

Educating Global Citizens through the Latin Translation of the Life of Barlaam and Iosaphat

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(an abridged version of my paper)

- A. The 13th century Latin version of Barlaam and Iosaphat by De Voragine in the context of Medieval Latin pedagogy in contemporary America.

Advocates for teaching post-classical Latin have always been few. There was a brief exchange in 1979 and 1980 between Clark and Lanham (see bibliography) in the *Classical Journal*. This followed shortly after the 1975 piece by Lanham called, *The Bastard at the Family Reunion: Classics and Medieval Latin*. Lanham advocated systematic teaching of the features of post-Classical Latin to avoid presenting the language 'as a jungle of philological anarchy' (1980.335). For that, she recommended reading the Old Latin version of the Bible (*Vetus Latina*) in tandem with Jerome's *Vulgata*. Her article from 1980 and others on the subject assume a shared cultural and religious background among those who teach and take post-Classical Latin.

Here I look at the global significance of Medieval Latin through the cross-cultural tale upon which the Barlaam and Iosaphat hagiography is based. The textual transmission of the story through its translations from Arabic, Georgian, Greek, Latin and other languages illustrates to students how each generation and culture acts upon the received traditions from the past. Thus, students realize that they not only can react to the past, but act on the way it is transmitted.

This is what the reading of Barlaam and Iosaphat in the contemporary classroom can offer. Intermediate Latin students who are not especially linguistically gifted or motivated can read this 5,000 word long text in half a semester. I am working on an intermediate Latin reader that would make this text accessible through extensive vocabulary help, commentary and introduction.

The existence of a recent publication by Lopez and McCracken (2014) which contains a description of the text's history and significance would allow teachers both in high schools and colleges to incorporate this text or excerpts from it into their curricula, revitalizing and enlivening their Latin classroom which can thus attract and retain students of a wider range of cultural backgrounds (Buddhist, Asian, South Asian, Middle-Eastern etc).

- B. How can this 13th century hagiography based on an Indian tale benefit modern students?

1. The Latin mostly follows Classical Latin norms and contains some of the best features of Classical Latin such as parallelism and periodicity. Students acquire skills of reading Classical Latin texts through an engaging story.
2. Contains all major features of Post-Classical Latin as well, so students can learn to handle post-classical Latin through systematic exposure to its features. The teaching of similarities and differences between stages of the language reinforces command of Classical norms.
3. The reading serves the objectives of Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS). Students have the opportunity to change the moral, the conclusion to the stories and discuss the relevance of these timeless tales to their own lives and to our modern challenges.

4. Fosters understanding of Latin as a whole and as a continuum spanning two millennia, not just several centuries. Students realize that globalization is not a new phenomenon, our world has been always interconnected in numerous ways, but modern advances in communications have accelerated the process and made interconnectedness more apparent. They see Latin as part of global culture.
5. The story is general enough that students can easily relate to it and follow the narrative without the need for extensive historical and background information. The style resembles *Sinbad the Sailor* or *A Thousand and One Nights*. When teaching Classical Texts, students of intermediate Latin simultaneously have to learn about new genres and a new culture along with the specific difficulties of polished rhetorical prose. Most students are already familiar with stories and stories within stories, so even students with limited Latin get used to this prose in a relatively short time. Therefore, I feel that the text is an excellent transitional reader that gives students the confidence and experience with substantial quantities of prose Latin, needed for the reading of original rhetorically polished classical prose.
6. The story invites reflection on textual transmission and cultural influences across time and geography. Most importantly, it invites reflection upon translation across languages, cultures and historical circumstances. Thus it naturally invites comparisons, particularly with Greek, making it especially suitable to support the Comparisons component of The World-Readiness Standards for learning languages.
7. It offers basic introduction to comparative religion since the differences between the Indian, Arabic and then the Christianized Georgian, Greek and Latin versions mirror differences in attitudes to idolatry, to sexual abstinence, to inter-generational relationships and to the discovery of a middle path between the extremes of asceticism and the excessive indulgence in pleasures.
8. Through this tale, students experience first-hand the fluidity of traditions handed down to them and they realize that they too, have the power to join the action, not just react to the past, but also act on it and reinterpret the past or the stories that they have inherited (I am referencing here the approach, now known as *Reacting to the Past* by Mark Carnes (Barnard College 1996)). I ask students to write a reaction to the story or find examples to illustrate it from their own lives and then summarize briefly in Latin their insights. Students see how stories influence life and our understanding of life. Significantly, the fictional Barlaam and Iosaphat were canonized by the Catholic church as saints in the 16th century. The Cultures, Connections and Communities goals of the *The World-Readiness Standards for learning languages* are thus suitably supported as well.
9. The tale offers opportunities for developing narrative imagination since students can practice animating the story by fleshing out the dialogues from their own experience of character. I ask students not to only to translate, but also to rewrite the text as dramatic dialogue. The students collaborate in composing the dialogue in English or in some cases, in Latin. There is a lot that is implied when characters begin to trick and deceive each other. After all, Shakespeare adopted one of the parables from Barlaam and Iosaphat in his *Merchant of Venice*. This is an enticing way to attain the Communication goal of the *The World-Readiness Standards for learning languages*.

10. Since the text has multiple levels of meaning, it is suitable for mixed classrooms. In my Late Latin classes I see a diversity of levels from graduate students to apathetic undergraduates. They all relate however to the text's main message: the confusing and disorienting nature of appearances and the difficulty of discerning truth concealed behind often deceptive facades.

C. Challenges for the students and the solutions to them:

1. Adjustment is required to the Late Latin features. I found that adjusting to the orthographic and grammatical peculiarities of LL was just that, adjustment rather than a steep learning curve. My 4th semester Latin class was comfortable with the authentic, non-regularized spelling within 2 weeks of reading. However, in the reader, I plan to normalize the text orthographically and include both a version with Classical spelling and the original.
2. For this text, students need to have a more solid knowledge of structural vocabulary (verbs like *dico* and *puto*) because this is the only way they can detect an Indirect Statement that starts with *quod*, *quia*, *quoniam* or *ut*. This knowledge will benefit their skills in reading CL. Students are able to read larger amounts of texts sooner and thus see more examples of both CL and LL constructions.
3. Students also need to pay closer attention to dictionary entries because only this can enable them to detect e.g. *puelle* = *puellae* based on *puella*, *ae f*, a first declension noun.
4. The story is abbreviated from a longer version and the transitions are occasionally abrupt and illogical. An elaborate commentary and summary as well as filling in of gaps from the fuller versions compensates for this disadvantage.
5. The framing story contains many other short stories. Students have to keep the continuous narrative in their head. Thus, they have to 'stay in the story'. The challenge is not only of staying in the story, but staying in the right story because we have stories within the main story that have very tenuous connection to the frame story. It is not always the students with the best Latin who manage to stay in the story and follow the development of the narrative. Becoming engaged with the story and its message develops students' ability to immerse themselves into the Latin and forces them to read it as they would an English story: visualizing the action and empathizing with the characters or with the narrator.

D. Sample from my work in progress entitled, *Reading Medieval Latin with the tale of the Buddha*, based upon the lives of the saints Barlaam and Iosaphat in the 13th century Latin rendition of Jacobus De Voragine.

Note: the orthography in this selection is as it appears in the original (it is not adapted to the Classical norm)

*A continuation of the parable about the four caskets. Barlaam, wanting to praise and commend prince Iosaphat for agreeing to meet with him despite his lowly status, tells him the story of a king who used four caskets with deceptive exteriors to teach his noblemen to look beyond first appearances. Shakespeare adapted this story in *The Merchant of Venice* Act 2, Scene 9, where he made the four caskets three.*

87 Deinde quatuor capsas fieri iussit et duas earum extrinsecus auro undique operiri et ossibus mortuorum putridis impleri, duas uero pice liniri et gemmis et margaritis pretiosis impleri fecit. 88 Vocansque illos magnates quos sciebat querimoniam apud fratrem deposuisse, quatuor illas capsas ante eos posuit et que pretiosiores essent inquisiuit. 89 Illi uero duas deauratas magni esse pretii, reliquas uero uilis pretii esse indicauerunt. 90 Precepit igitur rex deauratas aperiri et continuo inde fetor intolerabilis exhalauit. 91 Quibus rex: “Hec illis similes sunt, qui gloriosis uestibus sunt amicti, intus uero immunditia uitiorum pleni.” 92 Deinde alias aperiri fecit et ecce odor inde mirabilis exhalauit. 93 Quibus rex: “Iste illis pauperrimis quos honorauit similes sunt qui, etsi uilibus uestimentis operiantur, intus tamen omni uirtutum odore resplendent; 94 uos autem solum que de foris sunt attenditis et que deintus sunt non consideratis.” 95 Secundum igitur illum regem tu quoque fecisti bene suscipiens me».

Grammar notes:

87 note the use of *fecit* instead of *iussit* (cf. Grammar 3.1). See another example in 92.

88 Indirect Question introduced by *que*, dependent upon *inquisiuit*

89 *magni pretii* and *uilis pretii* are genitives of price: ‘of great value,’ ‘of little value.’

94 *que de foris sunt* is a Noun-relative clause, the DO of *attenditis* (you pay attention to the things which are outside)

foris and *intus* are adverbs in CL. Here, they take a preposition, a typical feature of LL (see Grammar 5.2)

Vocabulary

87 capsas, ae f. *receptacle, box, chest*

extrinsecus (adv.) *on the outside, externally*

operio, operire, operui, opertus *to cover, hide*

putridus, a, um *decayed, rotten*

pix, picis f. *pitch, tar*

linio, linire, linivi, linitus *to smear, seal*

gemma, ae f. *jewel*

margarita, ae f. *pearl*

pretiosus, a, um *valuable, expensive*

88 magnas, atis m. *nobleman, baron*

querimonia, ae f. *complaint*

pretium, ii n. *value, worth*

90 praecipio, praecipere, praecepi, praeceptus *to instruct, order*

aperio, aperire, aperui, apertus *to uncover, open*

foetor, oris m. *stench, bad smell*

exhalo, are, avi, atus *to breathe out, to pour out*

91 amicio, amicire, amixi, amictus *to clothe, dress*

intus (adv.) *within, on the inside*

immunditia, ae f. *dirtiness, foulness*

vitium, ii n. *vice, sin*

93 etsi (conj.) *although*

resplendo, resplendere, resplendui *to shine*

94 attendo, ere, attendi, attentus: *to pay attention to*

foris (adv) *out of doors*

deintus (adv.) *within* (similar to form of deforis/de foris)

considero, are, avi, atus *to examine*

95 secundum (prep.) *in accordance with, following after* (+acc)

suscipio, suscipere, suscepi, susceptus *to receive*

E. Sample exercise with a student response

DIRECTIONS: Respond to the parable about the four caskets by relating it to events in your own life. Rewrite in Latin the conclusion to the story.

A sample student response with a conclusion in Latin.

An experience in my own life that could be used to rewrite this parable today is when I was at a Christmas party and I had an option of three different gifts to receive. I choose the biggest gift and it was a joke gift with the box being empty. My sister who chose next, picked the smallest gift and inside was money. This situation I believe helps show that not always the biggest, most extravagant thing is the best. Also, this story shows that many times it is not until after we make our decisions that we find out what lies underneath and for that reason we should also choose carefully.

Quae optima videntur saepe pessima sunt.

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