

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

The familiar story of a prince who left behind the luxurious palace of his father to seek enlightenment in the ascetic way of life has grabbed the imaginations of countless generations of readers from various backgrounds. To non-Buddhists, the tale is known through Herman Hesse's *Siddharta*, a required reading in most high-schools. In the Latin West, the story of Iosaphat (the Buddha-figure) was one of the most widely read lives of saints since its rendition into Latin from Greek in the 11th century. How this story circulated among several religions is a fascinating story in itself, recently researched and presented to modern readers by Lopez and McCracken (2014). It passed through Arabic, Georgian and Greek versions before taking shape in two Latin translations: a long version from the mid-12th century and a short version included in Jacob de Voragine's 13th century *Golden Legend*. The first version was such a best-seller (it is preserved in a record number of manuscripts) that the abridged version was a logical follow-up to it. This abridged version is not only an enjoyable reading for 3rd-4th semester Latin students, it is also an excellent introduction to the reading of Medieval Latin texts.

In this paper, I present my work-in-progress commentary on this text and discuss how it helped my 4th semester Latin students become engaged readers of Latin.

I believe that this text, adequately presented to intermediate Latin learners can accomplish a number of valuable pedagogical goals at the same time: 1. Substantially increase students' confidence, fluency and facility with Latin and make them independent readers of the language; 2. Help them see Latin as part of global culture; 3. Increase students' appreciation for diversity since the subject matter lends itself to discussions about the exchanges between East and West over the centuries, about the vagaries of translations and about the ways in which receiving cultures transform cultural artifacts and harness them to their own agendas.

The existence of a recent publication by Lopez and McCracken (2014) which contains a description of the text's history and its significance would allow teachers both in high schools and colleges to incorporate this text 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).

Bibliography

Lopez, D.S. and McCracken, P. (2014). *In Search of the Christian Buddha: How an Asian Sage became a Medieval Saint*, W.W. New York and London: Norton&Co.