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SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE [JOHN THE MONK] (attributed to), *Liber Sancti Barlaam et Josephat*, and other saints lives
In Latin, manuscript on paper and vellum.
[Germany, diocese of Mainz, c. 1400-1425]

180 folios, in gatherings of 12 (i-xv¹²), complete (text of last folio copied twice), first bifolio and central bifolio of each quire written on parchment, else written on paper, written in dark brown ink in a gothic bookhand, on 26-27 long lines (justification 87 x 147 mm), traces of plummet and hard point ruling, prickings still visible throughout, quire signatures, rubrics in red, certain initials touched in red, 3-line high initials marking the beginning of different texts in red (ff. 7v, 64v, 157, 166v, 169v), one 6-line introductory initial in blue with purple penwork floral infill, purple calligraphic penwork extending in the margin, some marginal annotations (ff. 37, 164, and passim), some paper folios worn from the acidity of ink. CONTEMPORARY BINDING of brown calf on wooden boards, spine sewn on three thongs with paper label pasted in the first compartment with the letters IĒ painted in red (perhaps a former shelfmark), blind-stamped front and back with a regular blind-ruled frame composed of double fillets and a cross motif in the center, a single letter D on the back board, four brass bosses, umbilics on back board (for the binding, compare Schunke, no. 15, Marienfeld?), remains of brass clasp on front and back board, title inscribed on a label pasted on front board, only partially legible: "Vita sancti Barlaam [et Josaphat]," bottom pastedown from an earlier twelfth-century Sacramentary on vellum with traces of German neumes, front board detached, boards rubbed. Dimensions 147 x 210 mm.

With an original provenance and in a fine contemporary stamped binding, this exemplar neatly written on paper and parchment of the earliest (and still-unedited) of the two Latin versions of the Christianized Buddha legend testifies to the popularity of the work within the milieu of the Canons Regular. The compilation, including unusual saints lives—mostly otherwise unrecorded—enhances the textual importance of the manuscript.

PROVENANCE

1. Originally formed part of, and was probably made in, the monastic library of Abbey of the Virgin Mary in Hirzenhain, a Canons Regular monastery in the diocese of Mainz in Hesse-Darmstadt(not in Cottineau). Two contemporary inscriptions are copied on the upper and lower pastedowns: "Liber monasterii beate marie virginis in Hyrczenhayn ordinis canonicorum regularium prope Ortenberg Mogun[ensis] dyoc[esis]." In 1568, the premises were transformed into a Latin school which disappeared in 1593.
2. Front pastedown, the following inscription in German, copied in a sixteenth-century hand: "Johanned Dopent [...]".
3. Friederich Freyhers, his engraved bookplate on the front pastedown : "Friderich Freyhers v. und [zu] Franckenstein in Delstadt [...] ritter Daupman". The owner was a member of the Freiherr von und zu Franckenstein family, from Baden.

TEXT

ff. 1-155v, Book of Barlaam and Josaphat; incipit, "Incipit liber gestorum sanctorum Barlaam et Josaphat scriptus a sancto Johanne Damasceno. Cum cepissent monasteria construi..." ; explicit, "... geberna spiritaes cogitiones accende et ad beatudinem tuam perducere dignare per Jhesum Christum filium tuum. Amen. Explicit liber gestorum Barlaam et Josaphat suorum Dei."

ff. 157-164, Life of Saint Euphrosyna; incipit, "Fuit vir in Allexandria Pafnucius nominee honorabilis..." ; explicit, "... gloria virtus et puritas in secula seculorum. Amen".
Euphrosyna was the only daughter of Paphnucius of Alexandria.

ff. 164v-166, Life of Saint Columba, incipit "Advieners aurelianus ingerator de partibus orientis ...;

ff. 166v-174v, Lives of Saints Fides and Caprasius; incipit : "Passio sanctorum et inclitorum martirum Caprasii et Fidei..." ; explicit : "...assistat apud Dominum Jhesum Christum cui cum Gloria in secula seculorum. Amen."

ff. 169v-177, Lives of Saints Demas and Hermogenius; incipit, "Tempore illo sub nerone romanorum princips..." ; explicit, "...in unitate spiritus sancti per immortalia seculourm secula. Amen".

ff. 178-180, Letter from Frater Rogerius on Frater Bartrandus (see line 20), incipit, "[A]mico sed caro in Domino Jhesu suo fratri R.do [Ricardo ?] per frater Rogerius eius totus suusque indignus Dei...[...] Noveris quod in nocte epiphaniae Domini septem diebus post diem Silvestri cum frater quidam quem [...] vigilia fatigatus quiescent astitit ei quidam Montis Pessulani [Montpellier, Hérault, France] laudabilis memorie frater Bartrandus..." ; explicit : "...penam et culpam".

This letter recounts events from the Life of Saint Bertrand of Garrigue, one of saint Dominic's first followers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a figure linked to the conversion of the Cathars and responsible for the foundation of a number of convents in Montpellier, Avignon and the Convent of Saint-Jacques in Paris.

The core of the manuscript comprises this story of Barlaam and Josaphat, a retelling of the Buddha legend from within a Christian context. The "Buddha" reaches enlightenment through the love of Christ. In its earliest form, the tale goes back to the seventh century. In the eleventh century, the story is believed to have been translated into Greek (possibly from a Georgian original, which is known as the "Wisdom of Balahvar") and Latin. The Greek translation has traditionally, though erroneously, been attributed to St. John Damascene also referred to as St. John of Damascus. Now, the author is usually referred to as "John the Monk." The story was immensely popular in Europe in the Middle Ages and translated into many different languages, including Spanish, English, French, German, and Dutch. It led Rome to canonize the two saints who were to have lived in Ethiopia, a place called India in the text.

Raised in isolation in his palace, Josaphat is the son of a pagan king in a kingdom in part evangelized by Saint Thomas. His father was warned by an astrologer that his son would one day become a Christian and, so, he imprisoned the youth from birth. Eventually, Josaphat escapes, encountering successively a leper, a blind man, and an old man, thus learning of the existence of sickness and death. Next, he meets the hermit Barlaam, who takes him into the desert where he renounces the throne in favor of an ascetic life. Josaphat manages to convert his father and finishes out his life as a hermit in the company of his master Barlaam.

There are two distinct Latin versions. Ours is closest to the second Latin translation, referred to as the Vulgate version, which formed the basis of subsequent Latin and vernacular versions of the legend (B.H.L. 979; Sonet, pp. 73-88). In fact, the Latin manuscripts continue to pose philological problems, since they remain unedited and poorly studied. Sonet describes this confusion: "Les diverses versions latines de *Barlaam et Josaphat* sont peu étudiées et mal classées. La vaste diffusion de la légende, sa longueur, bien faite pour encourager les auteurs d'*épitome* ou d'*excerpta*, rendent ce classement particulièrement malaisé." Only selections have been edited by Peri (1959).

Frequently illuminated, some of the more famous versions include a bilingual French and Greek thirteenth-century copy, one of the treasures of Mount Athos (Ivion Cod. 463) and a fifteenth-century copy in the German translation by Rudolf von Ems, illuminated in the workshop of Diebold Lauber (J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 9).

Several incunable versions exist of the Latin translation: *Liber gestorum SS. Barlaam, eremita, et Josaphat, Indiae regis, auctore S. Joanne Damasceno*, [Speier, c. 1472-73] (Goff B-125; Hain-Copinger, 5914); Another edition is recorded [Strasbourg, H. Eggestein, not after 1474] (Goff B-126; Hain-Copinger, 5913). Both editions are rare

The other saints' lives included in the present manuscript appear to be unrecorded (either in the *Patrologia latina* or in *In principio*), with the exception of the Life of Saint Euphrosyne which exists in four exemplars preserved in the Bibl. Mun., Namur.

LITERATURE

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Woodward G. R. and H. Mattingly (ed. and tr.), *St. John Damascene: Barlaam and Joasaph [sic]*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1914 [Greek Version and English Translation].

Online Resources

The Online Medieval and Classical Library, with an digital text of Barlaam and Joasaph, tr.
By G. R. Woodward and H. Mattingly, 1914 (in English), prepared by Douglas B. Killings.
DisplayText cannot span more than one line!DisplayText cannot span more than one line!
illuminated translation of Rudof von Ems (workshop of Diebold Lauber)
<http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/objects/o1702.html>

illuminated bilingual Greek-French copy from Mount Athos
<http://www.culture.gr/2/21/218/218ae/e218ae15.html>

On Blessed Bertrand of Garrigue
<http://www.op.org/domcentral/trad/disciples/31bertgarr.htm>