

Euthymios the Athonite as author of the Beneficial story of Barlaam and Ioasaph

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Three elements that had been debated for almost a hundred years among Kartvelologists and Byzantinists are settled now in favor of the opinion of the Kartvelologists:

1. The frame narrative of the Greek Barlaam is a translation from the Georgian Balavariani and not vice versa,
2. The Greek Barlaam was produced around 1000 AD and,
3. because of the many notes that connect the Greek Barlaam to the Georgian translator and author Euthymios the Athonite (d. 1028), he is most likely to be regarded as the person who translated the Georgian Balavariani into Greek.

The question remains whether it was Euthymios himself or another person who elaborated the initial translation of the Balavariani and by inserting plenty of quotations and large pieces of other Greek texts enlarged it to the shape of the famous „Edifying story of Barlaam and Ioasaph“. Some colleagues take the authorship of Euthymios for granted without discussing it (Volk, Høgel). Two main arguments, however, support his authorship:

1. My main obstacle to accept Euthymios as the author of the Barlaam was that I assumed he would have produced literal translations. But various studies have shown, that Euthymios indeed translated quite freely and used to cut out phrases or add new ones and even insert longer passages from other texts into his “translations” always keeping in mind the benefit of his audience (cf. the comprehensive overview and analysis by Simelidis). Already Ephrem Mtsire (second half of the 11th c.) mentions this adaptation method of Euthymios.

2. Miminoshvili observed that the Greek Barlaam contains several Patristic quotations which resemble the compendium of Patristic quotations Euthymios produced in Georgian named “The Guide” (օδηγόց). The similarity concerns their sequence, wording, and phraseology. Obviously, these quotations are not literal quotations from the fathers. It makes sense that the extensive use of such a handbook would point to Euthymios who created it for this purpose.

3. Important here are also the titles of two Greek and one Latin manuscript containing the Greek Barlaam and its Latin translation where Euthymios is mentioned as the translator of the story which follows. In addition to that the translation of the Balavariani by Euthymios is mentioned also in the “Life of Ioane and Euthymios” by Giorgi the Athonite and the Testament of Ioane the Athonite.

These are certainly valuable indications but inferior to the two main arguments which are gained from the text itself.

It should be mentioned, that every study on the Greek Barlaam has to be carried out on version c of the Volk edition since the displayed text of his edition belongs to version a which is the later reworked edition. The oldest dated manuscript of the reworked version carries the year 1021 AD when Euthymios was still living. Thus, since Euthymios is accepted as the author of the original version c it is very likely that he himself produced the corrected version of his story.

The title of the Greek Barlaam as “Edifying story” (*ψυχωφελὴ ιστορία*) is striking since no saint’s life is called like that in Greek. Therefore, I presume that Euthymios as a scholar and a conscious pious man knew very well that Barlaam and Ioasaph were fictitious persons, he even might have known about the origin of the Balavariani from an Arabic text. Therefore, he did not call his book a life (*βίος*) and he did not expect the two protagonists to be included in the saint’s calendar. In fact, the fictitious character of the topic gave him the freedom to elaborate the text as much as he pleased.