in almost all of the European languages were available when Portuguese historian and traveler Diogo do Cuoto, in 1612, noticed the similarity of the celebrated story of saint Joasaph with that of Buddha. However, he believed that the story came not from the Orient to Occident but vice versa and that the tale of Christian saint was accepted and adapted in India. It was only in 19th century, with the rise of interest for everything coming from Orient, that dif-

Roman de Barlaamet Joasaph. Tome I: Recherchessur la tradition manuscrite latine et française, Namur-Paris 1949. For Slavic versions of text see: N.I. Lebedeva, *Povest' o Varlaame i Ioasafe, pamjatnik drevnerusskoj pervodnoj literatury XI-XII vv.*, Leningrad 1985.

ferent researches pointed out the parallels between the Joasaph and Buddha story³. With the discovery of fragments of a Georgian version of text, the author of this work and the time of its creation became questioned. In 1931 the authorship of saint John of Damascus - until then commonly accepted - was seriously contested by P. Peeters⁴ who stated that the Greek, Christianized version of *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* was not a work of 8th c. theologian John of Damascus but a translation and even partly creation of 11th c. Georgian monk and revered translator Euthymius of Athos⁵. This article raised many fervent scientific discussions. During the years new fragments of different versions of this text were found, researched and translated. Finally, in 2009 R. Volk, as a part of the critical edition of John of Damascus's work⁶, demonstrated why the ascription of authorship to Euthymius of Athos has become unavoidable.

Illustration of the novel

When we look at the corpus of all the representations originating from *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* we can observe three groups of examples: the illustration of the novel, the portraits of saint Barlaam and Joasaph and illustration of one of the allegories from the novel - the parable of the unicorn. In this text we will focus only on the portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph and the illustration of their novel, since it seems that the parable of unicorn raises a different set of questions.

What are the oldest examples of Barlaam and Joasaph's representations and what can we conclude from them? Two oldest examples of illuminated Barlaam and Joasaph manuscripts known today are the 11th c. *Hierosolymiticus Codex 42* from the Monas-

³ E. Laboulaye, *Le Barlaam et Joasaph et le Lalita Vistara*, Journal des Débats, 26 July 1859 and F. Liebrecht, *Die Quellen des Barlaam und Joasaph*, Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur t. II, 1860, 314-335.

⁴ P. Peeters, *La première traduction latine de 'Barlaam et Joasaph et son original grec*, Analecta Bollandiana t. XLIX, Brussels & Paris 1931, 276-312.

⁵ Saint Euthymius of Athos (ca. 955 – 1028) also known as Euthymius the Georgian or Eufimius the Abasgian, was one of the esteemed theologians and scholars of his time, one of the the Athonite Iviron monastery founders and translator of many religious treatises and philosophical works. For more information about Saint Euthymius and his role in transmission of Barlaam and Joasaph story see: D.M. Lang, *Saint Euthyme le Géorgien et la légende-grecque de Barlaam*, Bédi Kartlisa No. 17-18, Paris 1964, 62-68 and D.M. Lang, *The wisdom of Balahvar*, London 1957, 40-63.

⁶ R. Volk (ed.), op.cit.

tery of the Cross (Jerusalem)⁷ and the 12th c. *ms Jannina-Cambridge*⁸. Both of these manuscripts comprise Greek version of the text. So, from this we can see that the oldest illuminated manuscript is as old as the Euthymius's Greek translation of the Barlaam and Joasaph story⁹.

These two oldest illuminated manuscripts share some common characteristics: the episodes that are illustrated are almost identical; all of the short comments following the illustrated episodes, are identical; the style in which they are painted, simple and somber, is very similar; in both of these manuscripts the illuminated scenes are framed with a vermilion band. Even though these are the two oldest preserved examples we can see that they already have an elaborated cycle of illustrations: the *Hierosolymiticus Codex 42* has fifty nine (on two hundred and nine folios) and *Jannina-Cambridge* has fifty four illuminations (on one hundred and seven folios).

In the structure of Barlaam and Joasaph story it is possible to distinguish the narrative and didactic part. The didactic part consists of the parables and the Christian theological expose. If we look up closely at the choice of illustrations in these two oldest manuscripts, we can notice two things: much more attention was given to the narrative part and the parables than to the theological expose. Also, the illustration follows the last part of the story (from the return of Barlaam to the desert) quite laconically. When we compare these characteristic of the illumination with the evolution of the text we discover a concordance: this kind of repartition of the illustrations corresponds to the form that the Georgian text¹⁰ had prior to the

⁷ It is of interest to note that in this monastery both the oldest illuminated Barlaam and Joasaph manuscript as well as the oldest long Georgian version of the text were found. The colophon of long version manuscript (dated in 1060-1070) mentions saint Prochorus, who founded the Holy Cross Monastery and who was a disciple of saint Euthymius of Athos. Since it was renewed by saint Prochorus in 11th c., this monastery remained for centuries an epicenter of Georgian culture (it seems that even the celebrated poet Shota Rustaveli, one of the greatest contributors to Georgian secular literature, lived in it).

⁸ For reproductions and descriptions see: S. der Nersesian S., *L'illustration du Roman de Barlaam et Joasaph*, Paris 1936.

⁹ For the information about the oldest dated manuscript of the Barlaam and Joasaph story - *ms Kiev. Biblio. Acad. Scient. Ucraina. V3692* - copied on Mont Athos in 1021, during the life of st. Euthymius, and showing that he himself revised the first version of the text and made a second, improved version see: B.L. Fonkich, *Un 'Barlaam et Joasaph' greccaté de 1021*, Analecta Bollandiana t. XCI, 1973, 13-20.

¹⁰ For the Georgian versions of the text see: I. Abouladzé, *The georgian versions of Balavariani*, Tbilissi 1957



1. St. Barlaam, Church of the Virgin (Studenica monastery), 13 thc., south-west pilaster photocredits: Serbian institute for protection and conservation of monuments

modifications that appear with the Greek version¹¹. This strongly indicates that the Georgian illuminated manuscripts of *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* did exist and that they served as models for first Greek illuminated versions.

[in Georgian: synoptic edition of two Georgian versions of the text]; D.M. Lang, *The wisdom of Balahvar*, London 1957 [English translation of the short Georgian version]; id., *The Balavariani (Barlaam and Joasaph) / a tale from the Christian East translated to English from the Old Georgian*, Los Angeles 1966 [English translation of the long Georgian version].

¹¹ The Greek version of the text is not a simple translation and the additions are significant: the Christian doctrine is much more amply presented, the biblical citations

There are not that many saints in Byzantium whose lives are depicted in such a detail that each episode of their lives is vividly illustrated. How was the illustration of the Barlaam and Joasaph story created? The first model that imposes it self immediately would be the illuminated hagiographies, but because of the content of this story it was not possible to automatically apply the existing schemes: the many parables form the core of this text and for all of them illustrations needed to be created. For the episodes such as the birth of Joasaph, his baptism and communion, martyrdom scenes, visions of Heaven and Hell as well as scenes of death and burial of saints the models are found in the religious art.¹²

As we mentioned earlier, the illustrations of these two oldest manuscripts focus more strongly on the narrative part of the story than on the theological one, which indicates the profane art as a possible source of inspiration. The historical painting was put to the fore during the period of iconoclasm, it had an important place in the Macedonian times and it flourished during the Comnenian age. Even though the Barlaam and Joasaph story was prized by the monastic community, the great part of it depicts the sumptuous life of the court and for the most of the scenes it was possible to find a model in the Byzantine profane art: the emperor with his wife and children, imperial conquests, hunting scenes, investitures and other contemporary court rites.¹³ These scenes might have been inspired by the Antique and Oriental traditions as well: the heroic exploits of Hercules, king's hunt, investitures...

The life of the young prince and the apologues of Oriental origin¹⁴ described in *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* incited the Byzantine illuminators

and the works of Fathers of the Church are added as well as the integral *Apology of the Aristides*. For the Greek version of the text see: G.R. Woodward & H. Mattingly, *John Damascene: Barlaam and Joasaph*, Cambridge MA 1914 [the Greek text with the English translation].

¹² For examples see: *ms Iviron Codex 463 fol. 8v, 28v, 53v*; *ms King's College 338 fol. 77*; *ms Paris. gr. 1128 fol. 10v, 29, 29v* in S. der Nersessian, *L'illustration du Roman de Barlaamet Joasaph*, Paris 1936.

¹³ Since they glorify the contemporary ruler most of these scenes have of course been destroyed during the course of history but we know that many of the Byzantine emperors commissioned such works (Basil I the Macedonian, Manuel I Comnenos's representations in the Grand and Blachernae palace, Andronikos I Comnenos is represented in the Constantinople's Church of the Forty Martyrs).

¹⁴ For the origin of some of the apologues see: T. Benfey, *Pantschatantra: Fünf Bücher Indische Fabeln, Märchen und Erzählungen. Aus dem Sanskrit über setzt mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1859.

to compile and create the illustration that followed the course of the story in close detail and in a visual language that corresponds to the Byzantine visual norms. Just as the principal character of the story is a prince who became a monk, the origins of the illumination of this novel come from both religious and profane sources. Were there any Georgian and Arab illustrated manuscripts¹⁵ that served as a model for illumination of the Barlaam and Joasaph manuscripts? Yes, probably, but we only have indirect proof.

The status of two main characters, Barlaam and Joasaph, is interesting as it has always moved back and forth between fictional and historical. First, there was a historical person of Siddhartha, than during the centuries the fictional tale of Barlaam and Joasaph was formed. Later, these two characters gained status of historical persons, moreover saints, and much later their Christian origin was denied and proved as fictional, as the actual, historical identity of Joasaph was revealed.

The same is the case of their cult: sometimes they were treated as saints and sometimes as historical figures. The exact process of their canonization is not very clear and there is both proof that they were regarded as saints and proof that they were not. In some manuscripts Barlaam and Joasaph are haloed, and in some they are not. For example, in the King's College's *ms No 338* (12th or 13th c.) and in the richly illuminated *ms 463* from the Iviron monastery (end of 12th - beginning of the 13th c.), the very place established by the translator of the *Novel* – st. Euthymius, Barlaam and Joasaph are represented without halos. In the oldest illustrated manuscript, *Hierosolymiticus Codex*, both Barlaam and Joasaph are haloed. In *Parisinus 1128* Joasaph and his father are represented with halos, and Barlaam sometimes is and sometimes is not. In *ms Jannina-Cambridge* Joasaph is represented with a halo, and Barlaam seems not to be (the manuscript is damaged).

In wall paintings they are represented as saints, usually in the group of the highly revered monastic role models. In Georgia we have the earliest proof of st. Joasaph's canonization: he is inscribed in the calendar of saints and there is a hymn dedicated to him

¹⁵ There are only much later examples of illustrated Arab manuscripts of the *Novel*. The first documented appearance of the Barlaam and Joasaph text in the Arab world is in a bibliographical index *Kitāb al-Fihrist* written in 10th c. This work informs us that among the books translated from Pahlavi to Arab between 767 and 815 there were: *Kitāb al-Budd* ('The book of Buddha'), *Kitāb Balauharwa Būdhāsaf* ('The book of Balauhar and Budhasaf') and *Kitāb Būdhāsafmufrad* ('The book of Budhasaf alone'). As much as four more Arab versions of the text confirmed the Barlaam and Joasaph's popularity in the Arab world.



2. St. Joasaph, Church of the Virgin (Studenica monastery), 13th c., south-west pilaster
photocredits: Serbian institute for protection and conservation of monuments

dating from the 11th century¹⁶. What about icons and relics? These questions need to be more researched, since we can point out to only two 16th c. icons and one relic, today in city of Anvers¹⁷. Icon of Barlaam and Joasaph in the Romanian st. Nicholas church

¹⁶ This hymn was composed by saint George the Hagiorite (1009-1065), saint Euthymius's biographer, and it was based on material deriving from Georgian long version of the text, the 'Life of the Blessed Iodasaph'. He also drew up the Georgian church calendar, according to the Byzantine models, and in it he entered the Barlaam and Joasaph's names (on 19th May). (See: D.M. Lang, *The wisdom of Balahvar*, London 1957, 61.) When Joasaph entered into Greek calendars his day was first 26th August, and then 19th November.

¹⁷ The relic of saint Joasaph, a fragment of vertebra,

in Curtea de Argeş, is part of the princely mortuary deambulatory (before 1521) and icon of *Descent of Holy Spirit on the Apostles* (1532) was found in Macedonian Topličkiot monastery (st. Barlaam and Joasaph are represented on the verso with st. Simeon Nemanja and st. Sabbas the Serbian). There is also a second half of 12th c. *Crucifixion* icon - from the st. Catherine's monastery on Sinai - on which st. Barlaam is represented¹⁸. However, since he is represented without st. Joasaph, and as a martyr, and next to two other martyrs, we believe that it is not Barlaam, Joasaph's teacher, who is represented here but another st. Barlaam. Maybe Antioch martyr from the time of emperor Diocletian persecutions, mentioned in the homilies of st. Basil the Great and st. John Chrysostome, celebrated, just as st. Barlaam and Joasaph, on 19th of November.

In Catholic calendar Barlaam and Joasaph are celebrated on 27th November and their story regularly appeared in works such as *The Golden legend*, *Speculum historiale* and *Sermons*. When Barlaam and Joasaph story was translated from Latin, and when it entered the vernacular linguistic domain it gained popularity. Its tradition blossomed especially in the medieval France. The first French version dates from the beginning of the 13th c.¹⁹ and after that the translation appeared in basically all major dialects as well as in versified and theatrical versions. Many of these manuscripts are illustrated, but illustration, with rare exceptions, consists only of initials and historiated initials²⁰.

It seems that the Barlaam and Joasaph tradition in France was quite strongly rooted in nobility. The versions of the novel were specially abridged in order

was given by Venetian doge Luigi Mocenigo in 1571 to Portuguese king Sebastian. In 1633 it was presented to the one of monasteries in Anvers. G. Paris, *Saint Josaphat*, Revue de Paris No. 2, Paris 1895/3, 529.

¹⁸ K. Weitzmann. et al., *Icons from South Easter Europe and Sinai*, 1968, LXXXI.

¹⁹ L.R. Mills, *L'histoire de Barlaam et Josaphat - version champenoise d'après le ms. Reg. lat. 660 de la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane*, Geneva 1973, 7.

²⁰ i=initials, h=historiated initials, m= miniatures: 13th c. - *ms Paris Bibl. nat. fr. 1038 (7331)(i)*, *ms Lyon Bibl. municipale 867 (772)(LY)(i,m)*, *ms Paris Bibl. nat. nouv. acq. fr. 23686 (Anc. Bibl. Imp. de Saint-Petersbourg, fr. 35)(p2)(i,m)*, *ms Paris Bibl. nat. fr. 1553 (h,m)*, *ms Paris Bibl. nat. fr. 17229 (i, h)*, *ms Paris Bibl. nat. fr. 23117(i,m)*; 14th c. - *ms Cheltenham Bibl. Philips 3660 (h,m)*, *ms Londres Brit. Mus. Egerton 745(i,m)*; 15th c. - *ms. 51 BNF Vincentius Bellovacensis Speculum historiale(m)*, *ms Poitiers Bibl. mun. 83 (ancien 187, 252 Fleury, 101)(h,m)*, *ms Paris Bibl. nat. fr. 819 (ancien 7208,4,A) aux ff. 235r°-247v° (m)*, *ms Paris, Bibl. nat., fr. 22938(m)*.

to resonate better in the noble society. Gui de Cambrai's prince Joasaph amazes the reader or listener (the version was versified) more as a warrior, a noble knight than as a pious person. This version dedicated passages and passages of text to the necessity of penitence of the aristocracy. The mecene of this work were nobleman Gilles de Marquis and his wife. The Champenois versions seemed to be the most popular ones during the 13th and 14th c. As much as seventeen copies are known today, of which seven are illuminated. This version was dedicated to an aristocrat as well – princess Blanche de Navarre²¹. From the notes written at the end of some of the manuscripts we can also see that very often the owners were nobility²².

Illustration of *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel* is usually found in the manuscripts but there are two very interesting examples of wall painting representations: in the western porch gate of the Neamţ monastery in Romania and in the Gozzo palace in Lower Austria. Both of these examples show that commissioners were inspired by the dual but harmonious nature of principal character, prince-monk Joasaph. Recent discovery of 13th c. Gozzo palace reception hall frescoes in Krems (Lower Austria), shed some light on the life of Barlaam and Joasaph story in these parts of Europe²³. The wall paintings are quite fragmented but in good condition, and their execution is of fine quality so it was possible to identify the specific scenes from the *Novel*²⁴. Ottokar II of Bohemia (ca.

²¹ This version is part of *Recueil de Vies de saints et saintes*, and the Champenois text was translated from the Latin Vulgata version. Apparently, the author was an anonymous monk.

²² *Paris, Bibl. nat. fr. 1038 (7331)*: "Cestlivrest a Philipe de Concy, duchesse d'Yrlande et comtesse d'Oxfordh"; *Paris, Bibl. nat. fr. 17229*: signature at the end of the manuscript "Françoise de Bretagne" and "Ysabeaud' Albert"; *Paris, Bibl. nat., fr. 187 (6847)*: manuscript was made for Blanche, daughter of Aimonconte the Savoy (died in 1343); the richly illuminated *ms. 51 BNF Vincentius Bellovacensis Speculum historiale* was commissioned by Pierre II de Bourbon.

²³ Until the discovery of the Gozzo example the only other representative example of Barlaam and Joasaph illustration from the German environment was the lively and humorously illuminated manuscript *ms Ludwig XV9* See: N.H. Ott., *Anmerkungen zur Barlaam-Ikonographie. Rudolf von Ems 'Barlaam und Josaphat' in Malibu und die Bildtradition des Barlaam-Stoffs*, Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten, Sigmaringen 1993, 365-385.

²⁴ Eastern wall: Cave dwellings of monks or early Christians, King Avenir and two monks, Conflict between father and son, Barlaam and Joasaph. Southern wall: Demolition of the pagan idols, Joasaph grieves for Avenir upon his sarcophagus, Translation of power. The western wall is completely dedicated to the Last Judgement. Northern

1233 –1278), called The Iron and Golden king, was educated for the ecclesiastical role, but his life took a different path: after his brother's death he unwillingly became a king, then he led a rebellion against his father, who imprisoned him, after which they worked successfully together on gaining rule over Austria and fought the pagan Old Prussians. Throughout his reign Ottokar II founded churches and supported religious orders. Recent researches and analysis of the choice of scenes depicted in Gozzo palace, as well as facts from Ottokar's biography, revealed many of the analogies between Joasaph's and Ottokar's life which can explain the reason why story of Joasaph was depicted on the walls of such a representative space as is the reception hall²⁵.

The walls of the western porch gate of the Neamț monastery in Romania are decorated with an erudite iconographical program, created by the hesychast bishop Macarie. The Barlaam and Joasaph tradition has until that moment already been established in Romanian territories²⁶, but this example brings something significantly new. Monastery of Neamț has been built, expanded, decorated with the donations of the princes and in 1551 the western gate was embellished with an elaborate program consisting of thirty eight scenes from the Old and New Testament and thirty one scene from *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel*. This program has a fine repartition of secular and monastic elements. The historical and courtly scenes are mixed with more sophisticated, monastic themes. One scene helps us give a possible explanation for the idea behind this iconographical program: in the donors scene prince Stephen Rareș is guided by a crowned saint monk, st.Joasaph, to the enthroned

wall: medallions of four kings - Alexander Rex, Nebuchodonsor, [lack], Rex Romanorum.

²⁵ G. Blaschitz, *Wandmalerei enim Freskensaal der 'Gozzoburg' Krems Josaphat und Ottokar II Prøemysl?*, Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege No. LXII, 2008.

²⁶ Barlaam and Joasaph were part of royal funerary program in Curtea de Argeș (icons made in the time of Neagoe Basarab) and in Chambre of the tombs in Dobrovăț (concept has been made by bishop Macarie). Prince Neagoe Basarab has included parts of Barlaam and Joasaph story into Mirror for princes he had made for his son Theodos. In the 14th c. the parable of the unicorn appears in the iconographical program of several Wallachian and Moldavian churches. The manuscripts of Barlaam story circulated through Romanian territories at this time, and they were all southern Slavic redactions (during this period of history Romanian and Serbian territories were very open to mutual influences: the Serbian princess married Romanian rulers, the Slavic language was official written language, and monks, artists and common people from the Serbian territories often fled from the Turks to Romania).

Christ. Since in this very year, 1551, young Stephan Rareș was crowned as ruler of Moldavia, we can easily imagine that this decorated porch was conceived by the erudite bishop to honor that event, as kind of mirror for princes transferred into natural-size images. Both the biblical scenes and the life of prince Joasaph, as well as exemplary lives of great philosophers and hermits were there to educate and inspire the young sovereign.

Portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph

The iconographical model which continuously reappeared consisted of Barlaam and Joasaph depicted as saints, one beside another, in a dialogue. Barlaam was painted usually as an old, bearded monk with a serious expression. Joasaph is represented as a younger man, crowned, but wearing a monastic robe. Barlaam is often addressing Joasaph with a gesture of teaching.

It was generally accepted that the oldest examples of monumental wall painting portraits of saint Barlaam and Joasaph are the ones from Serbian Studenica monastery (1208/9). However, it was only logical to presume that somewhere in the Byzantine Empire there are to be found examples older than these. We would like to point out two possible examples of the wall painting portraits of saint Barlaam and Joasaph that are earlier: in the Cyprus church of St. Nicholas of the Roof in Kakopetria (early 12th c.) and in Akhtala monastery in Armenia (end of 12th c.). The St. Nicholas church is the surviving katholicon of an 11th c. Byzantine monastery. The portrait of Joasaph dates from the early 12th century, and Barlaam's portrait has been found only in the later layers of wall painting.²⁷ Both Barlaam and Joasaph are painted in the north-east recess, with the holy hermits st.Epigon and Pimen. Joasaph is here represented as an older man, holding a little cross – sign of his martyrdom. It is difficult to see whether he has a crown. In Akhtala monastery, on the north wall, two holy hermits are depicted. One is st.Barlaam, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and a pointed cap, with his hands held outwards in front of his breast in the gesture of receiving grace.²⁸ Next to him is a figure of which only insignificant fragments remain: a brown mantle, an epitrachelion and a cross held in one hand – Joasaph maybe?

When and where else do we find the wall painting portraits of saint Barlaam and Joasaph? The largest and most perseverant group of representations is most certainly found in Serbia: Barlaam and Joasaph appear on about twenty representations spreading

²⁷ A. et J. Stylianou, *The painted churches of Cyprus*, London 1985, 53-66.

²⁸ A. Lidov, *Mural paintings of Akhtala*, Moscow 1991, 71.



3. Queen Hélène d' Anjou and her son king Milutin with Christ Emmanuel, right above st. Barlaam and Joasaph – Gračanica monastery, c. 1320, narthex eastern wall

through four centuries. This is explained by the fact that the cult of these two saints was connected with the royal iconography: with its first appearance, in the church of Virgin in Studenica monastery, st. Joasaph was introduced to Serbian culture as one of the role models for all the rulers of Nemanjić dynasty²⁹. The research of this subject had revealed the many ways in which the idea of sovereign-monk perpetually and consciously appeared in the life of the Nemanjić dynasty³⁰. The personal input of st. Sabbas the Serbian, his admiration of saint Joasaph, as well as apparent similarities between their life stories together with st. Sabbas's erudition and creativity, set the way in which Barlaam and Joasaph will appear in Serbian medieval society, and especially in the wall painting.

²⁹ For the introduction of this model in Serbia and for other possible examples of iconography of "New Joasaph" see: V. Djurić, *Le nouveau Joasaph*, Cahiers archeologiques No. 33, 1985.

³⁰ See: V. Djurić, op.cit; I. Djordjević, *Sveti Simeon Nemanjakao Novi Joasaf*, Leskovačkizbornik XXXIII, Leskovac 1993.; S. Marjanović-Dušanić., *Vladarska ideologija Nemanjića*, Belgrade 1997, 234-246, 275-286.; M. Radujko, *Koporin*, Beograd 2006, 242-246, 249-251.

After that, many medieval Serbian rulers incorporated the teachings and messages of Barlaam and Joasaph story into their lives and iconographical program of churches that they have built. The poetic and metaphorical ending of "the New Joasaph" tradition in Serbian society is the life of the last heir of Nemanjić dynasty, the emperor of Thessaly, John Uroš Angelos-Doukas-Palaeologus who left his throne between 1372 and 1381, and became a monk, and took the name Joasaph. He left the profane life and was one of the founders of monastic life on the Meteora, and a very esteemed hermit of his time.³¹

From the end of the 13th and throughout the 14th c. portraits of saint Barlaam and Joasaph appear in several churches, mainly but not exclusively in the Thessaloniki region: in the northwest chapel of the Athonite Protaton church (ca. 1290), in the church of st. Clement (Peribleptos) in Ohrid (1294/5.), in the exonarthex of St. George at Omorphokklesia near

³¹ D.M. Nicole, *Meteora – the rock monasteries of Thessaly*, London 1963, 59–65; G. Subotić, *Počeci monaškog života i crkva manastira Sretenja u Meteori-ma*, Zbornik za likovne umetnosti MS 2, Novi Sad 1966, 125-181, especially p. 143.



4. Conflict between father and son, Gozzo palace, 13th c., eastern wall
photo: Peter Böttcher, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Studies on Medieval Realia

Kastoria (1295), in the crypte of st. Nicholas church in Kambia (end of 13th c.), on the first floor of narthex of st. Sophia church in Ohrid (middle of 14th c.), in the ambulatory of Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson (second half of 14th c.), in the Prophet Elias church in Thessaloniki (1360-80). In the same group of figures or in very close proximity to Barlaam and Josaphat we see, as a rule, other respected monks (such as st. Sabbas, st. John Climacus, st. Pimen ...) and quite regularly Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus and saint Pachomios and the angel.³² These three subjects are all closely related to monastic life and it is possible to explain appearance of these themes in the iconographical program by scholarly monastic influence, such as Athonite influence is.³³ "The relationship of the youthful prince turned monk and his ascetic mentor surely resonated with the Orthodox brethren, and their placement within subsidiary spaces suggests that these icons decorated chapels or spaces used for hourly prayers, special com-

³² All three representations (Barlaam and Joasaph, Heavenly Ladders, Pachomius and the angel) appear in Protaton, Peribleptos and Elasson example.

³³ S. Gerstel, *Civic and Monastic influences on church decoration in late Byzantine Thessalonike*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* No. 57, 2004, 232- 235 and V. Djurić, *Les conceptions hagioritiques dans la peinture du Protaton*, *Hilandarski Zbornik* No. 8, 1991, 51-55 and 77.

memorations, and penitential exercises."³⁴ More generally speaking, when portraits of st. Barlaam and Joasaph appear they are depicted as monastic role models. However, as we have already seen, that was not their only role: Barlaam and Joasaph were as revered by the erudite monks as they were by the emperors and nobleman.

It seems that to medieval Russia Joasaph and Barlaam tradition came through the Serbian 13th c. translation of the Greek text³⁵, and after that it was present in many manuscripts written in Old Russian. *The Joasaph's desert chant* was added to the Russian text and it was very popular: Joasaph's story became one of the examples in the Russian mirrors of princes.³⁶ However, there are only few figurative examples: three wall painting portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph dating from the 14th c.³⁷

³⁴ Gerstel, *op.cit.*, 233.

³⁵ T. Jovanović, *Varlaam i Joasaf*, Belgrade 2005, 12-13.

³⁶ P. Guran, *Barlaam et Josaphat et la monarchie universelle*, *Medioevo grecono.* 1, Torino 2001, 13-14.

³⁷ There are also few examples from 16th and 17th century: in the Ivan the Terrible's Golden palace in Moscow, Barlaam and Joasaph are represented (see: I. N. Lebedeva, *op.cit.*, 39) and two illustrated manuscripts from the 17th c. (*Leningrad No 71* and *Leningrad No 34.3.27*) seem to be one of last echoes of the Byzantine tradition of Barlaam illumination.



5. King Avenir and two monks, Gozzopalaze, 13thc., eastern wall
 photo: Peter Böttcher, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Studies on Medieval Realia

In the church of the Dormition of the Virgin, in Volotovo near Novgorod, portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph appear in the south-west zone beneath the dome, near the traditional place of the archbishop's throne. In Studenica monastery in Serbia, Barlaam and Joasaph are situated in the similar position. This indicates another possible interpretation which the Barlaam and Joasaph tradition may have had during the Middle Ages³⁸, especially since the painting in Volotovo was commissioned by archbishop Alexei and Volotovo was episcopal seat.

Russian representations of Barlaam and Joasaph have two specific characteristics: to Joasaph's name the word *царевичь* (prince) is regularly added, and Joasaph holds the cross in his hands, like a martyr. The inscriptions on the scrolls that st. Barlaam and Joasaph hold on all three Russian examples (Volotovo, Zvenigorod and Kremlin) are identical.

³⁸ For further readings about Barlaam's and Joasaph's representation, episcopos and episcopal thrones in Studenica and Kaporin monastery (Serbia), st. Demetrios church (Thessaloniki) and Volotovo church see: M. Radujko, *op.cit.*, 240 and *id.*, *Αρχιερατικός θρόνος des évêques de Moravica et la peinture de Saint-Achille Arilje*, Cahiers archeologiques No. 49, Paris 143-150.

The Zvenigorod Church of the Nativity³⁹ was founded by the prince Yuri Dimitrijevič and the st. Sabbas of Storozhev, disciple of one of most respected Russian saints - st. Sergius of Radonezh (1314-1392). When the two met, young prince was very impressed by st. Sabbas, who lived an ascetic life. The prince asked him to leave the hermit life and help him organize the monastic life in Zvenigorod. It is possible that in the apsidal zone of Zvenigorod, historical moments - the meeting of hermit Sabbas and prince Yuri, as well as establishing of the monastic life - were illustrated with corresponding saintly images - portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph and Pachomius and the angel.

In the Moscow Cathedral of the Assumption - the place of crowning of Russian kings - st. Barlaam and Joasaph are also represented. The Zvenigorod and Kremlin examples have several similar characteristics: they are placed in the apsidal area, Barlaam and Joasaph are painted next to the st. Pachomius and the angel scene, the color of cloths of Barlaam and Joasaph is the same in both churches. It is possible that the Zvenigorod representations were the model for the Kremlin ones, or that they shared the same model, today unknown.

³⁹ Today it is the Savvino-Storozhevsky monastery.

The hesychasm and the Barlaam and Joasaph story

After 1204 Byzantine Empire was faced with the slow but inevitable decline. Like a human being sensing its mortality and becoming intensely aware of its transient condition, the great empire was deeply shaken and consequently several renovation movements appeared, both political and spiritual ones. Hesychasm was one of them. It was based on the teachings of Athonite monks and it proclaimed the renunciation of material life and acceptance of monastic oath.

The story of Barlaam and Joasaph was praised by the hesychast movement, and particularly by the Thessaloniki bishop Gregory Palamas. He was born in a noble family, and raised in the imperial court, but very early he traded that life for the strict monastic life. Palamas's teachings strongly influenced the emperor John IV Cantacuzenus who later became a monk and took the name Joasaph. In a theological treatise – *ms.Bib.Nat.Codex Paris Grec1242* – on a miniature painted between 1371 and 1375, John IV Cantacuzenus was depicted as emperor and monk, pointing to the scene of the Hospitality of Abraham.⁴⁰

St. Demetrious church in Thessaloniki features two representations originating from *The Barlaam and Joasaph novel*: parable of the unicorn and st.Joasaph are depicted in close proximity. St.Joasaph is guiding haloed ecclesiastical dignitary to enthroned Christ. It is believed that this dignitary is in fact Gregory Palamas painted with his role model st.Joasaph, in 1368, nine years after his death.⁴¹

"To abandon the kingdom in order to gain what has a value greater than all the kingdoms of the world" – that was the credo of all the kings, rulers, noblemen who followed Joasaph's example.⁴² This kind of renunciation was often inspired or encouraged by the mystic or ascetic monks. We see that the union of two historical persons, one coming from the monastic and other from the noble environment, often incited the appearance of representations of saint Barlaam and Joasaph. Sometimes the personality of the commissioner united in itself both of them, like in the case of st.Sabbas the Serbian or st. Gregory Palamas.

Inspiration – the harmonious balance of opposite forces in human life

The story of Barlaam and Joasaph was very popular in a vast territory and for a long period of time:

⁴⁰ E.C. Constantinides, *The wall painting of the Panagia Olympiotissa at the Elasson in Northern Thessaly*, Athens 1992, 226.

⁴¹ V. Djurić, *Solunsko poreklo resavskog zivopisa*, Zbornik radova Srpske akademije nauka LXXV, 1960, 116.

versions in different languages and a significant corpus of images was created. Why? It is certain that the moralizing and vivid parables had something to do with its attractiveness, but there is also its captivating main character prince-monk Joasaph. The personality of Joasaph embraces harmoniously in itself two domains: the secular or temporal (represented by his royal status) and spiritual or eternal (represented by his abandonment of all material goods). With the temporal domain we relate categories such as: material, external, visible, action, movement, quantifiable, wealth. With the spiritual: the inner, invisible, immobility, immeasurable, endless, knowledge. Each person, during his or her life, strives, on a daily basis, to balance as well as possible these two domains.

"Throughout the many ages of history, and even before what are usually known as historical times, we find (as far as the evidences of oral and written traditions permit) clues of frequent opposition between the representatives of two powers, one spiritual and the other temporal... And besides, these two powers did not originally exist as a separate functions exercised by different individuals. On the contrary, they were two indivisible aspects of the common principle from which they both proceeded, linked indissolubly."⁴³ Throughout centuries the character of a god-king or saintly king occupied human mind, and the story of Joasaph probably raised interest for the same reason. What we have in Joasaph's tale is someone who is truly and fully the king: he is the ruler of two complementary domains, he has mastered the outer and inner, the material and spiritual. Therefore, representatives from monasticism as well as kings and noblemen, regarded story of Barlaam and Joasaph as their own. As can be seen in many examples, the duality of the story was a powerful trigger for the imagination and creativity throughout time, place and cultures.

Conclusions

The Barlaam and Joasaph novel generated a significant corpus of images: representations are disseminated throughout centuries and territories. Three types of examples can be recognized: portraits of Barlaam and Joasaph, illustration of their novel and illustration of the parable of the unicorn. The oldest examples of

⁴² We should also mention the Occidental iconographical formula for the renunciation of the royal power in the name of monastic life: it was the crown laid down on the ground. This was the emblem of the saints who refused the royal throne or abdicated: st. Louis of Toulouse, st. Walburge of Eichstätt, st. Wunibald of Eichstätt.

⁴³ R. Guenon, *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, Paris, 1984, 15.

illustration of the *Novel* and parable of the unicorn date from 11th century and the oldest examples of the portraits of saint Barlaam and Joasaph date from the 12th century. The first know illustrations of the *Novel*, *Hierosolymiticus Codex 42* and *ms Jannina-Cambridge*, already have an elaborated cycle of illustrations which, when analyzed closely and compared to the evolution of the text of the *Novel*, reveals that the repartition of the oldest illustrations, even though it is illustrating the Greek version of the text, actually corresponds to the Georgian text structure. Barlaam and Joasaph are sometimes represented as saints and sometimes not: in

some representations Barlaam and Joasaph are haloed, and in some they are not. The largest group of representations is found in medieval Serbia where the cult of saint Barlaam and Joasaph was linked with the royal iconography. In France many examples are found as well, but there the *Novel* was very popular among the nobility. Very interesting examples appear in Neamț monastery in Romania and Gozzo palace in Austria. The duality of the story, the advice on how to govern both material as well as spiritual world - its edifying quality was a powerful trigger to the imagination of readers and artists.

РОМАН ЗА ВАРЛААМ И ЈОАСАФ – ПАТУВАЊЕ НА ВЛИЈАНИЈА И ПРЕТСТАВИ

Резиме

Патувањето на текстот и претставата на Романот можно е да се следи од VIII век, а до денас се зачувани околу 140 примероци на ракописи, како и значителен број ликовни претстави што потекнуваат од Романот. Она што во текот на средниот век го поттикнало несомнено големиот интерес на најразличните култури за овој текст, секако е симболичната, универзално разбирлива срж на текстот: приказна за младиот човек кој е во потрага, истражувајќи и запознавајќи беспака, чудесни краишта, опасни бездни и скриени плодни оази на надворешниот и внатрешниот свет. Пред него се и искушенијата и животните дарови, а сето тоа се рефлектира преку бисерната низа на душата, корисни приказни што му ги раскажува учениот Варлаам. Симболичната рамнина на текстот како и загадочните приказни што го чинат неговото средиште ги инспирирале преводите и адаптациите на Романот на многу јазици. Денес се познати пахлави, персиска, арапска, сириска, грузинска, грчка, латинска, хебрејска, ујгурска, етиописка, јапонска и кинеска верзија на Романот за Варлаам и Јоасаф, а преводи и верзии на Романот постојат и на скоро сите регионални јазици на средновековна Европа (некои од јазиците, како што се латинскиот, францускиот, германскиот, поседуваат дури и по неколку различни, независни и прозни и стихувани преводи на Романот). Два аспекта на Романот, текстот на Романот и ликовните претстави инспирирани од него, многу нерамномерно се истражени. Потеклото на текстот на Романот и неговите различни верзии многупати биле предмет на научни истражувања: списокот на автори и списокот на дела посветени на оваа тема се обемни и различни. Меѓутоа, коментарите, анализите и истражувањата на ликовните претстави се мошне малубројни. Целта на ова истражување е на корпусот на овие претстави да им се пријде систематично, гледајќи ги како целина, и да се откријат и поттикнат низа нови, досега неразгледани прашања за овие претстави. Треба да се има предвид и тоа дека овој труд ќе ги претстави доста сумирано. Неверојатното патување, трансформацијата и приспособувањето, исчезнувањето и повторно појавување на текстот на Романот на истори-

ската сцена е еден од клучевите за разбирање на сите прашања што се однесуваат на ликовните претстави што го илустрираат ова дело. Потребно е да се распознаат слоевите кои на Романот му ги додавале или одземале различните традиции, создавајќи на тој начин сложено и богато наследство кое Романот го претставува денес. Во корпусот на ликовните претстави што потекнуваат од Романот можно е да се препознаат три типа претстави: портрети на Варлаам и Јоасаф, илустрации на ракописот на Романот, претстави на параболи за еднорогиот. Најстарите ликовни примери на параболата за еднорогиот се од XI век и се наоѓаат во Лондонскиот псалтир од 1066 година (Brit.Mus. Add.19352) и во Псалтирот Барберини гр. 372. Најстарите познати портрети на Варлаам и Јоасаф се од крајот на XII век: во црквата Св. Никола во Какопетрија (Грција) и во манастирот Ахтала (Ерменија). Најстари зачувани илуминирани ракописи на Романот се ierosolymiticus Codex 42 и ms Jannina-Cambridge (двата на грчки јазик) и се скапоцен извор на податоци за настанувањето и развојот на корпусот претстави што го илустрираат Романот, особено кога ќе се споредат со структурата на грузинскиот текст, кој им претходи на грчките верзии. Без сомение, најголемата група ликовни претстави што потекнуваат од Романот, главно портрети на Варлаам и Јоасаф, се наоѓаат во црквите на средновековна Србија, благодарение на врската на нивниот култ со иконографијата на владателската династија Немањкиќ. Голем број примери, главно илуминации на ракописот на Романот, настанале на територијата на Франција во текот на XIII, XIV и XV век, пред се како последица на интересот што го предизвикувал овај текст меѓу благородниците. Едни од најинтересните примери се претставите од Романот насликани во палатата Гоцо (Австрија), XIII век, и во влезната порта на манастирот Њамц (Романија), XVI век. Илуминацијата на ракописот овде е транспонирана во сидното сликарство со репрезентативни простори, чија улога била да ги повлече паралелите меѓу современите историски прилики врзани за кралските фамилии и универзалните поуки што ги давал Романот.