JOURNAL OF BYZANTINE STUDIES (JOeB) / JAHRBUCH DER OESTERREICHISCHEN BYZANTINISTIK, 75. Band/2025, 47–74
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DOI: 10.1553/joeb75S47

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Hagiography or Mirror for Princes? Prolegomena to the Study of the 'Christian' Legend of the Buddha in Armenian*

ABSTRACT: This introductive study to the Armenian *Barlaam and Ioasaph* (henceforth, Armenian BJ) intends to draw scholarly attention to the reception and circulation of the Christianized saga of the Buddha within the Armenian world. The contribution tries to identify the broad literary context of transmission of the Armenian BJ, by showing its transverse character across hagiography, fictional storytelling and *Fürstenspiegel* literature. In this respect, it points out common structural features with 'ascetic princes' literature, a cycle of narratives originating in the Syriac tradition and representing a specific model of renouncement and self-abasement that ostensibly differed from ascetic ideals as featured in Early Christianity and the Late Antiquity. The article provides preliminary considerations on the time and place of production, as well as on the patronage of the short and the long recensions of the Armenian BJ with a particular focus on the short recension. Finally, it offers a comparative textual analysis of some literary features of the saga, by considering the Armenian, the Greek, the Georgian, and the Arabic versions.

KEYWORDS: Buddha in Caucasus; 'ascetic princes' literature; Arabic-Armeno-Greek-Georgian entanglements; literary landscape(s); Syriac-Armenian literary interaction

To Carolina

1. BETWEEN HAGIOGRAPHY AND FICTIONAL STORYTELLING: TALES OF ASCETIC PRINCES IN ARMENIAN.

Stories of princes and noblemen who convert to an ascetic life by renouncing the pleasures of paternal royal courts or the material comforts of wealthy aristocratic milieus are interspersed with ascetic texts of varied kinds in late medieval and early modern Armenian manuscripts. Alongside sermons, homilies, moral exhortations, regulations, and the lives and deeds of early Christian martyrs and Egyptian and Syriac Desert Fathers, it is not unusual to come across tales of wealthy youths embracing an extreme life of deprivation. Within the same textual space, abridged and versified ballads, hymns, and tales based on the lives of voluntary hermits and ascetics demonstrate that the trials and tribulations of these specific holy men were highly popular and had such a significant impact that they were included in one of the most beloved and widely read forms of Armenian literature in the early modern Islamicate space, the songbook (*talaran*)[1]. It is no coincidence that ballads, tales and

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* Research for the essay was supported by the ERC project 'Reviving the Ascetic Ideal in the Eastern Mediterranean. Entangled Memories of Early Egyptian Monasticism in Medieval Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian Christianity (969–1375 CE)" (*RevIdEM*, ERC Starting Grant, 2023–2028; PI: Adrian C. Pirtea). The project has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Ninth Framework Programme "Horizon Europe" (grant agreement no. 101078631). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Agency. Neither the European union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. I would like to thank my colleagues Sergio Basso, Carolina Cupane, Samvel Grigoryan, Adrian Pirtea and Lewis Read who helped me to improve the final draft of this contribution with their suggestions and comments. I would also express my gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive observations. Any errors of analysis, interpretation and translation are, of course, solely my own.

[1] Songbooks started to be produced and circulated on a large scale from the 16th century onwards. They were meant to be read aloud, possibly in private gatherings in urban settings, where the middle-class made up of merchants, artisans and

songs about lay heroes, holy men and ascetic princes proliferated among non-elite Armenian audiences from the sixteenth century onwards. This occurred during a period of political, economic, demographic and social instability in Armenia and Asia Minor, which eventually led to the establishment of two main Islamic superregional powers, the Ottomans and the Safavids. The tremendous impact that these transformations had on the internal and external structures of Christian groups and communities across Asia Minor and the southern Caucasus is also reflected in their literary output, insofar as texts became a powerful means of disseminating knowledge from learned circles to a less learned public, "with the specific intention of codifying and/or communicating knowledge which may serve to inform individual or collective behaviour"[2].

This article offers a preliminary investigation into what I define literary subgenre of 'ascetic princes' as part of Armenian hagiography and medieval fictional storytelling. To trace the significance of this kind of literature in both the fields of Armenian literary studies and intellectual history, I will examine the Armenian recension(s) of the Christianized narratives on the Buddha as the case-study of the present contribution[3].

The literary trope of individuals who voluntarily abandon material riches and social prestige to embrace a life of renunciation and withdrawal from worldly pleasures, such as material possessions, sexual arousal and social status, gained popularity in the late Middle Ages—a period during which the early Christian and Late Ancient ascetic ideal was revived. The translation and copying of ascetic literature, such as the 'Sayings of the Egyptian Desert Fathers' (*Apophthegmata Patrum*) and the mystical works of Syriac authors, was initiated by Catholicos Grigor Pahlawuni Vkayasēr ('Martyrophile'; in officio, 1066–1105) and continued to proliferate under the Ṙubenian and Het'umian dynasties, rulers of Mediterranean Armenia from the second half of the twelfth century to 1375[4]. In his effort to revitalise the seemingly distant memories of Egyptian hermits and ascetics as well as of martyrs and saints from Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Upper Mesopotamia, Grigor II Pahlawuni drew inspiration from his own life of pilgrimages to Egypt, Palestine and Jerusalem, and by his long retreats from the throne of the Catholicosate to the Armenian monastery of Arekin (north of Marash) in the Black Mountain and to the Karmir monastery in K'esun[5]. Within the Armenian tradition,

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professionals, was growing significantly and obtaining increasing access to knowledge and cultural production. Not accidentally, one among the first five printed books in the Armenian language was a *Songbook*, printed in Venice in 1513 by Yakob Mełapart, an enigmatic Armenian, whose identity still puzzles scholars. On Yakob's *Songbook*: M. PIFER, Reading Hakob Meghapart's *Songbook* (Venice 1513/1514). On Middle Armenian and the First Printed Book of Armenian Poetry. *Turcica* 54 (2023) 287–324.

[2] B. POHL, Robert of Torigni's "pragmatic literacy": some theoretical considerations. *Tabularia* 2022, 1–29; https://doi.org/10.4000/tabularia.5576 (last access: 05-01-2026).

[3] The bibliography on *Barlaam* and *Bilawhar* is extensive and multifaceted. Useful bibliographical references can be found in: D. GIMARET, *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būdāsaf*, Beyrouth 1972; P. ALMOND, The Buddha of Christendom: A Review of the Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat. *Religious Studies* 23 (1987) 391–406; *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, vol. VI/I. Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria). Einführung*, hrsg. von R. Volk (*Patristische Texten und Studien 61*). Berlin – New York 2009; C. CORDONI, Barlaam und Josaphat in der europäischen Literatur des Mittelalters. Berlin – Boston 2014, 5–56; *Storia di Barlaam e Ioasaf. La Vita bizantina del Buddha*, a cura di P. Cesaretti e S. Ronchey. Torino 2012, IX–CXXIV (Introduzione). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the recent collaborative research project on 'Barlaam and Josaphat in Arabic Literature and Culture' based at the University of St. Andrews under the direction of Kirill Dmitriev and Bilal Orfali: https://barlaamandjosaphat.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/bibliography/ (last access: 07.05.2025).

[4] Fundamental studies on the historical and social context of this period are still G. DÉDÉYAN, Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés. Étude sur les pouvoirs arméniens dans le Proche-Orient méditerranéen (1068–1150). Lisbonne 2003; and C. MUTAFIAN, La Cilicie au carrefour des Empires. Paris 1988. On the application of the term "Mediterranean Armenia" to describe medieval Armenian statehood in Cilicia: S. GRIGORYAN, Les Arméniens et les Francs : étude historique et géographique de la noblesse et de son implantation dans l'Arménien méditerranéenne. Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 2021, thèse de doctorat, 57, 119–131. I wish to express gratitude to Samvel Grigoryan for providing me with his PhD thesis.

[5] For a discussion of the political and social intentions, goals and motivations that underlined the Pahlawuni dynasty's enterprise of patronizing the literary revival of early Christian models of renunciation and Christian behaviour: B. CONTIN, New Topographies of Belonging: Sharing Stories and Myths of Conversion and Sanctity in Twelfth Century Cilicia Armenia, in: Connected Revivals? Transregional Perspectives on the Syriac, Copto-Arabic and Armenian Cultural Renaissances

stories of ascetic princes and young aristocrats exhibit narratological features characteristic of hagiographic literature. However, compared to the lives of early Christian and late-antique saints and martyrs, which amassed collections of feasts (*tōnakank'*) and martyrologies (*vkayabank'*), menologies and synaxaria (*yaysmawurk'*), homiliaries (*čaṙəntir*), religious miscellanies (*žołovacu*) and *Apophthegmata*, the cycle of narratives referring to 'converted princes' is marked by specific textual peculiarities (see, infra)[6]. According to these features, four stories or characters can be distinguished that belong to the specific literary subgenre of the 'ascetic princes' cycle: John the Voluntary Pauper (*BHO* 499); Nersēh, son of the Romans' King (*BHO* 805); Alek'sios/Alek'sianos (*BHO* 43–44); and the anonymous son of the Roman king (*BHO* 1024)[7]. The story of Bar(a)łam (Barlaam) the ascetic, who converted the Indian prince Yovasap' (Ioasaph/Josaphat), thereby triggering the spread of Christianity across India, also belongs to the 'ascetic princes' cycle.

However, the Christian story of Buddha, *Barlaam*, differs from the aforementioned tales of 'ascetic princes' in that the textual structure of the former is closer to that of mirrors for princes (*specula principum* or *Fürstenspiegel*), an overarching term for a wide range of texts offering ethical and political advices to kings, rulers and high-rank administrators with the virtues that they were expected to be endowed with to be(come) good governors[8]. Moreover, *Barlaam* differs from the aforementioned 'ascetic princes' cycle in that it features story elements closer to the style and motifs of medieval fiction than to the structure of medieval hagiography[9]. Nevertheless, several features that form the basis of the narrative in the 'ascetic princes' literature can also be found in *Barlaam*, as well. Both narrative types—the ascetic princes and *Barlaam*—display traits that are either typological or anti-typological.

1. The initial character is either an infertile royal or aristocratic couple (e.g., in *Nersēh*, *the anonymous Son of the Roman King*, and *Alek'sios/Alek'sianos*) or a monarch with no heir (in *Barlaam*). In the former case, the king or the couple is depicted as being pious and generous

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(Eleventh-Fourteenth Centuries), ed. by B. Contin – A. Croq – A. Pirtea. Turnhout (forthcoming). On the life and activities of Catholicos Grigor Pahlawuni Vkayasēr: A. Kapoïan-Kouymjian, Le Catholicos Grégoire le Martyrophile (Vkayasēr) et ses pérégrinations. *Bazmavēp* 132 (1975) 306–325; A. Kapoïan-Kouymjian, L'Egypte vue par les Arméniens (XI–XVII siècles). Paris 1988; P. Berjekian, A Sermon Concerning Insults and Observing Sunday by Catholicos Grigor II Vkayasēr, M.A. Thesis (unpublished). Hebrew University 2009, 13–39; C. Mutafian, L'Arménie du Levant (XI^{e}-XIV^{e} siècle), Tome I. Paris 2012, 478–479.

[6] On the process of formation and development of the saints' feasts in Armenian liturgical calendar: J. Mécérian, Introduction à l'étude des Synaxaires arméniens (*Yaysmawurk'*). *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Jospeh* 30 (1953), fasc. 4, Bulletin arménologique, II, 99–178; P. Muradian, Urwagic hayoc' srbaxōsakan žaṙangut'ean [Overview of the Heritage of Armenian Hagiography]. *Ganjasar Theological Review* 7 (2002) 87–95.

[7] The stories of all these 'princes' were published by Fr. Mkrtič' Awgerean in his complete edition of the *Lives of the Fathers*: *Vark' srboc' haranc' ew k'ałak'akanut'iwnk' noc'in əst krkin t'argmanut'ean naxneac'* [Lives of the Saint Fathers and Their Civic Behaviours According to a New Translation of the Ancients], 2 vols., ed. by M. Awgerean. San Lazzaro, Venice 1855. Even though Awgerean's edition is still fundamental as reference publication in Armenian hagiography, there are obvious deficiencies that rely on the scholar's contemporary philological methodology and the limited access to manuscript catalogues and sources. Awgerean's edition is based on manuscripts that were held at the library of the Mekhitarist Monastery in San Lazzaro at that time. Unfortunately, Awgerean does not mention the manuscripts he used in his edition, making it difficult to identify the codices he used.
For a recent overview of the state-of-the-art on Armenian hagiography: P. Cowe, Armenian Hagiography, in: Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography, ed. by S. Efthymiadis, vol. 1. Aldershot 2011, 299–322; R. Pane, L'agiografia armena. Tematiche e prospettive di ricerca. *Rassegna degli Armenisti Italiani* XXII (2022–2023) 63–75.

[8] For a recent study on the circulation of this kind of literature in late medieval and early modern Western Europe and in the East: A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature (*Reading Medieval Sources* 7), ed. N-L. Perret – S. Péquignot. Leiden – Boston 2023.

[9] C. Cupane – B. Krönung, Introduction. Medieval Fictional Storytelling in the Eastern Mediterranean (8th–15th centuries AD): Historical and Cultural Context, in: Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean, ed. by C. Cupane – B. Krönung (eds.) (*Brill's Companion to the Byzantine World* 1). Leiden – Boston 2016, 1–17.

towards the poor and foreigners. In the latter case, the king of India, the father of Ioasaph, is praised for his glory and beauty but criticised for his idolatry and harshness.

2. The main hero hero (*Nersēh*, *Alek'sios/Alek'sianos, John the Voluntary Pauper*, *Ioasaph*) receives a secular (courtly) or spiritual education and is sometimes endowed with talents and sensitivity.
3. Unexpected encounter with an anti-trickster (usually, an ascetic) and conversion to a life of deprivation (*Nersēh*, *John the Voluntary Pauper*, and *Ioasaph*).
4. Withdrawal from the court and/or the city to the desert (or to a holy city as in the case of *John the Voluntary Pauper*), followed by the ascetic prince's eventual return from the desert to the city.

Narratives of 'ascetic princes' gradually entered Armenian hagiography from the eleventh to twelfth century. This is evident in a late eleventh century collection of sermons and homilies (*čaŕənt-tir*; manuscript V209, formerly numbered 991). So far, this is one of the earliest witnesses to the circulation of 'ascetic princes' literature (ff. 265r–273r). Closer examination reveals that the anonymous son of the Roman king in the V209 *čaŕəntir* may be identified with Alēk'sios/Alek'sianos (Alexios in Greek), otherwise known as the Man of God (*ayr Astucoy*, in later manuscripts *mard Astucoy*, corresponding to the Syriac *gabrā d-alāhā*)[10]. The anonymous prince is in fact described as the son of Op'omianos and Naxlais (Axlayis)[11], indicating ties with Euphemianus and Aglais—the names of Alexios' parents in the Greek tradition[12]. Yet, late medieval and early modern Armenian manuscripts contain two different versions of the story of the anonymous son of the Roman king, suggesting two underlying models. In a recent article, Anna Rogozhina showed that two versions of Alek'sianos were transmitted in Armenian: a shorter version and a longer version. She argued that the former depended on a late ninth-tenth century Constantinopolitan Greek redaction, while the latter relied on a sixth-century Syriac Vorlage[13]. The same hypothesis may also be valid for other stories in the 'ascetic princes' cycle but needs of course to be tested.

Regarding the anonymous son of the Roman king, it is reasonable to assume the existence of two underlying literary models, a Greek one and a Syriac one. The colophon of Gagik, who claims to have translated the tales of the anonymous son of the Roman king and *Nersēh* from Syriac into Armenian, confirms the influence of the Syriac tradition on literary developments in this specific subgenre of ascetic literature[14]. Further research is needed to establish the genealogy of the stories belonging to the Armenian 'ascetic princes' cycle and their textual interdependence. The circulation of

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[10] Cf. G. SCARCIA, Storia di Josaphat senza Barlaam (*Medioevo Romanzo e Orientale Testi* 4). Catanzaro 1998, 37.

[11] Naxlais is a corrupted form of Axlayis, which is reported as name of Alek'sianos' mother in the 1855 edition of the *Lives of the Saint Fathers*: AWGEREAN, Lives (see n. 6) 138.

[12] In other manuscripts, the name of the prince's mother is not provided and the father's one is spelled in another manner, namely Ep'emianos (Եփեմիանոս) or Efemianos (Եֆեմիանոս), possibly indicating a different underlying Greek redaction or simply showing different renderings of the Greek name according to geographically or chronologically different but coexisting spellings of Greek names. It is worth mentioning that, in the manuscripts containing the story of Alek'sianos/-Alēk'sios that I was able to examine, the name of the saint's father is Ep'remianos. The same Ep'remianos is mentioned as Alek'sianos' father in manuscript M2711 (f. 478v), a miscellany copied in 1480 at the monastery of Varag (lake of Van, Vaspurakan). The 'Sebaste' synaxarium, copied in 1302, reports the story of *John the Voluntary Pauper*, describing him as son of Ewtrop'imos (W1048, f. 190r). Łazar, scribe and priest active in the city of Sebastia/Sebaste, decided to integrate the copy he had of the Armenian recension of the *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, realized by Yovsēp' Kostandnupawlsec'i in 991/992 (as the initial colophon by Yovsēp' himself attests), into his recension of the synaxarium, preserving thereby the earliest surviving witness to the phenomenon of acculturation of Greek hagiography to Armenian world: N. AKINIAN, Yovsēp' Kostandnupōlsec'i t'argmanič' yaysmawurk'i (991) [Yovsēp' of Constantinople, translator of the Synaxarium (991)]. *Handēs Amsōreay* 1–2 (1957) 1–12: 12.

[13] A. ROGOZHINA, The Anonymous Saint in the Armenian Tradition. Alexi(an)os the Voluntary Pauper or the Anonymous 'Man of God'? *Armeniaca. International Journal of Armenian Studies* 1 (2022) 39–48: 40–41. The scholar's study is a very preliminary introduction to the Armenian Alexianos and her conclusions are not grounded on a convincing analysis of the textual material at hand.

[14] For instance, the colophon is found in manuscripts: W279 (y. 1640), f. 366v; W66 (y. 1644), f. 422v; M1982 (y. 1699), f. 214r.

both a shorter and a longer version of the same fictional narrative implies its polygenetic transmission and reception, and therefore the existence of multiple literary worlds or literary communities within the same language area. The co-existence of two recensions originating from different linguistic and cultural background suggests different contexts of production and reception, raising compelling questions about the target audience and their expectations, as well as the background of the production.

This model of polygenetic literary transmission may prove to be valid for the Armenian version of the *Barlaam-Roman*, as well. The fact that units and/or story fragments of these texts were transformed into ballads and songs and included in songbooks for a lay urban audience of professionals and artisans, who possibly listened to storytellers at private gatherings, testifies to the multilayered paths of circulation of narratives belonging to the 'ascetic princes' cycle[15]. Notably, the stories of Barałam and Alek'sios—two characters associated with the typological model of the man of God of Edessean-Antiochene provenance—became so popular that they were integrated into the literary genre of popular poetry. This is evidenced by *Tał i veray Yovasap'u t'agawori ordwoy t'agaworin Hndkac' Abeneray* ("Ode to King Yovasap', Son of Abener King of India") by Arak'ēl Bałišec'i (1380–1454) and the *Tał Alek'sanos čgnaworin* ("Ode to Ascetic Alek'sanos") by Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i (c. 1450–1535).

2. THE SHORT ARMENIAN BJ AND ITS BAGRATID COMMISSIONER: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE DATE OF COMPOSITION

At the end of the nineteenth century, Francis Conybeare and Mesrop Tēr-Movsēsian investigated the Armenian BJ (hereafter referred to as the *ArmBJ*)[16]. Conybeare examined the short recension of the *ArmBJ* in several codices, including a fifteenth-century menologium (*yaysmawurk'*/յայսմաւրք) held at the Mekhitarist Library of St. Lazzaro in Venice—the oldest manuscript available to him at that time. In contrast, Tēr-Movsēsian studied a longer version of the *ArmBJ*, relying on an early fourteenth-century manuscript formerly held at the Catholicosate Library of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Etchmiadzin[17]. There are some inaccuracies in Conybeare's study that are worth pointing out. Firstly, the scholar does not provide the number of the Venetian manuscript he used, merely stating that it was a menologium dated to 1440. However, an accurate survey of the Mekhitarist Library catalogue in San Lazzaro reveals no trace of any menologia containing the short *ArmBJ* dating back to 1440. During my own inspection at the Mekhitarist Library, I came across another manuscript: V 1382, a synaxarion copied by a married priest named Łazar in the Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Erznka (Erzincan) in 909 of the Armenian era (1462 AD)[18]. By comparing Conybeare's edition with the text in V1382, it can be assumed that Conybeare used this manuscript[19].

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[15] B. CONTIN, Elite Multilingualism or Elite Multilingual Franca? Assessing the Production and Circulation of Manuscript Prayer-Songbooks within the Armenian Communities of Caffa and Lvov (16th–17th cc.). *Medieval Worlds* (forthcoming).

[16] F. C. CONYBEARE, The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend in the Ancient Georgian and Armenian Literatures. *Folklore,* 7/2 (1896) 101–142; M. TĒR-MOVSĒSIAN, *Nkaragrut'iwn hogeworakan varuc' Yovsap'u ordwoy t'agaworin Hndkac' greal Yovhannu krawnawori* [Description of the Spiritual Life of Yovsap', son of the king of India, penned by the ascetic Yovhannēs]. Vagharshapat 1898.

[17] TĒR-MOVSĒSIAN, *Description* xxxvii. The manuscript Etchmiadzin 634 (y. 1322) examined by the scholar was formerly catalogued as miscellany (*žołovacu*). It could not check if the manuscript is still in the Etchmiadzin collection or has been transferred to the Matenadaran collection at some point during the Soviet period.

[18] In my survey, I examined the fifth volume of the Grand Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Mekhitarist Library in Venice by Fr. Sahak Čemčemian (San Lazzaro, Venice 1995), as well as the second volume of the same Catalogue by Fr. Barseł Sargisian (San Lazzaro, Venice 1924), which, contrary to the former, has no index to facilitate the search.

[19] The short *ArmBJ* is contained in the following manuscripts: V 1382 (copied in Erznka in 1460, *yaysmawurk'*, complete: ff. 687v–702r); V 143 (y. 1463, *yaysmawurk'*, ff. 684v–700r), V 224 (y. 1491, *yaysmawurk'*; defective, ff. 557r–567r); V 279 (y. 1441, *yaysmawurk'*, ff. 597v–613v); V1136 (y. 1541, ff. 477v–489r); V1160 (y. 1563, ff. 478r–486r); V1378 (y. 1581,

Alternatively, it could be supposed that the manuscript, which was available to Conybeare when he surveyed the monastery's library in the 1880s, was subsequently lost or misdated by the scholar himself[20]. In any case, Conybeare's interpretation of the manuscript's colophon is problematic. The colophon is very brief and provides minimal information on the historical context. It reads as follows:

> Thus, until today God performs many miracles in answer to the prayers of those who live in the land of India. I, As<a>t, a sinful servant of God, have shortened and translated <this history> into Armenian with great effort and labour through the patronage of a noble prince. For through their [i.e., Bar(a)łam and Yovasap'] life of abstinence and endurances the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are glorified now and ever. Amen[21].

Based on this limited information, Conybeare argues that the patronage of the short *ArmBJ*, rendered into Armenian from an unspecified original text by a certain Asat (Asad), is to be attributed to a Bagratid prince[22]. However, the colophon is generic and neither gives the patron's personal name nor identifies him as a Bagratid. Two years after Conybeare's study, in 1898, Tēr-Movsēsian somehow confirmed the scholar's claim. In fact, Tēr-Movsēsian reported that in a single manuscript, namely Etchmiadzin 1755 (y. 1441, copied in Tayšoł, on the southern shores of Lake Van), the colophon of the short redaction attributes the patronage to a Bagratid prince[23]. The colophon of the Etchmiadzin manuscript lends weight to Conybeare's suggestion that the short *ArmBJ* was patronised by a Bagratid, as the patron of the text is identified as an honourable Bagratid prince (*išxan*). However, who might this unnamed *išxan* be and might identifying him help us to date the short *ArmBJ*?

The term *išxan* is found in earliest Armenian sources to describe the *naxarars*, or lords of high noble families, in Arsacid Armenia. From the sixth century onwards, it began to be used to describe a more institutionalised role: that of presiding prince or governor-in-chief. This title was granted by either the Byzantines or the Sasanians, depending on the circumstances[24]. From the seventh to the

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ff. 683v–700r); V1812 (y. 1581, ff. 628r–642v). I would like to express my deep gratitude to Father Vahan Ohanian and Father Hamazasp Keshishian for their helpful support and assistance in my survey.

[20] Cf. Tēr-Movsēsian, *Description* xlvi.

[21] V1382, f. 702r: Եւ մինչեւ ցայսաւր բազում հրաշս առնէ ա<ստուա>ծ աղաւթիւք ն<ո>ց<ա> յաշխարհին հնդկաց: Զոր եւ ես ասատ մեղաւոր ծառայս ա<ստուծո>յ բ<ա>զ<ո>ւմ աշխատութ<եամ<բ եւ ջանիւ փոքր ի շատէ ծայրաքաղարարեալ թարգմանեցի զայս ի հայ բարբառ. Զեռամբ իշխանի միոյ պատուաւորի: Վասն որոյ ի ձեռն նոցին ճգնութե<ան> եւ հաճոյական վարուց փառաւորի հայր եւ որդի եւ սուրբ հոգին: Այժմ եւ միշտ եւ յապագայն յաւիտեանս յաւիտենից: Ամէն:
Conybeare does not report the Armenian colophon. What I reproduced here is the colophon of manuscript V1382 that, most likely, is the same manuscript used by Conybeare. All translations are by Benedetta Contin unless otherwise stated.

[22] Conybeare, The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend 112.

[23] Tēr-Movsēsian, *Description* xxxv. A couple of years before Tēr-Movsēsean, Nikolai Marr conducted research on the Armenian BJ and reported the results of his fieldwork on Armenian manuscripts: "While describing the manuscripts of the Sevan Monastery, I checked the Armenian synaxaria for a prose version of the *Barlaam and Ioasaph*. Of the nine manuscripts (numbers 32–40) <catalogued as synaxaria>, it turned out that the story had been preserved in three (33, 35 and 37). Of these, the latter is not complete, which, judging by the record, is due to a defect in the original manuscript from which it was copied. The other manuscripts do not contain this story, perhaps only because their final parts are defective. I would like to note that in the more ancient Armenian handwritten *yaysmawurk's*, also known as Մայր Յայսմաւուրք, to which the Sevan manuscripts also belong, the Story of Barlaam and Ioasaph is usually placed at the end as an appendix. At the end of the story in two Sevan manuscripts, there is an entry with the name of the author of the Armenian version of the story; this entry is even better preserved at the end of the same story in the Etchmiadzin manuscript number 1755, which was written in 1441. It should also be noted that in two illustrated manuscripts, numbers 33 and 35, in the margins, next to the text of the Story, there is an image of the Indian prince Ioasaph": N. Marr, Summer Trip to Armenia: Notes and extracts from Armenian manuscripts (in Russian). Saint Petersburg 1891, 2–3. Once again, I want to acknowledge the work of my colleague Samvel Grigoryan who provided me with the Russian extracts of Marr's book and a draft translation of the passages at hand from Russian into English.

[24] There are varied terms used to define this administrative service according to historical and geographical circumstances. The term *išxan* is an Armenian title equivalent to the Sasanian *marzpān* and to the Byzantine *patrik* or *patrikios kouropalates*. Since the fall of the Arsacid dynasty in Persarmenia (428), the office of *marzpān* was in the hands of Persian governors,

ninth century, the title of presiding 'prince' was primarily awarded to two prominent noble families: the Mamikonians and the Bagratids[25]. The Etchmiadzin colophon's mention of the genealogical affiliation of the short *ArmBJ*'s princely commissioner could provide evidence to establish a *terminus post quem* for the short *ArmBJ*. The Mamikonian noble family declined completely after 775, when Artawazd and Mušeł acted against the Caliph's appointed prince of Armenia (*išxan Hayoc'*) Ašot Bagratuni, son of Sahak. Therefore, it would have been highly unlikely that the Caliphate would recognise the leadership of those who had twice rebelled against its governorship of Armenia. Following the Mamikonian revolts of the eighth century, the Bagratid family rose to institutional and administrative power, gaining growing political authority and territorial control over Tarōn from the eighth century onwards. By the ninth century, the Bagratids had become so influential and powerful that they were recognised as legitimate rulers of Greater Armenia by Baghdād and Constantinople. Therefore, the ninth century seems to be a reliable *terminus post quem* for the short *ArmBJ.* Unfortunately, this scanty inference is not very useful for drawing any firm conclusions about the date of composition of the short *ArmBJ.* Another interpretation of the colophon may shed light on the date and milieu of the text's production. Given that the names of patrons are usually found in the colophons of late medieval manuscripts, we can argue that if the short *ArmBJ* had been written during the Bagratid period (ninth-eleventh century), the author would most likely have addressed his mentor by name rather than generically as a certain Bagratid prince. Of course, drawing conclusions from the mention of the Bagratid name in only one manuscript with no further identifying information, calls the veracity of any inference into question. Yet, manuscript Etchmiadzin 1755 is one of the earliest manuscripts of the short *ArmBJ*, if not the earliest, and its peculiarity in connotating the honourable commissioner of the text as a Bagratid prince is significant. During the period of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and in the aftermaths of its fall (1375), local wealthy and noble families ruled in Eastern Armenia and the Armeno-Georgian lands. These lands were either under Georgian rulership or under the Turkic emirates of the Kara-Koyunlu and of the Ak-Koyunlu. Significantly, the name Asat and its two close variants Asad and Asat' are attested in Armenian onomastic between the early thirteenth and the late fourteenth centuries, almost exclusively in the regions of Vaspurakan, Tarōn/Turuberan and in the region of Vayoc' Jor and Šahpunik' (Naxchevan), where the noble Xałbeank'-Přošeank' dynasty controlled the territory as vassal of the Zak'arians/Mkhargrdzeli[26]. Even though evidence from prosopography is important in providing clues as to the place and date of production of the short *ArmBJ*, further research into the use and frequency of the title *išxan* in written sources from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, particularly in colophons and epigraphic material, would help to elucidate the relationship between the short *ArmBJ* and his patrons, shedding light on literary and cultural patronage in the eastern regions of Armenia during the thirteen and fourteenth centuries[27]. For now, it is worth noting that prosopography provides evidence

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while starting from the late 630s the service passed to the Armenians with the establishment of David Sahaŕuni as prince of Armenia: Sebēos, *Patmut'iwn Sebēosi* [History of Sebēos], ed. G. V. ABGARYAN. Erevan 1979, 133:24–34 (chapter 41). Cf. Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'iwn tiezerakan*. St. Petersburg 1885[2], 86 (English translation: The *Universal History* of Step'anos Tarōnec'i. Introduction, Translation and Commentary by T. GREENWOOD. Oxford 2017, 155).

[25] For a recent historical analysis of the caliphal governance over the northern provinces of the Empire: A. VACCA, Non-Muslim Provinces Under Early Islam. Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania. New York, NY 2017, 125–128. Cf. also, C. TOUMANOFF, Introduction to Christian Caucasian History: II: States and Dynasties of the Formative Period. *Traditio* 17 (1961) 1–106.

[26] H. AČARYAN, Hayoc' anjnanunneri baŕaran [Armenian Prosopographical Dictionary]. Erevan 1942, 219–220; G. YOVSĒP'IAN (Hovsep'yan), Xałbakyank' kam Přošyank' hayoc' patmut'yan meǰ [The Khaghbakians or Proshians in Armenian History]. Vagharshapat 1928, 293 (vol. 1).

[27] Recently, a very stimulating study in this direction has been carried out for the thirteenth century, showing that the title *išxan* was held by the Zak'arians, the Khaghbakians, the Orbelians, as well as by the Het'umids of Lambron and by some minor aristocratic families of Armenian-populated urban centres such as, for instance, Kharpet/Xarberd: A. VARDANYAN, Žamanaki k'ałak'akan ənkalumə 11–13 dareri hayoc' vimagrerum ev hišatakarannerum [The Political Perception of Time in 11th–13th Century Armenian Epigraphy and Manuscript Colophons]. *History and Culture* 2/20 (2023) 8–17: 10.

suggesting that the short *ArmBJ* was written in the early thirteenth century or later. The mention of a Bagratid commissioner may indicate an attempt to legitimise Asat's endeavours in creating a shortened Armenian version of the Saga by leveraging a Bagratid connection and prestigious memory.

2.1 The ArmBJ's Chronology and Genealogy

Establishing the dates of composition for the long and the short versions of *ArmBJ* is also significant for identifying their genealogy of both versions and their ties with other Eastern Christian and non-Christian saga narratives, such as Georgian, Greek, Persian, Arabic, Jewish and Ethiopic versions. It is worth noting that, of these versions, only Arabic, Georgian and Armenian have a long and a short redaction that have come down to us in complete form. Scholarly attention to the Georgian tradition of the saga grew in the twentieth century when the *Balavariani* (*recensio longior*) was identified as the *Vorlage* of the Greek Byzantine *Barlaam* (BHG 224; hereafter *Barlaam*). The *Balavariani* possibly depends on a lost eighth-century Arabic version (*Kitāb Bilawhar wa Bûdâsaf*, hereafter *Kitāb*), which is also considered the source of the long recension of the Arabic narrative of the saga as published by an Ismaili publishing house in Bombay in 1889 (*Kitāb Bilawhar wa Bûdâsaf*, hereafter *Bilawhar*)[28]. The eighth-century Arabic version, which, according to Ibn al-Nadīm's Catalogue (*Fihrist*), was produced by Ibn Muqaffa' and his school, was translated from a middle-Persian version of the saga[29]. Essentially, the Arabic version has come down to us in three different versions: two old non-Christian recensions and a more recent Christian recension, while there exist two fragments of an abridged version of the long non-Christian recension[30]. Of the two extant non-Christian recensions, one is the *Bilawhar* and the other is a short version preserved in a treatise of the influential Twelver-Shiite author Ibn Bābūyah (d. 991; hereafter, *Būdāsaf*). The *Balavariani* introduces textual innovations which are not recorded in the Arabic *Bilawhar* and suggests that the Georgian long recension depends most likely on the lost eighth-century *Kitāb*. The *Balavariani* was produced between the ninth and the tenth centuries, while the *Wisdom of Balahvar* (*recensio brevior*; hereafter, *Wisdom*) is an abridged redaction of the former and was composed later as manuscript evidence confirms. The oldest surviving manuscripts of the short and long recensions were discovered in the library of the Greek Patriarchate in Jerusalem. In this collection, the *Balavariani* is contained within a single manuscript, the Codex Georg. 140, copied between 1060 and 1070. The *Wisdom*, meanwhile, is attested in two codices dating back to a period between the thirteenth or fourteenth century[31]. It has therefore been assumed that the former was composed between the ninth and the tenth centuries, while the latter was prepared at some point later between the tenth and the eleventh centuries. As for the authorship of the Byzantine *Barlaam*, also known as the *Edifying Story* (ιστορία ψυχωφελὴς), there are two main views. According to the first, the Byzantine *Barlaam* was composed by the Georgian monk Euthymius the Hagiorite (ca. 955–1028), who reworked the narrative from either the *Balavariani*[32] or the version of the saga arranged by his elder fellow Simeon the Metaphrast (d. 987), which has been identified by Robert Volk as 'Familie A'[33]. The other view is that, for its stylistic and linguistic

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[28] The long recension of the Arabic non-Christian version of the Saga was republished in critical edition by Daniel Gimaret in 1972. On the presumed Ismaili background of this recension: F. DE BLOIS, On the Sources of the Barlaam Romance, or: How the Buddha became a Christian Saint, in: Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mitteliranischer Zeit. Kolloqium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Werner Sundermann, hrsg. von D. Durkin-Meisterernst – C. Reck – D. Weber. Wiesbaden 2009, 7–26.

[29] IBN AL-NADĪM, Fihrist, 305 (ed. by G. Flügel, *Kitab al-Fihrist*. Leipzig 1872).

[30] D. GIMARET, Le livre de Bilawhar et Būḏāsf selon la version arabe ismaélienne. Geneva – Paris 1971, 25–27.

[31] I. ABULADZE, Introduction 23–24. In: The Balavariani (Barlaam and Josaphat). A Tale from the Christian East Translated from the Old Georgian by D. M. LANG, Berkley – Los Angeles 1966, 26.

[32] LANG, The Wisdom XXXI–XXXIII; ABULADZE, The Balavariani 30.

[33] Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, vol. VI/I. Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria). Einführung, ed. by R. VOLK (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 61). Berlin – New York 2009, 75, 142, 583–594. Cf. also J. GROSSMAN, Die Abhängigkeit der Vita des Barlaam und Ioasaph vom Menologion des Symeon Metaphrastes. *JÖB* 59 (2009) 87–94;

characteristics, the Greek *Barlaam* was written at the time of John of Damascus (d. 750), or before the ninth century at the latest[34].

As for the Armenian tradition, Conybeare maintained that the short *ArmBJ* was rendered from an alleged Syriac version and not from a Greek and probably circulated among the Armenian readers long before the fifteenth century, when it would have been integrated into Armenian hagiographic literature. Conybeare considered the short *ArmBJ* as a tenth century rendering of a Syriac *Vorlage*, by relying on scanty linguistic data. In his view, the use of the participle for the finite verb, as well as of the term *xasliat'*, which would have corresponded to the Syriac 'deficiency' (see, infra), were distinctive markers of a Syriac influence[35]. Conybeare's hypothesis is weak, for the scholar's conclusions are based on general features that do not forcibly indicate a Syriac underlying model for the Armenian.

Regardless of Conybeare's opinion, it is evident that the short *ArmBJ* exhibits the linguistic characteristics of medieval vernacular Armenian, whereas the long recension is more sophisticated and thus closer to the standard literary language[36]. The 'editor' of the short recension uses Arabic words to either strengthen the meaning of related Armenian terms, such as, for instance, the Arabic *haram* (حرم, meaning 'forbidden, prohibited, iniquitous') accompanying the Armenian *dařn* (դառն, meaning 'bitter') in the long *ArmBJ*, or to clarify the meaning of typical Armenian expressions, such as the term *xasiat'* (խասիաթ), derived from the Arabic *ḫāṣṣiyya* (خاصّية, meaning 'distinctiveness, quality'), replacing the Armenian *zays uni* (զայս ունի, meaning '[it] has this') in the long *ArmBJ*. Conybeare had already identified these few words, even though he misread and misinterpreted the term *xasiat'* as *xasliat'*. These terms entered Armenian literary language in the late medieval period, appearing for the first time in late twelfth century literary sources. This points to the twelfth century as a reliable *terminus post quem* for the composition of the short *ArmBJ*[37]. Conybeare's hypothesis that the short *ArmBJ* was produced in the tenth century due to its linguistic peculiarities appears therefore untenable, despite being reasonable from historical and socio-cultural perspectives. The period between the tenth and the eleventh centuries was indeed a time of great productivity in terms of Arabic-Armenian literary and cultural exchanges. During the later period of the Armenian Bagratuni minor kingdoms (tenth-eleventh cc.), the Arabic language began to influence the native idiom for various social, political and cultural reasons[38]. At the Bagratuni courts, the practice of rendering Arabic literature into Armenian is attested by the extant Armenian redactions of several tales belonging to the *Book of The Thousand and One Nights* and the Armenian only extant version of the *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John* by Nonnus of Nisibis, compiled in the mid-ninth

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C. HØGEL, Euthymios the Athonite, Greek-Georgian and Georgian-Greek translator and Metaphrast?, in: Mélanges Bernard Flusin, ed. by A. Binggeli – V. Déroche – M. Stavrou. Paris 2020, 353–364.

[34] A. KAZHDAN – L. F. SHERRY – Ch. ANGELIDI, A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850) (*The National Hellenic Research Foundation. Institute for Byzantine Research. Research Series* 2). Athens 1999, 1206–1207; W. J. AERTS, Überlegung zur Sprache und Zeit der Abfassung des griechischen Romans Barlaam und Josaphat, in: Begegnungen des Westens mit dem Osten, hrsg. von O. Engels – P. Schreiner (*Kölner Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*). Sigmaringen 1993, 364.

[35] Conybeare reads *xasliat'*, suggesting that the word derives from the Syriac 'deficiency' and arguing for a dependence of the Armenian short redaction on a Syriac lost version: CONYBEARE, The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend 117 and 135–6. Yet, closer examination of manuscript V1382 shows that the word is not *xasliat'* but *xasiat'*, which clearly derives from Arabic: MS V1382, folio 690r: Այլ արդ՝ խնդրեցեր տեսանել զպատուական մարգարիտն իմ: Եւ նա յետ ամէն զօրութեանց իւրոց. զայս ունի խասիաթ, որ հիւանդ հոգւով, զնա տեսանել որ ոչ կարէ [Thus, you asked to see my precious pearl. But <you should know that> apart from all its powers, it has a distinctive quality, for that one who has a ill soul is not allowed to see it]. Cf. TĒR-MOVSĒSIAN, Description xli.
An overview of the *vexata quaestio* concerning the existence of a lost Syriac *Vorlage* is offered in: CORDONI, Barlaam und Josaphat 35–37.

[36] H. AČARYAN, *Hayoc' lezvi patmut'yun* [History of the Armenian Language]. Erevan 1951, II, 226–54: 249.

[37] Cf. *Mijin hayereni baŕaran* [Dictionary of Middle Armenian], ed. by R. S. ŁAZARYAN – H. M. AVETISYAN. Erevan 2009, s. v. 'haram' and 'xasiat''.

[38] AČARYAN, *History* 169–217; R. W. THOMSON, Arabic in Armenia Before the Tenth Century. *TM* 18 (= Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé, ed. by A. Mardirossian – A. Ouzounian – C. Zuckermann; 2014) 691–706.

century[39]. Historiographies and colophons show that the activity of rendering texts from Arabic into Armenian was particularly effervescent in the courts of David III of Tayk‘/Tao Kouropalatês (d. 1000–1001) and Gagik-Abas of Kars[40]. It would be very tempting to assume that the short *ArmBJ* was composed within the former’s court. Yet, caution is required in the absence of a comparative study of the short *ArmBJ*, the Georgian recensions and the Arabic *Bilawhar*. The court of David the Curopalates was certainly a polyglot environment in which Georgian, Greek, Armenian and Arabic were all spoken and used for diplomacy and literature. It is worth mentioning that Euthymius’ father, John Varazvache, served David and was related to Yovhannēs T‘ornik, the Armeno-Georgian chief of the Curopalates’ troops who fought against the rebel Bardas Skleros at the battle of Pankaleia in 979[41]. This milieu may have provided the editor of the short *ArmBJ*, Asat, with suitable conditions and could also explain the similarities between this recension, the Arabic *Bilahwar* and the Georgian *Balavariani*. However, David’s court is not the only multilingual (or bordering) cultural and geographical space that could have offered an ideal setting for the composition of such a multilayered recension. Assuming , as I do, that the short *ArmBJ* was produced between the twelfth and the thirteen centuries (see, infra) would also imply that the most appropriate ambience for its composition would be a court or an urban centre in the eastern Armenian and Armeno-Georgian lands (Vayoc‘ Jor, Loṙi-Tašir, Gugark‘, Samtsakhe-Javakheti, Ayrarat)[42]. By acknowledging that, in the late Middle Ages, Armeno-Georgian cultural and literary contacts entailed pro-Chalcedonian or Chalcedonian Armenian ties with the Georgian world, it may be tempting to presume that the short *ArmBJ* was the product of either a Chalcedonian Armenian or an Armeno-Georgian ambience in bordering/in-between geographical and cultural zones[43]. These presumptions are working hypotheses that need to be substantiated by further comparative research, focusing on syntactical and linguistic similarities between other Armenian translations originating in Armeno-Georgian milieus and our case-study.

Tēr-Movsesian maintained that the short *ArmBJ* was an abridgment of the long version and that the short *ArmBJ* was already circulating in the second half of the thirteenth century. As for the long *ArmBJ*, he assumed that it was composed between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. The editor of the long *ArmBJ* also underlined that the narrative structure of the parables of the long

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[39] P. MURADYAN, Patmut‘yun « Płnjē k‘ałak‘i » zroyc‘i haykakan ev vrac‘akan patumneri u nranc‘ p‘oxharaberut‘ean šurǰ [On the Armenian and Georgian Accounts of the Tale of the Bronze City and Their Interaction], *Banber Matenadarani* 6 (1962) 249–262; *Nonnus of Nisibis. Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John*, Translation of the Armenian Text with Introduction and Commentary by R. W. Thomson. Atlanta, USA 2014, xvii–xlvi.

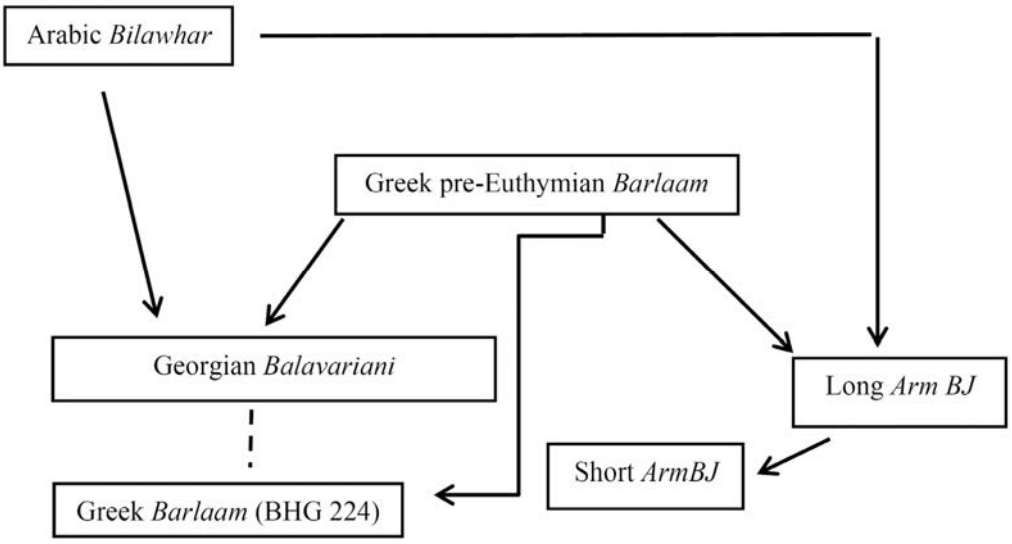
[40] That translations from Arabic into Armenian were made at the court of David of Tayk‘/Tao is witnessed, for instance, by a fourteenth century Armenian manuscript that was held at the Library of the Armenian Hospice of San Biagio in Rome: N. AKINIAN, Zroyc‘ Płnjē k‘ałak‘i [Tale of the Bronze City]. *Handēs Amsōreay* 1–4 (1958) 22–48.

[41] On T‘ornik’s origins and genealogy, it is still of fundamental importance the study of Nikolaj Adonc‘: N. ADONTZ, Tornik le Moine, *Études arméno-byzantines. Bibliothèque arménienne de la Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian*. Lisbonne 1965, 297–318. Cf. also, GRIGORYAN, Les Arméniens et les Francs 230–247.

[42] It is worth mentioning that, between 1214 and 1248, Simēon Płnjahanec‘i rendered Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, Ioane Petritsi’s *Commentary on Proclus’ Elements*, John of Damascus’ *Fount of Knowledge*, John Climacus’ *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, the *History of Georgia* (*Kartlis tskhovreba*) and the *Euchologion* from Georgian into Armenian at the monastery of Płnjahank’/Splēnjahan (nowadays, Axt‘ala in the Loṙi province) under the rulership of Ivanē At‘abeg (Zak‘arean/Mkhargrdzeli): N. AKINIAN, Simēon Płnjahanec‘i ew ir t‘argmanut‘iwnnerə vrac‘erēnē [Simēon of Płnjahank ‘ and His Translations from the Georgian] (*Azgayin Matendaran* 164). Vienna 1951, 8–9.

[43] The same dynamics of cultural in-betweenness, especially on linguistic and religious/confessional grounds, characterize not only Armeno-Georgian marchlands in the south Caucasus but also the Euphratese region in the period between the end of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries (GRIGORYAN, Les Arméniens et les Francs 119–131). This ontological condition of in-betweenness (implying discourses on self-perception and practices of identity-belonging and of identity bordering) entails a certain degree of cultural negotiation and polyvalence. For a methodological discussion of this issue: B. L. ZEKIYAN, Le croisement des cultures dans les régions limitrophes de Géorgie, d’Arménie et de Byzance. *Annali di Ca’ Foscari*, *Serie Orientale 17*, XXV/3 (1986) 81–96; B. L. ZEKIYAN, Lo studio delle interazioni politiche e culturali tra le popolazioni della Subcaucasia: alcuni problemi di metodologia e di fondo in prospettiva sincronica e diacronica, in: Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI). Atti della Quarantatreesima Settimana di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo (aprile 1995), vol. I. Spoleto 1996, 427–482.

version does not always reflect that of the Greek *Barlaam* (BHG 224). As already noted by Conybeare, the Armenian scholar noticed that the long *ArmBJ* sometimes shows more closeness to either the *Balavariani* or the *Bilawhar* than to the Greek *Barlaam*[44]. On this ground, Tēr-Movsesian argued that the long *ArmBJ* depended on a lost Greek recension[45]. A tentative reconstruction of the *ArmBJ*'s genealogy, as meant by Tēr-Movsesian, could be schematized as follows:



2.2. The long ArmBJ, its Colophon and the Viennese Manuscript 705

At the end of the long *ArmBJ*, we learn that the text was compiled by a certain Yovhannēs, whom the Greek *Barlaam* refers to as the fictional author of the tale. Unlike the Greek *Barlaam*, the Armenian text attributes authorship to a monk named John at the end of the tale rather than at the beginning, and includes details not found in the Greek tradition. The ending of the long *ArmBJ* reads as follows:

> I, Yovhannēs, the humblest of monks, went to India, saw all these things and their shrines and knelt in front of their holy relics, and blessed the Donor who allowed me to visit the resting place of these saints, who intercede for all those who believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, He deserves glory […][46].

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[44] Among the varied affinities between short *ArmBJ* and *Bilawhar*, both scholars noticed the Armenian recension's mentioning of 50 astrologers and wise men that they consider closer to the *Bilawhar*'s mentioning of 'astrologers and wise men (*'ulamā'*) By contrast, the long *ArmBJ* reports that King Abenēser gathered 55 magicians from the Chaldeans, as the Greek *Barlaam* does. It is worth noting that, in the short treatise entitled "On Advising the Youths by means of a Concise Physiology" (*Yałags xratu mankanc' suł inč' bnaxōsut'eamb*), the renowned scholar Yovhannēs Sarkawag ('The Deacon', 1045/1055–1125/29) uses the term *mamul/mamulk'* that was a 'new' Armenian loanword for the Arabic 'teacher, master' (*'ālim*, pl. *'ulemā', mu'allim, pl. mu'allamūna*): Yovahnnēs Sarkawag, Yałags xratu mankanc' suł inč' bnaxōsut'eamb (ed. A. G. Abrahamyan, Erevan 1956), 306–315: 307, l. 55. Cf. also S. Malxaseanc', Hayeren bac'atrakan baṙaran [Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Language]. Erevan 1944, *s.v. 'malum'* (*'mamul'*).

[45] Tēr-Movsēsian, Description cxiv.

[46] Tēr-Movsēsian, Description 123: Եւ զայս ամենայն ես նուաստ ի կրօնաւորս Յովհաննէս երթեալ ի Հնդիկս տեսի զգերեզման նոցա եւ երկրպագեցի սուրբ նշխարաց նոցա եւ աւրհնեցի զպարգեւողն ինձ զօրութիւն հասանել ի տեղի հանգստեան սրբոցն: Որ եւ բարեխօս իսկ են ամենայն հաւատացելոց ի Յիսուս Քրիստոս ի Տէր մեր: Ընդ որում Հօր եւ Հոգւոյն Սրբոյ վայելէ փառք […].

This ‘colophon’, which is not found in the Greek *Barlaam*, clarifies what is stated in the title of the long *ArmBJ* that reads as follows: ‘Description of the spiritual life of Yovasap‘, son of the King of India, who believed in Christ thanks to the hermit Barłam. It was written by the monk Yovhannēs <who> brought <it> to the holy city of Jerusalem’. The story of a certain monk named John of St. Saba, who brought the legend from the land of the Ethiopians, i.e., India, to Jerusalem is attested in Greek manuscripts but was apparently unknown to the Armenian tradition. However, one exception is represented by an early fifteenth century *čaṙəntir-oskep‘orik* (homiliary-miscellany[47]) that reports the Sabaite origin of John the monk[48].

The conclusion of the long *ArmBJ* that I quoted above provides readers with additional information. We learn that Yovhannēs/John undertook a long pilgrimage to India to pay tribute to the relics of Barłam and Yovasap‘at and to visit the holy places, where the saints were buried. Several questions arise from the reading of this passage: 1. What was the Armenian editor’s intention in including this information at the end of the story? Does it suggest devotional implications and the development of the cult of the saints among the Armenians? In the absence of a comprehensive study of the transmission and circulation of the long *ArmBJ*, it is difficult to estimate the impact of the legend on social practices more broadly. As in the case of Asat for the short *ArmBJ* (cf. above), prosopography could suggest that the novel became influential between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The use of the name Yovasap‘ is indeed attested in written sources from this period[49].

In the long *ArmBJ*, there is no trace of an Euthymian authorship[50]. Yet, manuscript W705 provides an alternative approach to reconstructing the reception of the *Barlaam* in Armenian. The colophon referring to the specific version of the long *ArmBJ* contained in the early fifteenth-century codex reads:

> “I, the sinful monk Yovhannēs, I went, saw and worshipped their honourable tombstone. I wrote down their God-pleasing life, so that every reader may read the four parts and sections. Amen! May the intercession of the God-pleasing men Barałam and Yovasap‘ descend upon Yakob Vardapet, Grigor the Monk, Kirakos the sinful scribe and my brother Simēon the Monk. Through the grace and benevolence of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is worthy of glory, power and honour forever and ever. I beg everybody to remember Yakob Vardapet, who with great desire and effort, collected the stories of these saints”[51].

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[47] The term *oskep’orik* means ‚gold-filled’ and indicates a sort of compendium or miscellany of religious and secular texts of varied literary genres. It became very popular from the fifteenth century onwards.

[48] Manuscript W705 (y. 1403, place of production: the Monastery of Mecanjanapat(ik‘)) reads as follows: Պատմութիւն թագաւորաց եթէովպացոց աշխարհին. Զոր հնդիկս անուանեն. Բերեալ ի ս<ուր>բ քաղաքն ե<րուսաղէ>մ Հովհաննէս կր<աւ>նաւոր. Վանաց սրբոյ սաբա [“Story of the kings of the land of the Ethiopians that is called India. John the Monk from the monastery of St. Saba brought it to the holy city of Jerusalem”] (f. 214r). It is worth underlying that this codex is the only one among those I examined to have illuminations on the margins of the manuscript folios. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Fr. Simon Balian for his assistance in consulting the manuscripts and for his unvaluable amiability over the last seven years.

[49] AČARYAN, Armenian Prosopographical 534–535.

[50] On Euthymius’ authorship: VOLK, Einführung 5–6; VOLK, From the Desert to the Holy Mountain 412–416.

[51] W705, f. 261r: Եւ զայս ես մեղաւորս Յովհաննէս, կրօն<աւ>որ, երթեալ տեսի եւ երկրպագեցի պատուական գերեզմանաց ն<ո>ց<ա>: Գրեցի եւ զա<ստուա>ծահաճոյ վարս ն<ո>ց<ա>: որոց լիցի ամենեցուն լսողաց դ մասն եւ բաժին. ամեն. եւ յակոբ վ<ա>րդ<ա>պետին եւ գր<ի>գոր կրօն<աւոր>ին. եւ ինձ մեղապարտ գրչիս կ<ի>ր<ա>կ<ո>սի եւ եղբօրն իմոյ սիմէոն կրօնաւոր> ընդ ա<ստուա>ծահաճոյ արանցն ա<ստուծո>յ. բարեխօսութեամբ բարաղամու, եւ յովասափու շնորհօք եւ մարդասիրութեամբ տեառն մերոյ եւ փրկչին յիսուսի քրիստոսի որում վայել եւ փառք իշխանութիւն եւ պատիւ>. այժմ եւ միշտ եւ յաւ<իտեանս>: Արդ աղեմ զամենեսեան կրկին յիշման արժանի առնել զյակոբ վարդապետն որ բազում փափաքմամբ եւ ջանիւք ժողովեաց զսրբոց պատմութիւնքս եւ հաւաքեաց ի միասին. […].

Kirakos the scribe tells us that the *Barałam* he copied is the result of the work of a certain Yakob Vardapet, who collected and compared various versions of the (Armenian?) saga, eventually choosing the best one. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the source language(s) of the versions that Yakob made use of. Kirakos' information implies that Yakob Vardapet had several texts at his own disposal and compared them to produce the most reliable and accurate version of the story. As manuscript W705 was copied in 1403, it is evident that the story of the two saints was already available to the Armenian readership before the beginning of the fifteenth century.

About the short *ArmBJ*, it is worth emphasising that its ending differs entirely from that of the long *ArmBJ*, identifying Asad/Asat as the metaphrastic rewriter/editor of the Armenian version of the saga (cf. supra, 2). This ignores the literary camouflage of the Greek *Barlaam*, which attributes the (Euthymian) recension to either John, monk of Saba, or John of Damascus, depending on the manuscript transmission[52].

2.2.1 Personal Names and Topography

Scholars have long considered differences in the naming and spelling of individuals and places to be indicative of textual interactions between the *Balavariani* and a lost old Arabic recension, and between the Byzantine *Barlaam* and the *Balavariani*. Unfortunately, Western scholars have not paid much attention to the Armenian recensions of the saga due to a lack of updated research on the Armenian tradition, as well as linguistic barriers preventing access to Armenian primary and secondary written sources. Conybeare's study, which includes an introduction and a partial English translation of the beginning and end of the short *ArmBJ*, is currently the only available source for Western scholars interested in the transmission of the saga in Armenian.

Some peculiarities in naming places and characters seem to corroborate the hypothesis that the *ArmBJ* does not exclusively and primarily depend on the Greek *Barlaam*, as can be seen in the following schema:

Bilawhar	***Balavariani***	**Greek *Barlaam***	**Short *ArmBJ***	**Long *ArmBJ***
Yūsaf/Būdāsaf	Iodasaph	Iôasaph	Yovasap‘	Yovasap‘
Junaysar/Janaisar	Abenes	Abennêr	Abener	Abenēser/Abenēr
Bilawhar/Balauhar	Balavari	Ba(r)laam	Barałam/Baragham	Barłam/Bargham
Anonym tutor	Zandan	Zardan	Zard (f. 695r)	Zardan
Rākis	Rakhis	Arachês	Aṙašis (f. 696v)	Aṙaršsis
Rakis	Nakori	Nachôr	Nak‘ovr	Nak‘ovr
Bahwan	Thedma	Theudas	T‘ewdas	T‘ewdas
Samtā	Barakhia	Barachias	Barak’ios/Barak‘ias	Barags‘ias
Shawilābaṭ	Sholait	Absent	(Sinawat‘an*)	Absent
Sarandīb	Sarandib	Sennar	(Sinap‘at‘an*)	
			Hndustan	Hndkac‘ erkirn
			Eritac‘woc‘	Anewretac‘oc‘/ Anewritac‘woc‘

There are several notable differences between the various recensions. However, I would first focus on toponomy. Place naming sensibly varies depending on the recension and may indicate different

[52] Storia di Barlaam e Ioasaf LXXIX–LXXXV.

approaches to creating a fictional landscape or point to specific topographical notions depending on variations in time and space. Both hypotheses can be considered working hypotheses. In the case of the *ArmBJ*, however, it seems to me that specific variations in place naming cannot be explained exclusively on linguistic grounds but must also be considered as markers of specific time periods and cultural spaces. In the *Bilawhar*, King Junaysar dwells in the city of Shawilābaṭ (Sulabat), while the land of Sarandīb is identified as the place of Bilawhar's provenance and retirement[53]. In the *Balavariani*, however, Shawilābaṭ is transformed into Sholait, and the island of Ceylon is named Sarandib according to the *Bilawhar*. In contrast, the Greek *Barlaam* omits the royal city and transforms Sarandib into Sennar. The long *ArmBJ* makes no mention of Yovasap' and his father's dwelling city, and the manuscripts of the short *ArmBJ* that I consulted do not specify it either. However, an external literary source suggests that the Armenians were familiar with Yovasap''s dwelling city in a form that indicates links with the Arabic *Bilawhar*. In fact, the thirteenth-century *Book that Shows the World* (*Ašxarhac'oyc'*, inadequately rendered into English as 'Geography') by Vardan Arewelc'i (1198–1271)[54], records the city of Sinap'at'an/Sinawat'an as the first of the three Indian royal cities and the residence of King Abenēr and his son Yovasap'[55]. Sinawat'an (Sinap'at'an/Sinauat'an[56]) may point to a distortion of the Indian royal city as it is reported in the Arabic *Bilawhar*. This information entails that Vardan was acquainted with the name of the city via either an Armenian source (most likely, the short *ArmBJ*) or an Arabic one. As already mentioned above, even though a Syriac version is assumed to have existed as medium between the Central Asian and Greek worlds, there is no material evidence of its concrete existence. Vardan's account may indirectly prove the existence of a Syriac source, as the scholar was one of the most prominent figures involved in the Armeno-Syriac interactions that characterised the cultural landscape of Cilicia, Cappadocia and Upper Mesopotamia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. However, in absence of a Syriac text, this is mere speculation. In this vein, it seems more reliable to assume that Vardan had access to either the short *ArmBJ* or an Arabic version of the saga.

Two further toponyms that deserve attention are the names of the desert where Bar(a)łam's and, later, Yovasap retired and died, and the place where the holy bodies of the two saints were relocated after their deaths at the initiative of Barak'ias. Yovasap' had appointed Barak'ias as his successor after withdrawing from rulership and retiring to the wilderness. The desert is mentioned in the long version of the *ArmBJ* but not in the short version, while the place where the relics were relocated is reported in the short version but not in the long version. Once again, Vardan's *Book that Shows the World* is a fundamental and intriguing source for reconstructing the topography of the *ArmBJ*. Vardan tells us that one of the two gates to the Indian Sea is that of the island of K'arkedon (Ptolemy's Karkos?; most likely, indicating an island in archipelago either of the Maldives or of the

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[53] The island of Ceylon is called Sarandīb by the twelfth century Muslim scholar al-Idrīsī in his *Book of Roger* (*Kitāb nuzhat al-muštāq fi'ḫtirāq al-'āfāq*): *India and the Neighbouring Territories in the Kitāb Nuzhat al-mushtāq fi'khtirāq al-'āfāq of al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī*, ed. by S. Maqbul Ahmad with a foreword by V. Minorsky. Leiden 1960, 26–30.

[54] I would not define Vardan's *Ašxarhac'oyc'* a geography *sensu stricto*, as it is for instance the *Ašxarhac'oyc'* attributed to the seventh century scholar Anania Širakac'i. Vardan's *Book* is indeed the product of his time, mirroring thereby the literary, aesthetical and cultural tastes and ambience that blossomed and developed across Mediterranean Armenia (and in the eastern regions of Armenia, as well) between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries thanks to intense interactions with a variety of western and eastern traditions. I tend to consider Vardan's *Book that Shows the World* as a treatise whose structure is closer to that of late medieval *mirabilia* than to that of ancient and late ancient geographies. Marvel or *'ajā'ib* literature was already known to the Arabs in the tenth century, as attested by al-Idrīsī who mentions the *Kitāb al-'ājā'ib* by al-Mas'ūdi (d. 957) as one of his primary sources: al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī (ed. S. Maqbul Ahmad 1960) 15–16. On the authorship of the short and the long recension of Vardan's *Book*: *Ašxarhac'oyc' Vardanay Vardapeti* [Book that Shows the World by Vardan Vardapet], ed. by H. Pērpērian (Berberian). Paris 1960, XXIII–XXVI (Introduction).

[55] *Ašxarhac'oyc'* (ed. Berberian 1960) 71, l. 149; cf. Vardan Barjrberdc'i Arewelc'i, Ašxarac'oyc' [Geography]. Constantinople 1728, 532–533.

[56] Vardan uses the diphthong *-aw-* for rendering the Persian *-pū-*, such as, for instance in Neyshāpūr, which is transliterated into Nušawur.

Laccadives)[57], which was located on the sea trade route from the Arabian Peninsula to India and the other way around[58]. Vardan also records that K‘arkedon was a resting point for merchants travelling from Khorasan and Babelōn (Babylon) to India and emphasises that the ascetic Barłam moved from to the desert of Eratac‘woc‘ (gen. pl. for a nominative in Eratac‘ik‘) to Hndustan <India> to illuminate Yovasap‘[59]. What topography does have Vardan in mind when describing the Indian world? I would argue that Vardan was acquainted with the short *ArmBJ*. On the one hand, he refers to the land of Hndustan as the place of origin of Barłam, and, on the other hand, the short *ArmBJ* informs us that Hndustan was the place where Barłam retired after his mission to Yovasap‘, and where he died and was eventually buried. A colophon of a manuscript composed in 1400 at the monastery of Suxaray (Suxaravank‘) in the Turuberan region, north-west of lake Van, tells us that, between 1383 and 1386, Timur marched upon Hndustan and returned to his capital, Samarkand, with many elephants and much booty[60]. The use of the term Hndustan in this colophon may suggest that late medieval Armenian geographical perception distinguished *Hndustan* from *erkirn Hndkac‘* (‘land of the Indians’), insofar as the former indicated a geographical area which was located south of Samarkand, most likely corresponding to the south-eastern part of Greater Khorasan (the Hindu Kush Himalayan region). The short *ArmBJ* clearly marks off the land of the Indians from Hndustan, identifying the latter as the birth and death place of Barałam and the former as the kingdom of Abenēr. Conversely, the long *ArmBJ* makes no mention of a place named Hndustan. By introducing the place name Hndustan, the short *ArmBJ* seems to suggest a different location for the relocation of the saints’ relics. The relics (long *ArmBJ*) or the bodies (short *ArmBJ*) were moved from a desert, either of Anewretac‘woc‘ (long *ArmBJ*) or of Eritac‘woc‘ (short *ArmBJ*), to the seat of King Barak‘ias. Both recensions agree in affirming that King Barak‘ias ordered the holy bodies to be moved from the desert cave where Bar(a)łam and Yovasap‘ had been buried. However, the short *ArmBJ* tells us that the holy bodies were moved across Hndustan and eventually transferred to their place of origin near Abenēr. In contrast, the long *ArmBJ* simply states that they were transferred during the reign of King Barak‘ias, providing no further details.

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[57] Karkos is listed among the islands surrounding Taprobane in Ptolemy’s *Geography*: Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy, ed. by J.W. McCrindle. Calcutta – Bombay – London 1885, 247–250: 250.

[58] We should imagine that the hemisphere was conceived of and represented in a different way in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The earliest Armenian map which has come down to us dates to the thirteenth-fourteenth century and is a modified T-O map with the west on the bottom, the east on the top and the Holy City of Jerusalem on the centre. Most likely, Vardan had at his disposal or was acknowledged with Muslim and Greek cartography. It is likely supposing that his information on Ceylon and India depended on Greek (Ptolemy), Armenian and Muslim geography but more in-depth research is needed to assess Vardan’s specific sources. On Armenian cartography and the earliest T-O map in the Armenian language: R. GALICHIAN, A Medieval Armenian T-O Map. *Imago Mundi* 60/1 (2008) 86–92; R. GALICHIAN, History of Armenian Cartography up to the year 1918. Yerevan – London 2017, 15–24.

[59] *Ašxarhac‘oyc‘* (ed. Berberian 1960) 71–72, ll. 149–157: Իսկ աշխարհին Հնդկաց Գ աթոռք են: Առաջինն Սինափաթան քաղաք, որ Է տակ պարիսպ ունի, եւ ամէն պարիսպի մէջն ՃՌ տուն է, որ է ԷՃՌ. եւ է նա աթոռն Հնդկաց թագաւորացն, ուր Աբենէր եւ Յովասափ նստէին: Բ աթոռոյն Մնդան է անունն, եւ Գ-ին Բեդար. եւ ունի Բ դուռն ծովու. մին դռնովն ի վեր ի Հրմուզ գան ի Խորասան վաճառականքն եւ Բ դռնովն ի վերայ Քարկեդոն կղզոյն գան ի Բաբելոն: Երատացւոց անապատն ի Հնդստան է, ուստի եկն Բարաղամ ճգնաւորն եւ լուսաւորեաց զՅովասափ: [Thus, in the land of the Indians, there are three seats. The first is the city of Sinap'at'an that has seven rows of walls and each wall has 1100 houses, that means 7700 houses, and it is the capital of the kings of the Indians, where Abenēr and Yovasap' were dwelling. The second seat is called Mndan and the third Bedar. The latter has two gates to the sea; and through the gate that is located in the Hormuz direction, come the merchants from Khorasan, while through the second gate, which looks towards the island of K'arkedon, come the merchants from Babelon. The desert of Eratac'woc' lies in Hndustan and from there the ascetic Barałam came and illuminated Yovasap']. Mndan may be identified with Multān or with Sindān: AL-SHARĪF AL-IDRĪSĪ (ed. Maqbul Ahmad 1960) 40.

[60] Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts 1301–1480, A Source for Middle Eastern History, ed. by A. K. Sanjian (*Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies* 2). Cambridge 1969, 118.

Short *ArmBJ* (V1382 f. 702r; M2711 f. 542r–v)	**Long *ArmBJ*** (ed. Tēr-Movsēsian 122)
And after he passed away, some of *his closest companions* in the wilderness came <to the cave of Barałam> under the influence of the Holy Spirit and buried the holy body of Yovasap‘ near Barałam. When King Barak‘ios heard about it, he sent *priests* and monks to open the saints’ tomb, where found the bodies of the blessed ones. They moved the bodies *through Hndustan with great honour*. *When they were a day away <from the capital>*, King Barak‘ias approached with many *lords and a multitude of ordinary people*. According to custom, they brought them [the bodies of the blessed ones] to the *native* kingdom and *placed* them near King Abener[61].	After he passed away, some people in the nearby wilderness were inspired by the Holy Spirit to realise that the holy Yovasap‘ had died. They came and buried his honourable body near to Barłam. Later, *they travelled to India and informed King Barak‘ia of <what they had done>, as he was still alive at the time*. Upon hearing this, he sent many monks, *chief-priests and princes to the Anewretac‘oc‘ desert and the cave of Barłam*. Once there, they opened the gravestone and found their [of the saints’] *uncorrupted* bodies inside. *Overjoyed*, they took the *relics of the God-pleasing* men and *brought them to his [of Barak‘ia] reign*. *When they were close to the field*, King Barak‘ia approached *with all his armies* and they brought them [the relics of the saints] to *his kingdom* and *buried* them near to King Abener[62].

These two excerpts provide a snapshot of the significant textual and linguistic differences between the long and the short *ArmBJ*. These divergencies also suggest different target audiences, milieus of production, literary background sources and intentions. Regarding the reference to ‘Hndustan’, might we infer that the short *ArmBJ* depicts this region as a border zone between the desert of Eritac‘woc‘ and the kingdom of Barak‘ias? This hypothesis is indirectly validated by Vardan’s *Book* (see, above) but further research through both recensions and the manuscript tradition is needed to confirm it.

It is tempting to consider the name of Barłam’s desert as we read it in the short *ArmBJ* and in Vardan’s *Book* as the Armenian spelling of Erat (Herat?), meaning a wilderness near the city of Herat. Within this framework, it is also worth mentioning that several twelfth and thirteenth centuries Armenian synaxaria refer to the place name Omeritac‘woc‘/Omoritac‘woc‘ in association with the city of Nengra in India as place of origin of Xarit‘a/Xaret‘a[63]. It could be argued that there is some similarity between Omeritac‘woc‘ and Eritac‘woc‘/Eratac‘woc‘ (and Anewretac‘woc‘, as well), and that the latter is the result of misspellings or misreadings during manuscript transmission.

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[61] V1382, f. 702r: Եւ յետ փոխելոյն իւր ի կենացս. Ոմանք ի մերձակայից եղբարց անապատին. ազդմամբ ս<ուր>բ հոգւոյն. եկեալ թաղեցին զս<ուր>բ մարմինն յովասափու մերձ բարաղամու: Եւ լըւեալ բարաքիոս արքայն. յղեաց ք<ա>հ<անա>յս. եւ կրաւնաւորս. եւ բացեալ զտապանս սրբոյն. գտին զմարմինս երանելեացն> Եւ մեծաւ պատուով առեալ տարան ի հնդուստան: Իբրեւ մերձ եղեն աւուր միոյ ճանապարհ՝ ընդառաջ ել. արքայն բարաքիաս. ամ<ենայն> մեծամեծաւքն. եւ բազմութեամբ ըռամկին. եւ ըստ արժանեացն ածին զնոսա ի թագաւորութիւն հայրենի. եւ եդին առ աբեներ թագաւորին:

[62] Tēr Movsēsian, Description 122 : Եւ յետ փոխելոյ նորա յաշխարհէ, ոմանք ի մերձակայ անապատին ազդեցութեամբ Հոգւոյն Սրբոյն գիտացեալ զվաղճան սրբոյն Յովասափու, եւ եկեալ թաղեցին զպատուական մարմին նորայ մերձ առ Բարղամու. եւ երթեալ ի Հնդիկս պատմեցին Բարաքիայ արքայի զի դեռ եւս կենդանի էր նա> Եւ իբրեւ լուաւ, առաքեաց զբազումս ի կրաւնաւորաց եւ ի քահանայապետից եւ յիշխանաց. եւ եկեալք յԱներետացոց անապատին յայրն Բարղամու, եւ բացեալ զգերեզմանսն գտին զմարմինս նոցա անապական> Եւ ուրախութեամբ առեալ զնշխարս աստուածահաճոյ արանցն, տարան ի թագաւորութիւնն իւր> Իբրեւ մերձեցան ի դաշտին, ընդառաջ ել Բարաքիայ արքայ հանդերձ ամենայն զաւրաւքն. եւ մեծաւ պայծառութեամբ ածին զնոսա ի թագաւորութիւնն իւր եւ թաղեցին մերձ առ Աբեներ արքայի:

[63] For instance, BNF 111 (13th c.), col. 359 and BNF 178 (12th c.), col. 591, in: Manuscrits arméniens de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, Catalogue, ed. by R. H. Kévorkian – A. Ter-Stépanian. Paris 1998.

Nevertheless, it is most likely that the place name Omeritac‘woc‘ refers to the Himyarite Kingdom of pre-Islamic southwestern Arabia (115 BCE–525 CE) and the city of Nengra to the Himyarite capital of Najrān, pointing to the intention to reconstruct and share a pan-Christian imagined geo-cultural space stretching from India through Arabia to the Mediterranean.

Differences in proper names can also indicate interdependence between different recensions. As for the Armenian, to a first preliminary survey, I would argue for a correlation between the short *ArmBJ* and the Georgian and Arabic versions. A link to the latter can be seen in the name of the young prince: Yovasap‘ (other variants attested by Hrač‘ia Ačaṙian are Yawasap‘ and Ovasap‘), which could hint at an underlying model in **ywsf* (يواسف)[64]. Given that the short *ArmBJ* was most likely composed between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries (before 1271, in any case), it is reasonable to presume that the initial vowels -ya- and -wa- of Yūsaf were transcribed into Armenian as -y- (յ) and -w/v- (ւ/վ) due to Persian influence on Arabic-Armenian linguistic interconnections[65]. The underlying model for the Armenian Barałam (but Barłam, in the long *ArmBJ*) may be either the Arabic *Bilawhar* or the Georgian Balavar(i). The phenomena of vowel intensification or redoubling and rendering of the middle -v(a)- in Georgian (ბა-ლა-ვა-რი) into -ła- in Armenian could indicate a Georgian underlying model for the short *ArmBJ*. Of course, it should not be overlooked that the ending in -m- points to a Greek influence, as well. In this respect, polygenetic trajectories of influence of different tradition texts on the Armenian short *ArmBJ* would explain the co-existence of similarities or dissimilarities between the Armenian text and the various recensions of the saga[66].

2.2.2. The order of the Parables in the Greek, Armenian, and Georgian Recensions

As for the order of the parables, the Armenian recensions appear to follow the same order as the Greek *Barlaam*. As Conybeare and Tēr-Movsēsian have already noted, the number of the parables is reduced from thirteen (in the Georgian version) or nine (in the Greek version) to six in the long *ArmBJ* or seven in the short *ArmBJ*[67]. Upon closer examination, it emerges that the order differs slightly from that of both the Byzantine *Barlaam* and the Georgian *Balavariani*. The following synoptic table illustrates the differences between the Armenian, the Greek and the Georgian recensions of the saga:

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[64] Ačaryan, Armenian Prosopographical 534–535. As we do not know how the diphthongs were pronounced in Classical and Middle Armenian, it cannot be ruled out that the name was written as Yowasap‘ and pronounced as Yuasap‘.

[65] Ačaryan, History of the Armenian Vol. 2, 180–185. Another compelling example is the rendering *tēr Dawit‘/Davit‘* into the Persian *ṭīr Dāwūd* by the fourteenth century scholar Moḥammad Naḵjavānī in his Dastur: G. Danielyan, Paštonakan namakagrut‘yunn u divanagitakan nviraberumə hay-monłolakan haraberut‘yunnerum [Official Correspondance and Diplomatic Gifts in Armeno-Mongol Interrelations], in: Kilikyan Hayastanə Merjavor Arevelk‘i ekełec‘ak‘ałakan p‘oxharaberut‘yunneri p‘astat‘łt‘erum. Vaveragitut‘yan xndirner [Cilician Armenia in the Ecclesiastical and Political Documents of Interrelations with the Near East. Authorship Issues], ed. by A. Bozoyan – G. Danielyan – A.-M. Chevalier. Yerevan 2023, 356–397: 363.

[66] S. Basso, Circulation périphérique et « fluidité » des textes : l’exemple du Barlaam kai Ioasaph au XIème siècle. *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* n.s. 2/2020, 25–40.

[67] Tēr-Movsēsian, Description lii-liii. Conybeare considers the story of the two vessels as the second parable: Conybeare, The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend 118–119. Yet, in ms. V1382, this story is associated with the first parable on the trumpet of death. Interestingly, a later scriber or reader has tried to erase the sentence introducing the story of the two vessels, by overwriting it with another sentence, namely ‘Second parable. Thus, the same king ordered’, which he penned in red ink. In f. 691r of ms. 1382, the underlying and overlined text reads as follows: […] ~~Ապա հրամայե~~ <Առակ երկրորդ: Արդ նոյն թգրն հրամայե>աց առնել. բ. փայտեղէն ամանս. զմիսն հրամայեաց ծածկել ոսկով եւ արծաթով… (“And then, he [i.e., the king] ordered to fabricate two wood vessels. And he ordered to cover one of them with gold and silver…”).

Long *ArmBJ* (ed. Tēr-Movsēsean) and **short *ArmBJ*** (ms. V1382)	***Balavariani*** (ed. Lang 1957)	**Byzantine *Barlaam*** (BHG 224)
1) The Trumpet of Death & the Two Vessels	1) The Trumpet of Death & the Four Caskets	1) The Trumpet of Death
2) The Sparrow and the Fowler	2) The Sower	2) The Four Caskets
3) The Man and the Unicorn	3) The Man and the Elephant	3) The Fowler and the Nightingale
4) The Man and His Three Beloved	4) The Man and His Three Friends	4) The Man and the Unicorn
5) The Rich Youth and the Poor Maiden	5) The King for One Year	5) The Man and His Three Friends
6) The Tame Wild Goat Cub	6) Dogs and Carrion	6) The King for One Year
	7) Physician and Patient	7) Parable of the Heathen King and his Faithful Counsellor
	8) The Sun of Wisdom	8) The Rich Youth and the Poor Maiden
	9) The King and the Happy Poor Couple	9) The Tame Gazelle
	10) The Rich Youth and the Poor Maiden	
	11) The Fowler and the Nightingale	
	12) The Tame Gazelle	
	13) The Costume of Enemies	

This schema suggests that the *ArmBJ* is dependent on the Greek *Barlaam*. However, this is not the case. The transformation or metamorphosis of the parables in the *ArmBJ* seems to indicate a cross-pollination between different traditions in a quite complex manner[68]. The parables of the *ArmBJ* exhibit micro-textual differences that demonstrate a polygenetic and non-linear transmission of the saga to the Armenian world. Compelling micro-textual divergences can be seen in:

1) the story of the king who ordered two caskets to be made. This tale is embedded in the first parable of the long *ArmBJ* —the tale of the caskets is also associated with the first parable in the *Balavariani*—but it is considered as an independent second parable in the short *ArmBJ*. In the Byzantine *Barlaam* and the Georgian *Balavariani*, the parable of the king who ordered four (and not two) caskets to be made is the main topic of the second parable in the former and a secondary topic of the first parable in the latter.
2) The third parable revolves around the story of the nightingale in the *Balavariani* and the Byzantine *Barlaam*, whereas the short and long *ArmBJ* have a sparrow as we read in the Arabic *Kitāb*;
3) The seventh parable tells of a tame gazelle in the *Balavariani* and the Byzantine *Barlaam*, whereas the short and long *ArmBJ* tell of a tame wild goat.

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[68] The question concerning the textual transformation of the parables from the Arabic Bilawhar to the Greek Barlaam is discussed in: B. LIENHARD, Vom arabischen Buch "Bilawhar wa-Būdāsf" zum byzantinischen "Barlaam und Joasaph". Textumformungen am Beispiel der Sämannsparabel, in: Medioeovo romanzo e orientale. Macrotesti fra Oriente e Occidente. IV Colloquio Internazionale, Vico Equense, 26–29 ottobre 2000, a cura di G. Carbonaro et al. Soveria Mannelli 2003, 495–507; B. LIENHARD, Neuordnung und Umformungen im Parabelkorpus des byzantinischen Barlaam und Ioasaph, in: *Selecta colligere*, ed. by R. M. Piccione – M. Perkams. Alessandria 2003, 169–193.

This preliminary sample of micro-textual dissimilarities unfolds complex stratifications in the transmission process of the saga in the East and draws attention to the significance of the Armenian tradition to reconstruct the interconnected ways of circulation of popular stories and folklore tales among Christians and Muslims. In what follows, I will focus on the long *ArmBJ* and seek to individuate and explain some passages that significantly differ from the Byzantine *Barlaam*.

2.2.3. The Long ArmBJ and the Byzantine Barlaam: the Description of the Land of the Indians

In comparison to the Greek *Barlaam*, the long *ArmBJ* does not have the famous parenetic introduction but begins with the description of the narratological spatial context:

Long *ArmBJ*, 1–2	**Greek *Barlaam* 1,1**
Երկիրն Հնդկաց հեռագոյն է յԵգիպտոսէ. յարեւելից կողմանէ փակեալ բարձր լերամբք եւ ծով շուրջ պատեալ. եւ երկիր բարի եւ գեղեցիկ եւ բազմամարդ յոյժ: Եւ ամենեքեան մոլորեալք էին ի կռապաշտութեան. այլ յորժամ միածին Որդին Աստուծոյ որ էն ի ծոց Հօր վասն մերոյ փրկութեան կամաւ Հաւր եւ Սուրբ Հոգւոյն ի վախճան աւուրց իջեալ յերկնից եւ ի հայրական աթոռոյն ոչ պակասեաց եւ մարմնացեալ ի սրբոյն կուսէն Մարիամայ, զի զերկիրս երկին արասցէ, եւ զմեզ ի ծառայութենէ մեղաց ազատէ, եւ հաղորդս արասցէ երկնային բարութեանց: Եւ կատարեալ զամենայն տնօրինաբար վասն մերոյ փրկութեան, համբերեաց խաչի եւ մահու, եւ յարուցեալ յերրորդ աւուր համբարձաւ յերկինս եւ նստաւ ընդ աջմէ Հօր, եւ զմխիթարիչ Սուրբ Հոգին առաքեաց առ ընտրեալ աշակերտսն իւր, եւ ի ձեռն հրեղէն լեզուացն առաքեաց զնոսա ընդ ամենայն երկիր. պատուիրեաց նոցա մկրտել զ-ամենայն տեիզերս յանուն Հօր եւ Որդւոյ եւ Հոգւոյն Սրբոյ, զի որք հաւատասցեն եւ մկրտեսցին կեցցեն, իսկ որք ոչն հաւատան դատապարտեսցին[69]:	Ἡ τῶν Ἰνδῶν λεγομένη χώρα πόρρω μὲν διάκειται τῆς Αἰγύπτου, μεγάλη οὖσα καὶ πολυάνθρωπος, περικλύζεται δὲ θαλάσσαις καὶ ναυσιπόροις πελάγεσι τῷ κατ᾽ Αἴγυπτον μέρει, ἐκ δὲ ἠπείρου προσεγγίζει τοῖς ὁρίοις Περσίδος ἥτις πάλαι μὲν τῷ τῆς εἰδωλομανίας ἐμελαίνετο ζόφῳ, εἰς ἄκρον ἐκβεβαρβαρωμένη καὶ τοῖς ἀθέσμοις ἐκδεδιητημένη τῶν πράξεων. Ὅτε δὲ ὁ μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πλάσμα μὴ φέρων ὁρᾶν ἁμαρτίᾳ δουλούμενον, τοῖς οἰκείοις περὶ τοῦτο σπλάγχνοις ἐπικαμφθεὶς ὤφθη καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἁμαρτίας χωρὶς καὶ — τόν τοῦ πατρός θρόνον μὴ ἀπολιπών — παρθένον ᾤκησε δι᾽ ἡμᾶς, ἵν᾽ ἡμεῖς κατοικήσωμεν τοὺς οὐρανούς, τοῦ τε παλαιοῦ πτώματος ἀνακληθῶμεν καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀπαλλαγῶμεν τὴν προτέραν υἱοθεσίαν ἀπολαβόντες, καὶ πᾶσαν μὲν τὴν διὰ σαρκὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τελέσας οἰκονομίαν, σταυρόν τε καὶ θάνατον καταδεξάμενος καὶ τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις παραδόξως ἑνοποιήσας τὰ ἐπίγεια, ἀναστὰς δὲ ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ μετὰ δόξης εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀναληφθεὶς καὶ ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς μεγαλωσύνης καθίσας, τὸ παράκλητον Πνεῦμα τοῖς αὐτόπταις αὐτοῦ καὶ μύσταις, κατὰ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, ἐν εἴδει γλωσσῶν πυρίνων ἐξαπέστειλε, καὶ ἔπεμψεν αὐτοὺς εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη φωτίσαι τοὺς ἐν σκότει τῆς ἀγνοίας καθημένους, καὶ βαπτίζειν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, [ὡς ἐντεῦθεν τοὺς μὲν αὐτῶν τὰς ἑῴας λήξεις, τοὺς δὲ τὰς ἑσπερίους λαχόντας περιέρχεσθαι […][70].

[69] Tēr-Movsēsian, Description 1–2.

[70] Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos VI/2, 861.1–12, 861/864.1–20, pp. 8–9 (Volk).

The land of the Indians lies far beyond Egypt. It is surrounded *by high mountains* to the east *and bordered by the sea* (italics by BC). This country is *pleasant and beautiful and densely populated*. Yet, the people are all corrupted by idolatry. *At the end of time*, the Only-Begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, *descended from heaven for our salvation, in accordance with the will of the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was incarnated* in the *Holy* Virgin *Mary although He was not diminished in the paternal throne. <And this happened,> to convert the earth into heaven. He will cleanse us from the servitude of sin and allow us to participate in celestial bliss*. By fulfilling everything according to the economy of the Incarnation for our salvation, he endured the <sufferings of the> cross and death. Then, He rose on the third day and ascended into heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father. He sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to his chosen disciples, and by means of fiery tongues, dispatched them to all *countries*. He commanded them to baptise the whole world in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for *those who will believe and will be baptised, will be saved and those who do not believe will be condemned*.

The country of the Indians, as it is called, is vast and populous lying far beyond Egypt. On the Egyptian, it was washed by seas and navigable gulfs, but *on the mainland, it marched with the borders of Persia, a formerly darkened land of gloom of idolatry and barbarism, wholly given over to unlawful practices*. However, when the Only-Begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, saw *his own handiwork in bondage to sin, he was moved with compassion*, and showed himself to us without sin. Without leaving his Father's throne, he dwelt for a time in the Virgin's womb *for our sakes, so that we might dwell in heaven, and be reclaimed from the ancient fall and freed from sin by receiving again the adoption of sons*; when he had completed every stage of his earthly life for our sake, endured *the death of the Cross*, and united earth and heaven in a marvellous way; when he had risen again from the dead, been received up into heaven, and been seated at the right hand of the Father's majesty, from whence, according to his promise, he sent down the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to his disciples and *eyewitnesses*, in the form of fiery tongues; and dispatched them to all *nations, to enlighten those in darkness,* and baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *It was thus that some of the Apostles travelled to the far-off East*[71].

On the one hand, the italicised passages may suggest that the long *ArmBJ* is not a word-for-word translation of the Greek *Barlaam*, or at least not of the version that has survived. Conversely, we could argue that the Greek *Barlaam* is the source text of the long *ArmBJ*; however, it showcases significant textual adaptations and modifications. In the present passage, it seems to me that the Armenian editor is concerned with unfolding the meaning of the Scriptures and demonstrating that the second person of the Trinity is not diminished in essence through the Incarnation. In the *Barlaam*, we read: Ὅτε δὲ ὁ μονογενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός ('For, the Only Begotten Son of God, the *One being in the bosom of the Father*'), which is a word-for-word quotation of John 1.18[72]. The Armenian translation of this quotation reads: Միածինն Որդի՝ որ է ի ծոց Հօր ("the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father"), but the editor adds an explanation that intends to reflect the standard confession of faith of the Armenian Church as formulated by Catholicos Yovhan Ōjnecʻi at the council of Manazkert/Mantzikert in 726[73]. Another difference is to be read in the final

[71] Barlaam and Ioasaph by John Damascene (?), Edited and Translated by G. R. WOODWARD – H. MATTINGLY. Cambridge, MA 1914. Woodward's and Mattingly's English translation is available online thanks to the project Gutenberg: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/749/749-h/749-h.htm (last access: 01-01-2026). I modified it slightly.

[72] Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos VI/2, 861.6, p. 8 (VOLK).

[73] An English translation of the canons of the council of Manazkert is available in: P. COWE, Doctrinal Union or Agreement to Disagree? Armenians and Syrians at the Synod of Manazkert (726 CE), in: Bridging Times and Spaces: Papers in Ancient

paragraph of the long *ArmBJ*. While the Greek *Barlaam* emphasises the immediate effects of the Holy Spirit through the Baptism, i.e. enlightening those who are in the darkness of ignorance, the Armenian editor focuses on the eschatological value of the Baptism and the apostolic mission.

The long *ArmBJ* is interspersed with long discussion dedicated to theological and Christological issues that were particularly relevant for an Armenian learned audience[74]. Furthermore, the long *ArmBJ* showcases a Monothelite position in clear opposition to the Dyothelite standpoint of the Byzantine *Barlaam* that reflects the official perspective of the Byzantine Church as hallmarked at the third council of Constantinople in 681[75]. Another delicate topic is the incorruptibility of the incarnated nature of the Second person of the Trinity, which is dealt with in the context of the parable seventh on the tame wild goat cub[76].

2.2.4 The Ascetic Barlaam in the ArmBJ

The long *ArmBJ* and the *Barlaam* feature two different approaches to issues concerning the ascetic praxis as it appears in the description of Barlaam/Barłam. The former adds details that are not attested in the latter (emphasis in italics is mine):

Long *ArmBJ*, 14	**Greek *Barlaam* 6,1**
Եւ եղեւ յաւուրսն յայնոսիկ յանապատական ծերոյ կրօնաւոր ոմն, իմաստուն եւ աստուածական գրոց եւ պատուիրանաց յոյժ հմուտ. Ղեւտական գրոց, Հին եւ Նոր կտակարանաց. եւ էր անուն նորա Բարղամ: Սայ ազդեցութեամբ Հոգւոյն գիտացեալ վասն որդւոյ թագաւորին, եւ վերստին առաջնորդութեամբ Հոգւոյն ճանապարհորդեալ, մինչեւ եկեալ եհաս ի քաղաքն յորում էր որդի թագաւորին: Եւ եկեալ անդ՝ զգեցաւ զգեստ աշխարհականի ի վերայ այծեացն, եւ եղեալ ի կերպս վաճառականի եմուտ ի քաղաքն: Եւ արարեալ անդ աւուրս բազումս, ծանօթացաւ պաշտօնէի ումեմն որ յամենայն ժամու մտանէր եւ ելանէր առ որդի թագաւորին: Եւ էր նմա պատուական եւ մտերիմ յոյժ, իրում անուն Զարդան կոչիւր, ընդ որում եհարց որդի թագաւորին մինչեւ ի պաղատն էր, վասն իւրոյ արգելմանն եւ վասն քրիստոնէական հաւատոցն[77]:	Ἐγένετο γὰρ κατ᾽ ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρὸν μοναχός τις σοφὸς τὰ θεῖα, βίῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ κοσμούμενος [36] καὶ εἰς ἄκρον πᾶσαν μοναχικὴν μετελθὼν πολιτείαν: ὅθεν μὲν ὁρμώμενος καὶ ἐκ ποίου γένους οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν, ἐν πανερήμῳ δέ τινι τῆς Σενααρίτιδος γῆς τὰς οἰκήσεις ποιούμενος, καὶ τῆς ἱερωσύνης τετελειωμένος τῇ χάριτι. Βαρλαὰμ ἦν ὄνομα τούτῳ τῷ γέροντι. οὗτος οὖν ἀποκαλύψει τινὶ θεόθεν αὐτῷ γενομένῃ γνοὺς τὰ κατὰ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ βασιλέως, ἐξελθὼν τῆς ἐρήμου, πρὸς τὴν οἰκουμένην κατῆλθε. καὶ ἀμείψας τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σχῆμα, ἱμάτιά τε κοσμικὰ ἀμφιασάμενος, καὶ νηὸς ἐπιβάς, ἀφίκετο εἰς τὰ τῶν Ἰνδῶν βασίλεια, καὶ ἐμπόρου ὑποδὺς προσωπεῖον, τὴν πόλιν καταλαμβάνει, ἔνθα δὴ ὁ τοῦ βασιλέως υἱὸς τὸ παλάτιον εἶχε. καί, ἡμέρας διατρίψας ἐκεῖσε πολλάς, ἠκριβολογήσατο τὰ κατ᾽ αὐτὸν καὶ τίνες οἱ τούτῳ πλησιάζοντες. μαθὼν οὖν τὸν ἀνωτέρω ῥηθέντα παιδαγωγὸν πάντων αὐτῷ μᾶλλον οἰκειότατον εἶναι […][78]

Near Eastern, Mediterranean and Armenian Studies Honouring Gregory E. Areshian on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. by P. Avetisyan – Y. Grekyan. Oxford 2017, 61–83: 68–69.

74 Tēr-Movsēsian, Description 70–71.

75 Tēr-Movsēsian, Description 72.

76 Tēr-Movsēsian, Description 67.

77 Tēr-Movsēsian, Description 14.

78 Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos VI/2, 896.1–10, 896/897.11–14 (Volk).

In those days, there was a certain elderly *ascetic* monk who was *wise and highly* learned *in the divine scriptures and the commandments and the Book of Leviticus, as well as in the Old and New Testaments*. His name was Barłam. *Through the intervention of the Spirit*, he had learned of the King's son *and, guided by the <same> Spirit, he had reached the city, in which the King's son lived.* Once he arrived, *he put on ordinary clothes on his goatskin tunic and,* disguised as a merchant man, entered the city. He spent many days there and met with *a certain functionary, who had daily access* to the King's son. *This man, Zardan by name,* was a close friend of the King's son. *While Zardan was in the palace, the son of the king had indeed asked him about his isolation and the Christian believers.*

At that time, there was a certain monk who was learned in heavenly things. He was gracious in word and deed and was a model follower of every monastic rule. I cannot say where he came from or what is background was, but he lived in a desolate wilderness in the land of Senaar, and had been perfected through the grace of the priesthood. This elder's name was Barlaam. Learning by divine revelation the state of the king's son, he left the desert and returned to the world. He changed his habit for lay attire, embarked on ship and arrived at the seat of the Indian empire. Disguised as a merchant, he entered the city where the palace of the king's son was located. He stayed there for many days and diligently enquired about the affairs of the prince and those that had access to him. Learning that the tutor, of whom we have spoken, was the prince's closest friend, […].

The most significant differences between the two texts concern the ascetic's knowledge, place of origin and attire. However, there are other details in this passage of the long *ArmBJ* that differ from the *Barlaam*. In the Armenian text, the ascetic is characterised as elderly and highly learned in divine scriptures and commandments, whereas the Greek text describes Barlaam as a virtuous and upright man, who was learned in divine matters (Ἐγένετο γὰρ κατ'ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρὸν μοναχός τις σοφὸς τὰ θεῖα, βίῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ κοσμούμενος καὶ εἰς ἄκρον πᾶσαν μοναχικὴν μετελθὼν πολιτείαν). Rather than the sentence 'graced in word and deed, a model follower of every monastic rule' found in the *Barlaam*, the long *ArmBJ* emphasises the ascetic's knowledge of God's laws and prohibitions, namely commandments and Leviticus, as well as the New Testament. The Armenian text does not specify the ascetic's place of origin, while the Greek says that he lived in the land of Seenar which has been identified as either the region of Shinar in Mesopotamia or the island of Ceylon. This is likely a corruption of the Arabic and Georgian Sarnadīb/Sarandib. The latter is more likely to be correct, as we are told that the ascetic embarked on a ship to reach India. Neither Seenar nor the ship are mentioned in the long *ArmBJ*, suggesting that the editor either operated consistently and coherently in selecting his source text or that he had to a different Greek recension that has not surivived. The long *ArmBJ* specifies that the ascetic wore coarse haircloth. Interestingly, this image evokes Catholicos Yovhan Ōjnec'i, who removed his gold-embroidered cloth in front of the caliph to reveal his coarse haircloth[79]. It is also interesting to note that the term used in the long *ArmBJ* to describe the ascetic's rough garment is also found in the Armenian *Apophthegmata Patrum*[80]. Finally, the long *ArmBJ* introduces Zardan, the courtly functionary, at this point of the narrative, anticipating both the Greek that names him only in Chapter 21, and the short *ArmBJ* that identifies Zard as 'a certain one among Yovasap''s slaves' in the context of the seventh parable[81].

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[79] Step'anos Tarōnec'i, Patmut'iwn tiezerakan [Universal History], ed. by G. Manukian. Lebanon 2010, 705, ll. 194–202. The Universal History of Step'anos Tarōnec'i: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, ed. T. Greenwood. Oxford 2017, 170–171.

[80] *Nor baṙgirk' haykazean lezui* [New Dictionary of the Armenian Language], ed. by G. Awetik'ean – X. Siwrmēlean – M. Awgerean, vol. I. Venice, San Lazzaro 1836–1838, 90.

[81] Conybeare, The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend 126.

3. CONCLUSIONS OF THE CURRENT PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The present study aimed to highlight that the Armenian version of the saga merits more scholarly attention. Though not exhaustive, it has attempted to outline several textual differences between the long *ArmBJ* and the Greek *Barlaam* in a preliminary manner. These differences bring forth two hypotheses. First, the long *ArmBJ* may testify to the existence of what appears to be a lost Greek version—a non- or pre-Euthymian version—of the novel, which may have been removed from circulation following the popularity of the Euthymian recension. Secondly, despite its dependence on the Greek *Barlaam* (BHG 224), the long *ArmBJ* exhibits textual modifications that suggest an attempt to adapt the material to its target audience. It has also be highlighted that both recensions demonstrate a certain degree of cross-pollination between different traditions. This challenges the standard paradigm of a linear transmission of the saga from Central Asia to Europe via the Greek world. In this linear model, the complexity of the Caucasian intermezzo with its intra-regional historical and cultural interactions is only marginally included. The implicit assumption that the Armenian BJ essentially depends on the Greek *Barlaam* disregards the fact that the Armenian tradition produced two recensions and that many macro- and macro-textual dissimilarities between the long *ArmBJ* and the Greek *Barlaam* call into question the influence of other co-existing versions of the saga, particularly the Georgian and the Arabic ones. Finally, the circulation of the saga across the Armenian world is compelling in its own right and from a broader comparative perspective. The substantial linguistic and textual differences between the short and the long Armenian recensions suggest that they emerged from different cultural and social contexts and were intended for different audiences. In this vein, it is worth emphasising that the short *ArmBJ* omits and/or abridges significant theological discussions while keeping the general structure of the parables. This suggests that the text was intended for an audience more interested in hearing about ethical rules in personal, domestic and political settings than in being informed about theological and Christological subtleties. The short *ArmBJ* focuses on conveying notions relating to royalty and on offering the portrait of the ideal prince, thereby abridging the theological questions that are extensively developed in the long *ArmBJ*. I therefore argue that the short *ArmBJ* was most likely written in the period between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, a period characterised by the renewal of the ascetic ideal across the Eastern Mediterranean and the resurgence of Armenian royal ideology in connection with the growing power of the Ṙubenian and Het‘umian dynasties in Mediterranean Armenia[82]. In this specific socio-political context, medieval Armenian became increasingly interested in conceptualising different notions originating from ancient and late ancient ethics and political philosophy. These notions included the relationship between individual and society/community, justice and friendship, law and ‘governance’, contemplation and action. The theme of a remote seclusion, whether in the form of a city of brass as in the *Tale of the City of Bronze*, or a desert as in the Armenian BJ, is one of the main literary motifs in popular tales and stories that were translated into Armenian from Arabic, Syriac or Greek in the period between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries. Even though not discussed in this contribution, it is worth mentioning that there exist typological similarities between the figure of Yovasap‘ and the main character of the Armenian folk ballad of Prince Aslan, indicating the penetration of literary motifs into later vernacular and oral literature[83]. The theme of a prince’s conversion to true enlightenment and a virtuous life also had implications for the late medieval Armenian experience. The eleventh-century historian Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i indeed reports that a prince from the

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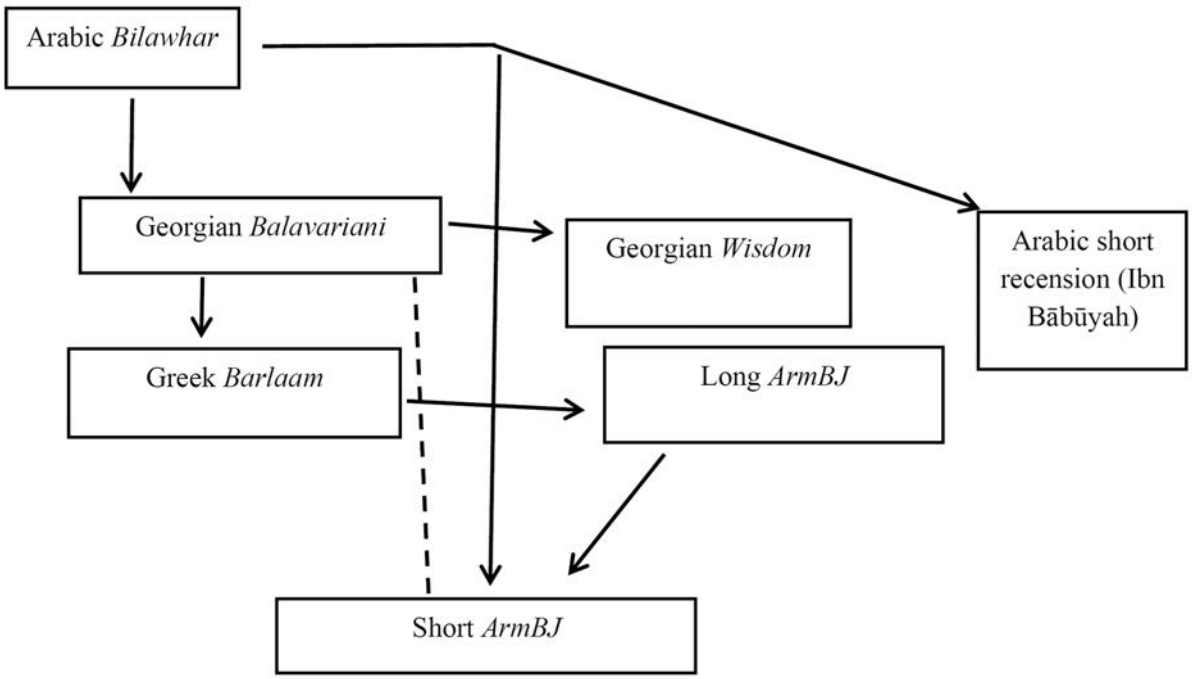
[82] P. Cowe, The Renewal of the Debate between Royal and Monastic Ideology under Gagik I of Vaspurakan as a Factor of Commercial and Economic Revival, in: Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashian (1927–2009), ed. by B. Outtier et al. (*Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity* 16). Leiden – Boston 2019, 242–258.

[83] J. R. Russell, The Interrupted Feast, in: Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashian (1927–2009), ed. by B. Outtier et al. (*Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity* 16). Leiden – Boston 2019, 468–529; J. R. Russell, The Armenian Shrines of the Black Youth (*t‘ux manuk*). *Le Muséon* 111 (1998) 319–343.

vicinity of Širi—a stronghold of the 'heretical' T'ondrakite movement in the province of Mananłi — used to join the ascetics of a hermitage he had established on his fief in the mid-eleventh century during Lent each year[84]. A more well-known example is that is that of King Hetum II (1265–1307) who abandoned his royal duties and responsibilities at the court of Sis in Mediterranean Armenia to embrace the monastic life[85].

Upon preliminary examination, textual interdependence is evident between the long and the short version of the Armenian BJ. It is most likely that the short *ArmBJ* is a shortened version of the long *ArmBJ*. However, the context of production and the intentions of the editor of the shortened version differ significantly, as highlighted by the stylistic and linguistic differences examined in the current preliminary study. Finally, based on this preliminary research, I would propose the following tentative genealogy of the Armenian versions, which emphasises the cross-circularity in the transmission of the saga (the dotted line indicates a possible either direct or indirect influence):



[84] ARISTAKĒS LASTIVERTC'I, *Patmut'iwn* [History]. Venice 1844, 102.
[85] C. MUTAFIAN, L'Arménie du Levant (XI^e–XIV^e siècle), Tome 1. Paris 2012, 188–190.

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(V = Venice, Mekhitarist Library of San Lazzaro; W = Vienna, Mekhitarist Library; M = Erevan, Matenadaran)

V209: end eleventh-early twelfth cc., place of production: Cilicia; *čaŕəntir* (homiliary); ff. 265r–273r: the *Son of the Roman King, named man of God* (earliest manuscript containing this narrative to the best of my knoweldge).

W705: y. 1403, place of production: Monastery of Mecanjanapat(ik‘), *yaysmawurk'*; ff. 214r–261r: long *ArmBJ* (different from Tēr-Movsēsian’s edition)

W224: y. 1428, place of production: Arckē, *čaŕəntir-tōnakan*; ff. 429r–432r: Alek'sios/Alek'sianos.

V279: y. 1441, place of production: city of Van; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 597v–613v: short *ArmBJ*.

V1382: y. 1460, place of production: Erznka, *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 687v–702r: short *ArmBJ*.

V143: y. 1463, place of production: ?; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 684v–700r: short *ArmBJ*.

M2711: y. 1480, place of production: Monastery of Varag, Van; *žołovacu* (collection of writings); ff. 528v–549v: short *ArmBJ*.

V224: y. 1491, place of production: Monastery of Arǰaŕerk; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 557r–567v: short *ArmBJ*.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. Arm c.3 (late 15th-–early 16th c.), place of production: ?, *yaysmawurk‘;* ff. 545r–560v: short *ArmBJ*.

W10: 16th c., place of production: ?; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 542r–548v: short *ArmBJ.*

W224: y. 1428, place of production: Arckē, *čaŕəntir-tōnakan*; ff. 214r–261r: long ArmBJ (different from Tēr-Movsēsian’s edition.

V1136: y. 1541, place of production: Zēyt‘un; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 477v–489r: short *ArmBJ*.

V1160: y. 1563, place of production: *t‘lak; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 478r–486r: short *ArmBJ*.

W395: y. 1564, place of production: Sebastia; *oskep'orik-hawak'acoy* ('Golden belly' or encyclopedia with advice texts); ff. 215r–271v: long *ArmBJ*.

V1378: y. 1581, place of production: T‘ełut; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 683v–700r: short *ArmBJ* (incomplete).

V1812: y. 1581, place of production: Xizan; *yaysmawurk‘*; ff. 628r–642v: short *ArmBJ*.

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