

## CHAPTER VII

### LONG STORY: “BARLAAM AND JOSAPHAT”, “PHYSIOLOGUS” AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON A WALLACHIAN *SPECULUM PRINCIPIS* FROM THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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#### Preliminaries

There are old texts whose age is not necessarily given by the date when they were written but by their long vitality and influence down the centuries. Such texts live on in other literary products centuries after their first appearance. The Christian “Physiologus” (● Φυσιολόγος) (from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c.) or the christianized History of Buddha, I mean the popular novel “Barlaam and Josaphat”, are examples of such very influential writings, which enjoyed a wide reception in the Christian world. The following pages are dedicated to the exciting history of “Physiologus” and “Barlaam and Josaphat”, which continued to exist in the *speculum principis*<sup>1</sup> of the Wallachian Prince Neagoe Basarab (1512–1521), “The Teachings to His Son Theodosius” from 1519–1520. Basarab incorporated, combined and

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<sup>1</sup> For the tradition, definition and typologies of *specula principum* see Wilhelm Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1938). ●tto Eberhardt, *Via regia. Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds von St. Mihuel und seine literarische Gattung* (Munich: Fink, 1977). Wilhelm Blum (ed.), *Byzantinische Fürstenspiegel: Agapetos, Theophylakt von Ochrid* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981). Hans-●tto Mühleisen, Theo Stamm, Michael Philipp (eds.), *Fürstenspiegel der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1997). J. Manuel Schulte, *Speculum regis. Studien zur Fürstenspiegel-Literatur in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Münster: Lit, 2001).

reinterpreted some elements from these earlier texts in his advisory work addressed to his young son, Theodosius. I will offer a case of literary entanglement across religions, languages, and cultures. The selection of these three sources is determined by my argument that the understanding of hagiography should go beyond the technical concept of a Saint's vita and miracles and regard hagiography as a semantic grounding on deeper experience and understanding of the Holy or holiness, the *Vitae sanctorum* representing only the literary stylistic concretization of complex religious mentalities. For all this, see the conclusions at the end of this paper.

## Structure

I will *try first* to introduce you to the two writings, "Physiologus" and "Barlaam and Josaphat" by telling you something about their history. I should mention that my overview of these works does not follow the chronology of their production but rather their literary importance in the cultural context of 16<sup>th</sup> century Wallachia. I am therefore going to begin with "Barlaam and Josaphat", although this work is, in its Christian form, almost six hundred years younger than the Greek "Physiologus". I think, since we speak about entanglement, that such processes of *Verflechtung* nullify somehow chronologies and put the stress, on the contrary, on the crossroads, parallel developments, and the aspects of interconnection. The *second* part of the article will be a short presentation of the Wallachian literate Prince Neagoe Basarab, and of his mentioned work. I will stress their privileged position in the cultural area of the orthodox world in post-Byzantine South-East Europe. I dedicate the *last* part of my article to the concrete influences that the two works I am speaking about exercised on the Wallachian mirror of the prince. The *conclusions* will point out the hermeneutical implications of the sources' evidence regarding the issue of "entangled hagiographies" with the different stages of hagiographical understanding embedded in religious preoccupation with the Holy and Holiness.

## Two stories from the first Christian Millennium

"Barlaam and Josaphat" is the Christian form of the history of Siddhartha Gautama's enlightenment or better said, about his becoming Buddha.<sup>2</sup> The difference between the stories reflects the difference between

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<sup>2</sup> Translations I used: George R. Woodward, Harold Mattingly and David M. Lang, *Barlaam and Josaphat* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967). Ludwig

religions. The impersonal Buddhism speaks about the attempt to leave the world behind, gaining enlightenment, being a bodhisattva, a being on its way to Buddha. The Buddha-History focuses on the steps of individual enlightenment of young Prince Gautama: from recognizing the danger of the world to the way out of it, i.e. achieving liberation from the world.<sup>3</sup> The enlightenment of Gautama, his becoming to Buddha, has a cosmological function. The whole creation takes advantage of the cognition of the way out from the cyclical process of becoming. The Christian legend of the holy man Barlaam and his pupil Josaphat—in fact a phonetic mutation from the Sanskrit *bodhisattva*<sup>4</sup>—lays the accent not on the cosmological freedom and enlightened self-conscience out of the permanent cyclical motion, but on the danger to the soul residing in the imprisoning materiality of the world, short said, “salvation through faith”.<sup>5</sup> The liberation of Josaphat is a personal act of conversion to another system of values without any cosmological meaning.

Technically speaking, “Barlaam and Josaphat” enjoyed a wide reception in the Muslim, Manichean and Christian world of the Near East and Europe: it was even better known in the Middle Ages than the Alexander romance and it was spread over an enormous area between India and Island or Russia. The legend was handed down in four versions: Arabian (8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> c.), Georgian (9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> c.), Greek (probably 11<sup>th</sup> c.) and the better known Latin translation widely read in Latin Europe of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>6</sup> Some scholars identified the author of the Christian Greek version as John

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Burchard, *Die Legende von Barlaam und Josaphat* (München: Theatiner-Verlag, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> Graeme MacQueen, “Rejecting enlightenment? The medieval Christian transformation of the Buddha-legend in Jacobus de Voragine’s Barlaam and Josaphat”. *Studies in Religion* 30/2 (2001), 153

<sup>4</sup> MacQueen, “Rejecting enlightenment?”, 154; Jürgen Tubach, “Das Bild vom idealen Christen: Askese im Barlaam-Roman”, in *Sprache, Mythen, Mythizismen. Teil 3*, edited by Armenuhi Drost-Abgarjan et al., (Halle/Saale: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2004), 761.

<sup>5</sup> MacQueen, “Rejecting enlightenment?”, 152.

<sup>6</sup> See MacQueen, “Rejecting enlightenment?”, 155. Tubach, “Das Bild vom idealen Christen”, 770ff. Robert Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Iosaph (spuria), VII: Einführung*, (Berlin New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2006), 98ff, 141ff. Sophia G. Vashalomidze, “Georgien, kulturelle Schwelle zwischen Asien und Europa am Beispiel der Barlaam-Legende”, in *Der christliche Orient und seine Umwelt*, edited by Sophia G. Vashalomidze/Lutz Greisiger, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 277. See also D. M. Lang, *The Balavariani (Barlaam and Josaphat). A Tale from the Christian East Translated from the Old Georgian* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University Press, 1966).

Damascene (who died in 754), while others argued that the Georgian monk Euthymios Hagiorites (who died 1028) translated the novel from Georgian into Greek.<sup>7</sup>

“Barlaam and Josaphat” reached the Danube principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia through the Slavonic translations from Bulgarian and Serbian monastic circles.<sup>8</sup> The Danube principalities were using Slavonic till the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a cultural and diplomatic language, the lingua franca of the orthodox East and South-East Europe. We can speak about an Orthodox Commonwealth held together by its orthodox faith, matrimonial and economic networks as well as Slavonic culture.<sup>9</sup> “Barlaam and Josaphat” was translated into Middle Bulgarian or Slavonic in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century from the Greek original.<sup>10</sup> The Slavonic translation was already circulating north of the Danube in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The oldest Slavonic manuscript we still possess that was produced in Wallachia itself, is dated 1518, a year before Neagoe Basarab began his “Teachings to

<sup>7</sup> Karl Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reichs (527–1453)*, vol. I, (München: Beck, 21897), 457ff. D. M. Lang, “Introduction”, in *St. John Damascene. Barlaam and Joesaph*, edited by G. R. Woodward H. Mattingly, (Cambridge Massachusetts/London: University Press, 1983), ix-xi, xv-xvii, xx-xxii; Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 74. See also Franz Dölger, *Der griechische Barlaam-Roman ein Werk des H. Johannes von Damaskos*, (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1953).

<sup>8</sup> Émile Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle et sa diffusion dans les Pays Roumains* (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1947), 51f.

<sup>9</sup> Stojan Romanski, *Mahnreden des walachischen Wojwoden Nēgoe Basarab an seinen Sohn Theodosius*, (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1908), 113-115. Alexandru Rosetti, et al. (eds.), *Istoria literaturii române I: Folclorul. Literatură română în perioada feudală (1400–1780) [History of Romanian Literature I: Folklore. Romanian Literature in the Middle Ages 1400–1780]*, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RPR, 1964), 236. Émile Turdeanu, “Les Principautés Roumaines et les Slaves du Sud. Rapports littéraires et religieux”, in *Études de littérature roumaine et d’écrits slaves et grecs des Principautés Roumaines*, ed. Émile Turdeanu, (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 13. Ștefan Ciobanu, *Istoria literaturii române vechi [History of Old Romanian Literature]*, (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1989), 22. Further literature, Pandelete Olteanu (ed.), *Slava veche și slavona românească [The Old Slavonic and the Romanian Slavonic]*, (Bucharest: Editura didactică și pedagogică, 1975). Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova, “Les monuments de migration dans les Balkans jusqu’à l’époque ottomane,” in *Byzance, la Bulgarie, les Balkans*, ed. Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova (Plovdiv: Bulgarian Heritage Foundation, 2010), 3-175.

<sup>10</sup> Dan H. Mazilu, *Barlaam și Ioanșaf. Istoria unei cărți [Barlaam and Joesaph. The History of a Book]*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1981), 58.

Theodosius”.<sup>11</sup> It might be that this manuscript was also used by the Wallachian scholar Udriște Năsturel to translate “Barlaam and Josaphat” into Old Romanian in 1648.<sup>12</sup>

Another important text for the cultural landscape of Wallachia was the Greek “Physiologus” from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century,<sup>13</sup> the work of an anonymous Alexandrian. At first, this was a Greek collection of 48 chapters dealing with characteristics of different species of fauna and flora, as well as with minerals. We also find a number of fantastic creatures like the unicorn, the phoenix, the siren, the centaur. This scientific treatise is followed by a second part that includes the Christian-theological interpretation of creation, trying to recognize in the constitution of the world the hidden reason of God encrypted in what is visible; all of this discussion—of course—is underpinned by numerous Bible quotations.<sup>14</sup> There are some parallels

<sup>11</sup> Moses Gaster, *Literatură populară română [Romanian Vernacular Literature]*, (Bucharest: I. Haimann, 1883), 33.

<sup>12</sup> Ion C. Chițimia, “Considerații despre ‘Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab’” [Considerations on the Teachings of Neagoe Basarab]. *Romanoslavica* 8 (1963), 290. Virgil Cândea, “L’humanisme d’Udriște Năsturel et l’agonie des lettres slavonnes en Valachie”. *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 6/2 (1968), 22; Nicolae Cartoian, *Cărțile populare în literatura românească. Epoca influenței sud-slave [The vernacular Books of the Romanian Literature. The Period of South Slavic influences]*, (Bucharest: Editura enciclopedică, 1974), 291-293; Dan H. Mazilu, “Despre ‘Viața Sfinților Varlaam și Iosaf’” [On the Vita of “St. Barlaam and Josaphat”], in *Omagiu lui Virgil Cândea la 75 de ani*, vol. 1, ed. Paul H. Stahl, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 2002), 393.

<sup>13</sup> Klaus Alpers, “Untersuchungen zum griechischen Physiologus und den Kyraniden”, in *All Geschöpf ist Zung’ und Mund*, ed. Heimo Reinitzer, (Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1984), 14.

<sup>14</sup> „Physiologus heißt eine griechisch abgefasste Schrift, die ursprünglich 48 Kapitel umfasste. Diese Kapitel enthalten zunächst Aussagen oder kurze Berichte über die Eigenarten von Tieren, Pflanzen und Steinen. [...] An diesen sozusagen naturwissenschaftlichen Teil schließt sich als zweiter eine christliche Auslegung an. Diese wird durch zahlreiche Bibelzitate erhärtet“ (Ursula Treu, “Nachwort,” in *Physiologus*, ed. Ursula Treu, [Hanau: Union, 31998], 111). See also Moses Gaster, “Il Physiologus nuneno”. *Archivio glottologico italiano* 10 (1886 1888), 273-304. Jean B. Pitra, “Physiologus”, in in *Spicilegium solesmonense complectens Sanctorum Patrum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum*, vol. 3, ed. Jean B. Pitra, (Paris: Didot, 1855), 338-373. Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, 455-457. A. Karnejev, “Der Physiologus der Moskauer Synodbibliothek”. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 31 (1894), 26-63. Friedrich Lauchert, *Geschichte des Physiologus*, (Straßburg: Trübner, 1889). Francesco Sbordone ed., *Physiologus. Reprint of the edition Milano*, (Hildesheim et al.: G. Olms Verlag, 1936). Nicolae Cartoian, *Cărțile populare în literatura românească. Epoca influenței sud-slave [The vernacular Books of the Romanian*

between the Greek “Physiologus” and the Indian “Pantchatantra” from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>15</sup>, but no direct relationship between them could be traced. In fact “Pantchatantra” came into the Mediterranean through Persian and Arabian versions from the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>16</sup> “Physiologus” and “Pantchatantra” belonged to the same kind of scholarly preoccupation with scientific observation corroborated by spiritual interpretations.

The “Physiologus” was translated into Slavonic using a Byzantine version of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Greek original. The Slavonic translation is preserved today only in Russian manuscripts, but we know that the translation from Greek into Middle Bulgarian occurred South of the Danube in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Slavonic manuscripts of the “Physiologus” also circulated in the Danube Principalities even before the destruction of the Bulgarian state by the Ottomans in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. After this date several monks from Bulgaria and Serbia found refuge at the courts of the Wallachian princes and brought with them not only many manuscripts but also the art to produce them: calligraphy. The Wallachian and Moldavian calligraphy schools of the 15<sup>th</sup> century are paradoxically the most important for the perpetuation of written culture in Slavonic language.<sup>18</sup>

## A princely political author: Neagoe Basarab and His Teachings to Theodosius

Neagoe Basarab ascended to the throne of the Principality of Wallachia in 1512. He is the first Prince not to have descended from the old lineage of the Basarab dynasty, which had ruled Wallachia since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Neagoe descended from the Wallachian nobility, as the offspring of a

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*Literature. The Period of South Slavic influences*, (Bucharest: Editura enciclopedică, 1974), 236-238. Nikolaus Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter*, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976). Alpers, “Untersuchungen,” 13-87. Marco Depietri, *Der jüngere Physiologus. Eine sprachwissenschaftliche Untersuchung* (Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2010), accessed August 23, 2017.

<http://physiologus.proab.info/?re=10>.

<sup>15</sup> Johannes Hertel, *Das Pancatantra. Seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung*, (Berlin: 1914); Patrick Olivelle Teubner (ed.), *The Pancatantra. The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, (Oxford: University Press, 1997), xii ff.

<sup>16</sup> Alpers, “Untersuchungen”, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Georg Polivka, “Zur Geschichte des Physiologus in den slavischen Literaturen”. *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 14 (1892), 381.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase a românilor până la 1688 [The History of the religious Romanian Literature until 1688]*, (Bucharest: Socecu, 1904), 7-9; Romanski, *Maluren den*, 119; Rosetti, *Istoria*, 241.

powerful Boyar family, and he was born in 1481 or 1482.<sup>19</sup> His name “Basarab” is in this case only a nickname he assumed after he usurped power, to legitimate his authority. The reign of Neagoe Basarab was regarded by a contemporary author, Gabriel, the Protos of Mount Athos, and the author of Nephon II’s *Vita* (ca. 1519),<sup>20</sup> as a blessing for the Orthodox World from Wallachia to Mount Athos and beyond, to Jerusalem and Mount Sinai.<sup>21</sup> Neagoe Basarab spent enormous amounts of money to build churches and to supply them with precious reliquaries, liturgical vessels, benefits for monasteries etc.<sup>22</sup> His best known foundation is an architectural jewel, the monastery church of Curtea de Argeș in Wallachia, which was regarded by Gabriel Protos as being, even if not as large as the Hagia Sophia, much more beautiful.<sup>23</sup> This church is considered by art historians to be the quintessence of the so-called “Romanian Baroque” of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>24</sup>

Let us now consider now the treatise itself, “The teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosius”, a work of great theological, political,

<sup>19</sup> Ioan C. Filitti, “Craioveștii I”. *Convorbiri literare* 54/3 (1922), 193-228; *Idem*, “Craioveștii II”. *Convorbiri literare* 54/4 (1922), 292-320; Radu Ș. Vergatti, *Neagoe Basarab. Viața, opera, domnia [Neagoe Basarab. Life, Works, Ruleship]*, (Curtea de Argeș: Ed. Episcopiei, 2009), 24-26.

<sup>20</sup> Vasile Grecu, “Introducere” [Introduction], in *Gavriil Protul. Viața Sfântului Nifon [Gabriel Protos. The Vita of Saint Nephon]*, ed. Vasile Grecu, vol. I, (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial/Imprimeria Statului, 1944), 6-8, 22.

<sup>21</sup> Gavriil (Gabriel) Protul, *Viața Sfântului Nifon [Vita of St. Nephon]*, ed. Vasile Grecu, vol. II. (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial/Imprimeria Statului, 1944), 160.

<sup>22</sup> Protul, *Viața*, 157-159. See also Ioan Moldoveanu, “Aspects of the Relations of the Romanian Principalities with Mount Athos in the Light of Recent Research Findings”, in *The Romanian Principalities and the Holy Places along the Centuries*, ed. Emanoil Băbuș, Ioan Moldoveanu, Adrian Marinescu, (Bucharest: Sophia Publishing House, 2007), 53-68, here 56f. Petronel Zahariuc, “Câteva documente de la Neagoe Basarab” [Some documents from Neagoe Basarab]. *Studii și materiale de istorie medie* 28 (2010), 193-213. Mihail-S. Săsăujan, “Actul de ctitorie al Domnului Neagoe Basarab” [The ktitor activity of the Prince Neagoe Basarab], in *Sfântul Voievod Neagoe Basarab – ctitor de biserică și cultură românească*, ed. Nicolae-C. Cădă, (Bucharest: Cuvântul Vieții, 2012), 63-80, here 72ff.

<sup>23</sup> Protul, *Viața*, 162. See also the account of the chronicler Radu Popescu Vornicul, *Istoriile domnilor Țării Românești [Libri historiarum principum Ungrovalachiae]*, ed. Constantin Grecescu, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1963), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Edgar Papu, *Barocul ca tip de existență [The Baroque as Way of Life]*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1977), 250-252; *Idem*, *Din clasicii noștri. Contribuții la ideea unui protochronism românesc [Our Classics. Contributions to the Concept of Romanian Protochronism]*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1977), 20-22.

military, and diplomatic erudition.<sup>25</sup> The opus includes two parts, one containing theological and theoretical arguments about the political order in the cosmos, about the likeness of the prince to God, about the enlightenment of the ruler in a hesychastic manner. The second part is far more practical, dealing with the selection of counselors, diplomatic affairs, military strategy, social *caritas*, protocol for official receptions etc.<sup>26</sup> We are not sure, but most of the evidence suggests that Slavonic was the original language of the Teachings. There are also doubts as to the authorship of the work: We still have no direct proof in the sources that Neagoe Basarab is without doubt the author of this *speculum principis*.<sup>27</sup>

The Slavonic manuscript fragments of the “Teachings” include 111 pages and are registered under No. 313 in the National Library “Cyril and Methodius” in Sofia.<sup>28</sup> The Italian paper, the fonts, the filigrees, the ink, and some characters in gold led the specialists to date this luxurious manuscript to the period from 1519 to 1535.<sup>29</sup> This fact supports the hypothesis that it could have been the official copy for Prince Theodosius himself.<sup>30</sup> The 111

<sup>25</sup> See Mihai-D. Grigore, *Neagoe Basarab – Princeps Christianus. Christianitas-Semantik im Vergleich mit Erasmus, Luther und Machiavelli (1513–1523)*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2015), 76-133.

<sup>26</sup> See Neagoe Basarab, *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie [The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius]*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> For the whole debate on the paternity and the original language of the work see Grigore, *Neagoe Basarab*, 77-106.

<sup>28</sup> P. P. Panaitescu, “Introducere” [Introduction], in *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, ed. P. P. Panaitescu, (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1959), 214. Pandele Olteanu (ed.), *Slava veche și slavona românească [The Old Slavonic and the Romanian Slavonic]*, (Bucharest: Editura didactică și pedagogică, 1975), 385. Damian I. Bogdan, “13 file inedite din cel de-al doilea arhetip al Învățăturilor lui Neagoe Basarab” [13 new sheets from the second archetype of Neagoe Basarab’s Teachings]. *Revista de istorie și teorie literară* 17 (1968), 385-387. Gheorghe Mihăilă, “Date noi despre originalul slavon al ‘Învățăturilor lui Neagoe Basarab’ și critica unei ipoteze neîntemeiate” [New Data Regarding the Slavonic Original of Neagoe Basarab’s Teachings and an Argument against an Unfounded Hypothesis], in *Contribuții la istoria culturii și literaturii române vechi*, ed. Gheorghe Mihăilă, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1973), 327.

<sup>29</sup> Charles M. Briquet, *Les filigranes*, vol. 1, ed. Allan Stevenson, (Amsterdam: Paper Publ. Society, 1968), 35-37, 222.

<sup>30</sup> Mihăilă, “Date noi”, 328; Dan Zamfirescu, *Neagoe Basarab și Învățăturile către fiul său Theodosie. Problemele controversate [Neagoe Basarab and The Teachings to Son Theodosius. The Controversies]*, (Bucharest: 1973 Minerva), 208; Matei Cazacu, “Les ‘Enseignements du Prince Neagoe Basarab à son fils Théodose’ dans



pages represent only a third of the whole work, as can be seen from the comparison with the complete versions preserved by the Old Romanian translation of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> We have 9 such Old Romanian manuscripts, only three of them are complete. The oldest and at the same time the best one is registered nowadays under No. 109 in the Library of the Romanian Academy's subsidiary in Cluj. This manuscript belonged to the Phanariote Prince of Wallachia Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714–1716).<sup>32</sup> As we know, the Phanariotes were ardent bibliophiles and enthusiastic readers of advice literature: for instance, another manuscript of the “Teachings” was copied for the Phanariote Nikolaos Mavrocordatos (January–November 1716 and 1719–1730) in 1727 (today Library of Romanian Academy Ms. 1062).<sup>33</sup> Returning to our important Ms. 109, due to the terminology used in a marginal note made by the copyist, the specialists could date the first Old Romanian translation to around 1635. Another important manuscript is No. 221 of the Dionysiou monastery on Mount Athos with the Greek translation of the “Teachings”. It was indexed already in 1895 by Spiridonos Lampros and first published in 1942 by Vasile Grecu in Bucharest in a bilingual Greek-Romanian edition.<sup>34</sup> After an analysis offered by Leandros Vranoussis at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Balkan and Southeastern European Studies in Athens in 1970 we know that this manuscript—containing only the second part of the “Teachings”—is approximately ten years older than the Slavic one mentioned above, and also that it is an autograph writing by the hand of Manuel of Corinth, the scholarchos of the Patriarchate in

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*l'histoire des idées politiques*”. *Buletinul bibliotecii române. Studii și documente românești*, N.S. 15/19 (1989), 111.

<sup>31</sup> Panaitescu, “Introducere,” 216.

<sup>32</sup> Pompiliu Teodor, “Două manuscrise copiate pentru biblioteca lui Ștefan Cantacuzino [Two Manuscripts Copied for the Library of Ștefan Cantacuzino]”. *Amiamentul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj* 5 (1962), 231. Zamfirescu, *Neagoe Basarab*, 361.

<sup>33</sup> Zamfirescu, *Neagoe Basarab*, 367-369. The version in Ms. 1062 represents the secularized form of the original text, reproducing only the non-religious and non-theological passages of the “Teachings”.

<sup>34</sup> “Ιωάννου Νέγγου Βεβόδα καὶ αὐτοκράτορος Οὐγγροβλαχίας λόγος”; in the inventory of Lampros Ms. 221 was registered under No. 3755, see Spiridonos P. Lampros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos*, vol. 1, (Cambridge: University Press, 1895), 367; Neagoe Basarab, *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab domnul Țării Românești. Versiunea grecească editată și însoțită de o traducere în românește de Vasile Grecu [The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab, the Prince of Wallachia. The Greek version with Romanian translation by Vasile Grecu]*, ed. Vasile Grecu, (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial/Impr. Statului, 1942).

Constantinople until 1530.<sup>35</sup> In the 1980s another Greek translation from the Slavonic Teachings was discovered in the Bibliotheca Vallicelliana in Rome, a translation made in the intellectual environment of the Muscovite Court of Ivan the Terrible in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> All this emphasizes how wide the reception of the Teachings was in the Orthodox world.

### **“Barlaam and Josaphat” and “Physiologus” in the “Teachings to Theodosius”**

As I said, the legend of “Barlaam and Josaphat” as well as “Physiologus” circulated already in the Danube principalities of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is not surprising that Basarab in his “Teachings to Theodosius” adopted parts of them.

The “Teachings” borrow substantially from “Barlaam and Josaphat”, five fragments in part one and one fragment in part two. First, the lottery of the four caskets is the first fragment we are dealing with:

Then he ordered four wooden caskets to be made. Two of these he covered over all with gold, and, placing deadmen’s moldering bones therein, secured them with golden clasps. The other two he smeared over with pitch and tar, but filled them with costly stones and precious pearls, and all manner of aromatic sweet perfume. He bound them fast with cords of hair, and called for the noblemen who had blamed him for his manner of accosting the men by the wayside. Before them he set the four caskets that they might appraise the value of these and those. They decided that the golden ones were of greatest value, for, peradventure, they contained kingly diadems and girdles. But those that were be-smeared with pitch and tar, were cheap and of paltry worth, said they. Then said the king to them, ‘I know that such is your answer, for with the eyes of sense ye judge the objects of sense, but so ought ye not to do, but ye should rather see with the inner eye the hidden worthlessness or value. Whereupon he ordered the golden chests to be opened. And when they were thrown open, they gave out a loathsome smell and presented a hideous sight. Said the king, ‘Here is a figure of those who are clothed in glory, but within is the stink of dead men’s bones and works

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<sup>35</sup> Leandros Vranoussis, “Les ‘Conseils’ attribués au prince Neagoe (1512-1521) et le manuscrit autographe de leur auteur grec”, in *Actes du II<sup>e</sup> congrès international des études du sud-est européen (Athènes 7-13 mai 1970)*, vol. 4, eds. Maria G. Nystazopoulou and Tito Johalas, (Athens: s. n., 1978), 377-383.

<sup>36</sup> Santo Luca, “Manoscritti greci dimenticati della Biblioteca Vallicelliana”. *Augustinianum* 28/3 (1988), 661-702; Ioan Dumitriu-Snagov, *Monumenta Romaniae Vaticana*, (Rome: Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, 1996), 90.

of iniquity. Next, he commanded the pitched and tarred caskets also to be opened, and delighted the company with beauty and sweet savor of their stores. And he said unto them, 'Know ye to whom these are like? They are like those lowly men, clad in vile apparel, whose outward form alone ye beheld, and deemed it outrageous that I bowed down to do the obeisance. But through the eyes of my mind I perceived the value and exceeding beauty of their souls, and was glorified by their touch, and I counted them more honorable than any chaplet or royal purple.'<sup>37</sup>

Basarab teaches his son that appearance may be the most dangerous enemy of a ruler, not only because it prevents him from recognizing where true values might be hidden but also because the gold of Christian virtue—embodied by monkish ascetics dressed in black—is also hidden behind sobriety and meaninglessness: "So be aware and do the same [my son] like that faithful and good king and through humility you will rise. And give honor to those who are servants of God because they are also His brothers."<sup>38</sup> Recognizing Holiness is the best way to gain it, and the scope of the hagiographical didactics is to make the addressee aware for the encounter with the discrete or even hidden Holiness.

The second important fragment borrowed from "Barlaam and Josaphat" is the parable on the nightingale and the fowler:

'Idol worshippers', said he, 'are like a fowler who caught a tiny bird, called nightingale. He took a knife, for to kill and eat her; but the nightingale, being given the power of articulate speech, said to the fowler, 'Man, what advantageth it thee to slay me? For thou shalt not be able by my means to fill thy belly. Now free me of my fetters, and I will give thee three precepts, by the keeping of which thou shalt be greatly benefited all thy life long.' He astonished at her speech, promised that, if he heard anything new from her, he would quickly free her from her captivity. The nightingale turned towards our friend and said, 'Never try to attain to the unattainable, never regret the thing past and gone, and never believe the word that passeth belief. Keep these three precepts, and may it be well with thee.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> G.R. Woodward, H. Mattingly and D. M. Lang (eds.). *St. John Damascene. Barlaam and Ioasaph* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), VI, 42-44, 74-77.

<sup>38</sup> Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 92, "Așisderea fă și tu, cum făcu acel împărat bun și credincios, și te vei înălța întru smerenia ta. Și să cinstești pre cei ce sântu robi lui Dumnezeu, că aceia sântu și frații lui". I have translated all Old Romanian quotations myself.

<sup>39</sup> Woodward, et.al., *St. John Damascene*, X, 78-81, 134-137.

Basarab adapts this advice as a guide for the political behavior of the ruler: Do not arrogate for yourself to do things beyond your God-given duty, do not judge by virtue of false witnesses and liars, and do not regret things you cannot make undone, thereby becoming enraged and acting rashly and thoughtlessly:

That is why nobody should hastily become enraged and do bad things, but at first the king, or the prince or other magnates should be aware of that. [...] And do not be hasty in believing all kind of lies instead of the truth, and wait until things and words you thought credible prove true indeed. And do not reach you hand beyond the limits given you by God, the vanquisher upon the living and the dead, because if you do that, not even your bitter repentance will help you anymore.<sup>40</sup>

In the chapter on military strategy in the second part of the Teachings, Basarab again applies the advice of the nightingale: Avoid engaging in open battle with superior forces, even when your lying counselors try to convince you to do so.<sup>41</sup>

The other, less important, fragments we find in the Teachings are the parable of the three friends symbolizing the world, the family and good deeds. The best of all these, the only one who accompanies us after our death, is the third friend.<sup>42</sup> The same hold true for a ruler, only the fruits of his philanthropic activity and charity during his reign will give good account of him in the front of the Almighty. We also have in the “Teachings” a paragraph with a synthetic history of Christianity, where Barlaam recounts for Josaphat the pagan persecutions against the Christians. The last borrowed fragment is about a city whose citizens had chosen foreigners to rule them for one year, after which they would be exiled to an uninhabited island. But one wise ruler was not carried away by the sudden prosperity and took advice, learning about the city’s custom. Taking a precaution he deposited a large sum of money on that island that he could enjoy, after his

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<sup>40</sup> “Drept aceia, nu să cade nimunui să să mânie îndată și să facă rău, iar mai ales împăratului și domnului și celor puternici. [...] Ce nici să te grăbești și să te neoești a crede minciunile, în loc de lucruri adevărate, până nu să vor adeveri cuvintele și lucrurile cu arătare credincioasă. Iar de te vei ispiți să-ți întinzi dreapta ta mai sus decât unde țe-au dat Dumnezeu, cea ce biruaște pre cei vii și pre cei morți, cu adevărat decii te vei căi și nu-ți va fi acea căială nici de un foles”, Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 95.

<sup>41</sup> Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 176.

<sup>42</sup> Woodward, et.al., *St. John Damascene*, XIII. 116-117, 197; Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 102-104.

rule in the city had been completed.<sup>43</sup> While “Barlaam and Josaphat” interprets this parable as the allegory of demonic powers struggling for the men’s soul, Neagoe Basarab puts it in terms of the political virtues of the ruler: To prepare now due to your good, philanthropic deeds your eternal stay in the “other” City of God.

The animals of the “Physiologus” help the author of the “Teachings to Theodosius”<sup>44</sup> to visualize the abstract virtues about which he’s speaking and to give the Holy or Holiness a “face”. For the creation is an image of the Creator: God resides in and acts through the visible things and living beings of the cosmos. Basarab uses the description of the snake, the dove, and the ostrich. This is also a proof that the author of the Teachings knew and used the Slavonic “Physiologus” because the parable of the ostrich is completely different in the Slavonic and Old Romanian “Physiologus” when compared to the Latin “Physiologus”.<sup>45</sup>

From the parable on the *serpent* Basarab only adapts the third characteristic of the serpent: When endangered he does not protect his body and only takes care of his head.<sup>46</sup> The Slavonic “Physiologus” interprets this in terms of the care of the Christian men for their souls (like the head, the most precious and sensible part of the human being with the soul placed in it) and not for the bodies, because what would be their gain if they lost their souls?<sup>47</sup> This is not the same as the Latin “Physiologus” where the precaution of the snake mirrors the conduct of the martyrs who are prepared to let their body be tortured and slain in order to keep their head safe, i. e. Christ the head of any man.<sup>48</sup> Basarab changes fully the interpretation: He does not stress anymore the “ferocity” of the snake, like the Slavonic or Old Romanian “Physiologus”,<sup>49</sup> but speaks only about the serpent as a model of

<sup>43</sup> Woodward, et.al., *St. John Damascene*, XIV. 118-120, 200-203.

<sup>44</sup> Compare it with the Old Romanian “Physiologus” translated *ad litteram* after the Slavonic “Physiologus” (Gaster 1886-1888). English transl. after Middle Bulgarian by Anna Stoykova (ed.), *Physiologus*. 1994, 2009-2012. Accessed August 23, 2017 <http://physiologus.proab.info/?re=10>.

<sup>45</sup> Zamfirescu, *Neagoe Basarab*, 250.

<sup>46</sup> Moses Gaster, “Il Physiologus numeno” *Archivio glottologico italiano* 10 (1886-1888), 286.

<sup>47</sup> Gaster, “Physiologus,” 287.

<sup>48</sup> “Debemus igitur nos in tempore periculi totum corpus morti concedere, solum caput custodire: hoc est, Christum non deferere, quemadmodum sancti martyres fecerunt. Omnis enim viri caput Christus est: ut ait Scriptura”

([http://spcoll.library.uvic.ca/Digit/physiologum/facsimile/facsimile\\_cnt.htm?img=10](http://spcoll.library.uvic.ca/Digit/physiologum/facsimile/facsimile_cnt.htm?img=10), accessed January 17, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Gaster, “Physiologus”, 286.

wisdom and holiness, because the serpent “prays to God to see some human face, because [it knows] that the humans are the image of God”.<sup>50</sup>

The *turtledove* is for Neagoe no longer a symbol for innocence, as Jesus Christ had said in Matthew 10, 16: “Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves”. The Wallachian prince changes the words of Christ. In place of “innocent”, he puts the adjective “reasonable” (Old Romanian *întregi*). Because the Slavonic and Old Romanian “Physiologus”<sup>51</sup> teaches that doves are wise. When they find a grain they wait to eat it, checking first whether a hawk is lurking in the skies. This precaution is an example for Christians, because the wise Christian will be prepared when the hawk is coming—for Basarab this is death and not Satan like in the Slavonic “Physiologus”<sup>52</sup>

The third parable on the *ostrich* (στρουθοκάμηλον) is different in the Slavonic version used by Basarab than in the Greek “Physiologus”. While the other two versions stress that the ostrich is very careful about the safety of its eggs, Basarab states that the ostrich broods his eggs not only with the eyes but also with the mind.<sup>53</sup> As I said, this does not form part of original and underlines the duty of the Christian ruler; in the midst of temptations, he should not lose his head, the location of the soul and of reason. Basarab’s conclusion is that the Christian ruler has to concentrate his thoughts during the liturgy on the truly important spiritual matters and not be distracted by everyday concerns: “That is why, my beloved brothers and sons, when you are in the church and pray, your words and your thoughts should not be at the ambassadors [you have sent or at those you have to receive] nor at other political concerns nor at your gold or silver or other treasures you have”.<sup>54</sup>

We observe from the parables chosen by Basarab, but also from the sometimes very original interpretations, that the Wallachian prince is impressed by the wisdom of those animals whose conduct can offer men an example of holiness. This is not only an allegorical and analogical interpretation of prosaic realities of the seen world, but a spiritual understanding of the internal structures of creation encoded by the Creator.

<sup>50</sup> Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 145-147.

<sup>51</sup> Not the Latin one, cf. [http://spcoll.library.uvic.ca/Digit/physiologum/facsimile/facsimile\\_cnt.htm?img=10](http://spcoll.library.uvic.ca/Digit/physiologum/facsimile/facsimile_cnt.htm?img=10), accessed January 17, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Gaster, “Physiologus,” 283; Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 146.

<sup>53</sup> Gaster, “Physiologus,” 288.

<sup>54</sup> “Pentru-aceia, fraților și feții miei, când veniți în biserică și vă rugați, să nu vă fie vorbele nici gândurile pentru solii voștri, sau de semile care veți vrea să luați cuiva, sau de aurul și de argintul vostru și de alte avuții”, Basarab, *Învățăturile*, 147.

## Final considerations

The three sources I previously discussed underpin my argument that “hagiography” transcends the concrete borders of the *terminus technicus* used by historians and has to be seen primarily in its religious complexity. We speak here about different stages of mentalities from the cosmological experience of the Holy’s omnipresence in creation to the literary concretization. I unfold the systematic considerations on the sources’ evidence in three directions:

*Primo*: “Barlaam and Josaphat” was chosen as a typical example of hagiography *stricto sensu*, a Saint’s vita, with its exemplar function for the ideal existence of a Christian. The scholar has to be cautious, however, when he tries to identify strictly delimited fields of what is “hagiography” and what is “biography” in pre-modern traditional cultures: because the two patterns coexist, communicate and flow one into each other.<sup>55</sup> The Christian historical accounts of holy persons combine the two biographical paradigms discussed by Albrecht Dihle in its work “Die Entstehung der historischen Biographie”. On the one side, the ancient historical presentation of ethical conduct and deeds of a virtuous individual, the so-called Roman *laudatio*,<sup>56</sup> and, on the other side, the encoded presence of God in the holiness of Saints, as organs or media of the Holy in the world. The existence of an exemplar individual is part of *Heilsgeschichte*, and the whole literary style of hagiography aims to articulate this fundamental insight. The Saint becomes a *vas Dei*.<sup>57</sup> In other words, the hagiographical writing is a biography of a person written from the perspective of her religious, scriptural, terminological and symbolical background. We cannot write about a Saint’s life without thinking at the history, at his becoming, at the way from sinner to Saint. Alternatively, we think on the other side at the impact and effect of this status of holiness on the environment of that Saint, we try to put in

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<sup>55</sup> Walter Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, vol. I: Von der Passio Perpetuae zu den Dialogi Gregors des Großen. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986), 17-19.

<sup>56</sup> Friedrich Prinz, “Aspekte frühmittelalterliche Hagiographie” In *Agiografia nell’Occidente cristiano. secoli XIII-XV*, ed. Enrico Cerulli et al., (Rome: Ac. Nazionale dei Lincei, 1980), 9; Albrecht Dihle, *Die Entstehung der historischen Biographie*. Sitzungsberichte d. Heidelberger Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-Hist. Kl. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1987), 30-32; Gereon Becht-Jördens, “Biographie als Heilsgeschichte. Ein Paradigmenwechsel in der Gattungsentwicklung: Prolegomena zu einer forngeschichtlichen Interpretation von Einharts ‘Vita Karoli’ in *Quaerite faciem eius semper. Studien zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum*, ed. Andrea Jördens et al., (Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2008), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Becht-Jördens, “Biographie”, 10.

word his exemplar function for others on their way to perfection.

*Secundo*: To choose “Physiologus” could surprise at first sight, because it does not address any Saint or miracles. “Physiologus” cannot be counted as hagiographical writing; it is no report on miracles or on the holy life of a Saint. But if we consider the etymological sense of “hagiography”, that of writing about Holiness and the Holy (*das Heilige*), a whole semantic sphere opens up and such works like “Physiologus” *have to* be introduced in the ample discussion on the concept of hagiography. Hagiography as *terminus technicus* designates a historiographical preoccupation with the biography of a holy person. The historical account of the exemplar life of individuals and their deeds (i. e. miracles) grounds however on a broader religious meaning and understanding of the Holy. I mean here that *termini technici* are of course necessary to comprehend complex semantics and articulate discourses by putting ideas, experience and mentalities in words. However, in this simplification process, the underlying meaningfulness of concepts is obstructed and whole semantic spheres are ignored.

This is why the spontaneous association of the term “hagiography” is that of a literary historiographical and biographic genre, a *terminus technicus* defining a specific form of literature about a Saint (ἅγιος), a holy person, and his deeds, forgetting the original meaning of speaking or writing about Holiness and the Holy (ἅγιον) itself. We have to consider that the classical Greek religious use of “Holy” and “Holiness” does not allow the attribution of ἅγιος or ἱερός to human persons, only to properties of the God (buildings, slaves, animals, artefacts, goods). In the classical Greek and Roman ancient world, there were not per se holy objects: holiness was induced by rituals of initiation, consecration, sacralization.<sup>58</sup> That is the difference made by Christian theology, which understood the creation as a pyramidal system related in a hierarchical *continuum* of Holiness and grace to the Creator, at the top of this cosmologic structure. For the ancient Greeks Holiness was a common good of the community, for Christians somebody had to believe in the Christian God and act (ethically) like Him, to gain *likeness to God* (ὁμοίωσις), and as a consequence to be part of the hierarchical pyramid of holiness, mentioned above. Through personal faith, ethical conduct and universalistic claims Christianity achieved a revolution in the understanding of holiness and the Holy in Late Antiquity. “Holy” is something else than the common good, not everybody can reach the status of Holiness, so this complex field became elitist. “Physiologus” appears

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<sup>58</sup> Christoph Auffarth, “Wie kann man von Heiligkeit in der Antike sprechen? Heiligkeit in religionswissenschaftlicher Perspektive”, in *Heilige, Heiliges und Heiligkeit in Spätantiken Religionskulturen*, eds. Peter Gemeinhardt and Katharina Heyden (Berlin Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), 22, 30.



exactly in this period of transition and combines the two conceptions I previously described.

The Greek “Physiologus” is the form of surprising the hidden reason of the divine, its *Logos*, in the structures of the creation; it is observing God in the cosmos and its beings. The classical Christian understanding of the world regards the cosmos as the place of *hierophany*, the irruption of the Holy into the history: “The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Ps. 19, 1). Therefore, the whole creation is a medium of God revealing himself. “Physiologus” accomplishes in this way the didactical-parenetical function of *any* hagiographical writing,<sup>59</sup> addressing “profane” persons in order to show them the *modi* of the Holy, as well as the way to holiness.

This way of creating a discursive *continuum* between Creator and his creation is, as I showed, characteristic for the neoplatonic environment of 2<sup>nd</sup> century Alexandria where the “Physiologus” was written. This understanding of hagiography reveals the different stages of hagiographical entanglement: from the abstract theological principle to the concretization in a literary genre. We have here the relation between the term “hagiography” and the hagiographic discourse seen as semantic field making conceptualization possible. In other words, speaking about the holiness of God’s creation is a form to put the divine in words. Referring to the media of holiness ranks also as hagiography. Choosing the “Physiologus” in a study on hagiography is a dismissal of anachronistic reductions of hagiography to the literary genre of a “Bios” or “Vita”, a necessary change in perspective that was initiated in religious studies already in the 1980s.<sup>60</sup>

*Tertio*: Christian hagiography is not only the enumeration of dates, issues and deeds of a Saint’s life, but also a sapiential and spiritual “methodology” on the way to holiness. In the case of “Barlaam and Joasaph” not only the account on the wise old father Barlaam is hagiographical, but in the first place the young Josaphat’s conversion through faith. The existential steps to holiness—from sinner to Saint—are not a rare topic of Christian hagiography. That is why I have chosen the “Teachings to Theodosius”, to see how they combine and adapt the two paradigms, of ancient biography on the one hand—stressing the exemplarity of the ruler’s ethical conduct—and of Christian hagiography on the other

<sup>59</sup> Prinz, “Aspekte”, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Gemeinhardt and Katharina Heyden, “Heilige, Heiliges und Heiligkeit in spätantiken Religionskulturen”, in *Heilige, Heiligen und Heiligkeit in spätantiken Religionskulturen*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Katharina Heyden, (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), 417/438, here 418f.

hand—showing the ruler’s spiritual improvement and redemption on the way to the Holy.

*Ergo*: I have tried to illustrate the complexity of hagiographic semantics and demonstrated that the technical hagiographical approach, a Saint’s *vita* for instance, represents only the concrete aspect of the confrontation with the Holy. A Saint’s *Vita* is the *concretization* of the Holy in the Holiness of individual existence of a holy person, a fact which recommends this Saint as model to follow. Nevertheless, the technical hagiography, a *Vita*, grounds on the broader hagiographic understanding of the presence of the Holy, i. e. in our case the Christian God, in the structures and beings of the world. The cosmic system encodes the Holy and reveals it at the same time for the “experts” of the sacred. That is why a work like “*Physiologus*” *has to be* used in a study on hagiography because of the exemplary structure and behavior of God’s creatures, which can lead those who really understand things to holiness in the very same way a Saint’s *vita* does. The application offered by Neagoe Basarab helps us in this understanding of hagiography. He sees animals as models of wisdom, spirituality and ethical conduct for men on their way to God, better said, for Christian rulers on their way to God. Because for Basarab, as well for Martin Luther for instance, everybody attained redemption from its personal and public state of being (German: *aus seinem Stand heraus*). This is why the Christian ruler has to excel and gain salvation of his soul in his state of being, as ruler, not as a monk or some other member of society.

Earlier books live in later. The “*Teachings to Theodosius*” kept “*Barlaam and Josaphat*” and “*Physiologus*” alive. The author of the “*Teachings*” does not slavishly transcribe lines from the sources but reflects upon and interprets them in order to edify his own system. For Basarab it was no longer the enlightenment that primarily mattered, the epistemic liberation experienced by the Indian “*Josaphat*”, i.e. Buddha. As in the Latin Christian version of the story, Basarab thought it important to teach his son about the dangers of the world, to instruct him in becoming a Saint without abandoning his status as political ruler. While the Christian “*Barlaam and Josaphat*” advocates renunciation, asceticism and the abjuration of the world, the Wallachian prince tries to apply those virtues to the political sphere of the Christian prince. His son Theodosius should not flee the world: instead, he should remain there, as an act of responsibility toward his subjects and as a fulfillment of the duty God confided to him.

Narratives flourish with a long life through successive revivals in different cultural environments. In this way, a story of personal illumination becomes, in Christendom, the story of a young aristocrat on his way to asceticism and perfection. In 16<sup>th</sup> century Wallachia the parables of

“Barlaam and Josaphat” or “Physiologus” frame the advisory discourse of the political and spiritual instruction of the successor Prince. The entanglement of texts, ideas or discourses is a network of narratives communicating, offering answers to new questions in new contexts, answers which nevertheless come clothed in old stories.