

The Original Text Form and Chapter Order of the *Physiologus*, with an Edition of the Chapter on the Lizard in Π

▼ **ABSTRACT** The oldest textual form of the first recension of the *Physiologus* can be reconstructed thanks to a precise comparison between the Armenian translation, Latin translation γ, and one single Greek manuscript, Π (Moscow, GIM, Sinod. Gr. 467). The strange placement of the chapter on the lizard at the beginning of the collection in both Π and the Armenian translation can be explained by assuming a codicological accident in their common ancestor. The chapter on the lizard is the last in the collection in the Latin version γ of the *Physiologus* and the model of the *Physiologus syrus Leidensis*, and this must have been its original position. The folio on which that chapter was written fell off and was wrongly put at the beginning rather than the end of the book in the ancestor of Π and the Armenian version. The placement of the lizard in the second position, as in the majority of Greek manuscripts, can be interpreted as an attempt at correcting the misplacement that had occurred in the model of Π. In accordance with that hypothesis, all Greek manuscripts (except Π) and the Ethiopic translation as well as Latin x depend upon a unique hyparchetype. This conclusion completely changes our views on the textual history of the *Physiologus*.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Armenian, Latin, Greek, Syriac, translation, codicology, codex, accident, archetype.

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1. Introduction

The *Physiologus* has been the topic of several studies in recent times, witnessing a renewal of the interest in the text of this fascinating and, in many ways, strange

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Christian book on animal lore.¹ A thorny question remains the time of composition of that work, which is, of course, a key issue for determining the milieu in which the *Physiologus* was written.² Whereas it may, indeed, not be possible to solve this question, at least a first necessary step towards answering it is to understand the transmission history of the *Physiologus* better, especially at its earliest stage, in order to assess the oldest form of the text more securely. As we will show below, arguments regarding dating or contextualising the *Physiologus* based on extant editions of the Greek text often disqualify themselves by using states of the text that are far removed from and later than the original text.

A new examination of the Greek witnesses and the Latin and Oriental translations of the first recension of the *Physiologus* led me to the conclusion that, within the first recension, as identified by Francesco Sbordone in 1936, two clearly different text states should be distinguished, which I have called redaction α and redaction β (Macé 2021a, 72–74). Redaction α is preserved in only one Greek manuscript, **II**, discovered in 1894, and, to a lesser extent, in a few other manuscripts, belonging to what Sbordone called *quarta classis* (**AEI**). I had left open the question of the stemmatic relationship of the two redactions (if both are indeed redactions) in my 2021 article. On the basis of the evidence I had then, it was difficult to decide if **AEI** represented a text state which was intermediary between redaction α and redaction β , or whether it was the result of a contamination of the two redactions (Macé 2021a, 74–80). Some new elements allow me to propose an answer to that question and develop a clearer picture of the early history of the *Physiologus* tradition.

2. Sbordone's Stemma of the Tradition of the *Physiologus*

In 1894 Aleksandr Karneev published the text of the *Physiologus*, which he had found in an eleventh century Greek manuscript kept in Moscow. Containing a *nomocanon* and bearing the number “432” in the Synodal Library, it was called **II** by Karneev (1894, 29). The number “432” given by Karneev must have referred to Archimandrite

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- 1 See, for example, the recent article by Pires (2023), as well as the collected studies edited by Isabelle Draelants and Arnaud Zucker (2019), and by Zbyněk Kindschi Garský and Rainer Hirsch-Luipold (2019); for attempts at situating the *Physiologus* into larger literary or theological contexts, see Grant 1999 and Cox Miller 2018. I am neglecting Stavros Lazaris's 2016 monograph, which does not bring much new information and contains several mistakes: see the reviews by Horst Schneider in *Historische Zeitschrift* 308 (2019), 770–71 and Caroline Macé in *Speculum* 94 (2019), 852–53. Despite this efflorescence of scholarly literature, Samuel Vollenweider is right that the *Physiologus* is usually neglected in handbooks of early Christian literature (Vollenweider 2019, 93, n. 2); it is not mentioned in the new *Geschichte des Christentums in der Spätantike* (Gemeinhardt 2022) either. This little book is, indeed, a UFO for historians of Christian literature and thought, still suffering from a bad literary and theological reputation and from its being mistaken for a work of zoology.
 - 2 Samuel Vollenweider, who tends to date the *Physiologus* to the fourth century on the grounds of theological discussions, which had arisen in that century and are echoed, according to him, in the first chapter of the *Physiologus* (on the lion), offers an overview of previous scholarship in favour of an early dating of the *Physiologus* to the third or even second century (Vollenweider 2019, 93, n. 3–4). However, the important article by Valentine A. Pakis is not mentioned in that overview, although it contains some refreshing thoughts on the alleged Egyptian origin of the *Physiologus* (which is dubious according to Pakis) and on a possible influence of Tatian on it (Pakis 2010, 148–57).

Savva's catalogue, of which the second edition had been published in 1858. But that manuscript, Moscow, GIM, Sinod. gr. 432 (Vladimir 317; Diktyon 44057), does not contain the *Physiologus*. As I have shown elsewhere, the manuscript meant by Karneev must have been Moscow, GIM, Sinod. Gr. 467 (Vladimir 318) (Macé 2017). Because of this confusion in numbers, the *Physiologus* text of **II** remained accessible for a long time only through Karneev's edition, which contains some mistakes.

Karneev's article bears the subtitle "Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der Frage nach der Vorlage des armenischen und eines alten lateinischen Physiologus" (1894).³ Indeed, with the discovery and edition of the text of the *Physiologus* contained in **II**, Karneev solved what had presented itself as a riddle:

Somit weichen die armenische und die lateinischen Versionen von allen bis jetzt bekannten griechischen Texten fast vollständig ab [...]. Es lag also, da bis jetzt kein griechischer Text von gleicher oder ähnlicher Gestalt aufgefunden war, die Vermutung nahe, dass darin eine Willkür des armenischen (resp. lateinischen) Übersetzers zu erkennen sei; dagegen blieb die Thatsache der jedenfalls sehr auffallenden Übereinstimmungen zweier verschiedener Übersetzungen (lateinisch und armenisch) gänzlich unerklärbar (Karneev 1894, 28).

The resemblances of the two translations could now be explained because they were based on Greek models that were close to manuscript **II** (Karneev 1894, 29). Gohar Muradyan's new edition of the Armenian translation, on a much larger and better basis than that used by Karneev, confirmed, in agreement with Nikolay Marr (1904), the very close relationship between the Armenian text and **II** (Muradyan 2005, 48–53). The same is true of Francis J. Carmody's edition of Latin version γ (Carmody 1941, 97).

Karneev concluded from his discovery that the text state (which he called a "Redaktion") represented by **II**, the Armenian translation, and Latin γ was a further development of "the already modified recension A" (Greek manuscript **A**, see the list of sigla in Appendix 1) (Karneev 1894, 30) and he added:

Somit müssen wir Pitras Hypothese von der überaus großen Bedeutung des armenischen Textes gänzlich verwerfen [...]. Leider finden wir diese unzutreffende, für den heutigen Stand der Physiologusfrage durchaus antiquierte Ansicht in der sonst so verdienstvollen bibliographischen Übersicht über die slavische Philologie von Dr Fr. Pastrnek wieder. Der Verfasser glaubt nämlich, dass der armenische Text die älteste griechische Fassung wiedergebe [...] (Karneev 1894, 30, n. 1).

This conclusion was accepted by Sbordone, who classified the manuscripts of the first recension into four "classes", the last one being that containing **II** and some

³ The Armenian version was accessible to Karneev thanks to a French translation of the text edited by the Mekhitarist Gabriel Ayvazean and published by Jean-Baptiste Pitra in 1855; see Muradyan and Topchyan 2021, 281. The Latin translation was known to him through the edition by Charles Cahier (1851–1856); see Boodts and Macé 2021, 111–13.

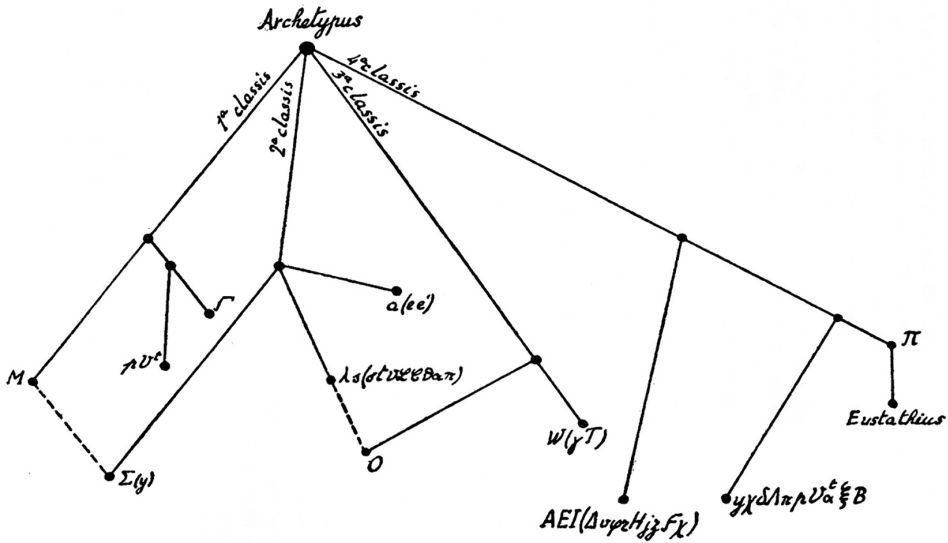


Fig. 1: Sbordone's *antiqui Physiologi codicum stemma* (Sbordone 1936, LXXIX).

other manuscripts (Sbordone's fourth class). Furthermore, Sbordone inferred the following from the agreements between **Π** and what he considered a commentary on the *Hexaemeron* by Eustathius of Antioch (first half of the fourth century):

sequitur ut codicis **Π** archetypus eo saec. ineunte circiter comparatus sit, familia vero AEI (cuius lectiones saepe deteriores quam **Π**, ordo vero et numerus capp. puriorem fontem testantur) saeculo III^o exeunte, recensiones ideo antiquissimae **ΜΓ** et **Σαλs** ad annum fere 200^{um} referantur (Sbordone 1936, LXXVIII).

This work on *Hexaemeron* (CPG 3393) is not by Eustathius of Antioch and must have been compiled at a later date, which Friedrich Zöpfl situates between about 450 and 500 (Zöpfl 1927, 53–55). The later dating of the work does not change much to Sbordone's reasoning, which is based on the false assumption that **Π** and Pseudo-Eustathius' work share a state of the text which is secondary in comparison with what Sbordone considers *recensiones antiquissimae*, **ΜΓ** and **Σαλs**. In fact, as we will see, the opposite is true.⁴ Sbordone based his stemma of the tradition, as reproduced in Fig. 1 (for the manuscripts indicated by these sigla, see Appendix 1 below), on this conclusion, which is wrong.

Ben E. Perry mostly accepted these conclusions in his 1937 review of Sbordone's edition and in his 1941 article for the *Real-Encyclopädie*, and only added that

⁴ Sbordone's reasoning was accepted by Ben Perry (1937, 492), but criticised by Alan Scott (1998, 421–33). On the dating of Pseudo-Eustathius' work, see Odorico 2020, 189–92. About the quotations of the *Physiologus* and of Philo of Alexandria's *De animalibus* by Pseudo-Eustathius (Philo's *De animalibus* being otherwise preserved only thanks to an Armenian translation), see Macé 2020. On the importance of Pseudo-Eustathius' work for the tradition history of the *Physiologus*, see Macé 2021a, 96–105.

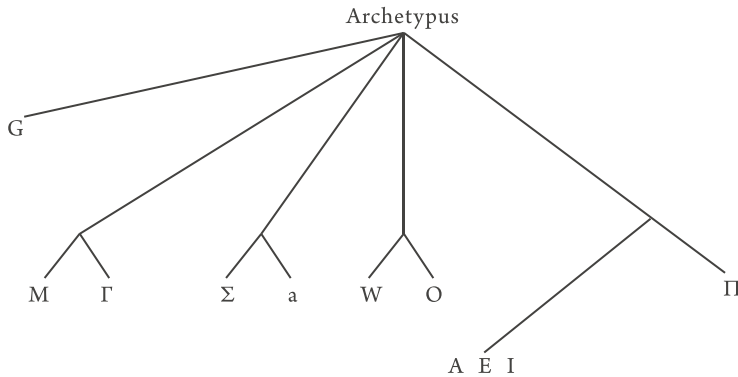


Fig. 2: Offermanns's stemma (redrawn from Offermanns 1966, 11), simplified.

Sbordone neglected “what is certainly the best and probably also the oldest, of all Greek manuscripts of the *Physiologus*” (Perry 1937, 492; 1941, 1113), i.e. manuscript **G**, which is close to Sbordone’s preferred first class **MT**, but without many of **MT**’s mistakes (Perry 1937, 492–93). Perry, however, deplored the fact that Sbordone did not use the ancient translations at all (Perry 1937, 491).

The same criticism was made even stronger by Francis J. Carmody, the editor of the Latin versions of the *Physiologus*, who depreciated Sbordone’s stemma and his edition in the following way:

His critical method is unsound, and his classification of the Greek manuscripts can be shown to be faulty in the light of the indirect tradition in other languages. [...] the frequent agreements between all these versions [Ethiopic, Armenian, Syriac, Arabic, and Latin] and Greek **Π** was proof of the authenticity of many readings in this text which were rejected by Sbordone (Carmody 1941, 96–97).

Despite Carmody’s opinion, manuscript **Π** continued to be considered a later, remote offshoot of the original text believed to be best represented by manuscript **G** (according to Perry). Dieter Offermanns, who edited manuscript **G** (1966), even posited it on a separate branch, on the left side of the **MT** branch (see Fig. 2), and so did Dimitris Kaimakis (1974, 4a), following him. Neither of these two editors made any use of the ancient translations and they did not revise or challenge Sbordone’s stemma in any way.

Although, from a stemmatic point of view, for a manuscript to be on the “left” or “right” side does not mean anything, there was obviously a kind of horizontal hierarchy (rather than a vertical one) implied in Sbordone’s stemma and in the stemmata depending upon his.⁵ The primacy given to **M** by Sbordone, because he considered

⁵ Perry had noted the fact that Sbordone’s four-branched stemma should not have led to a preference for the text of **M** and pointed out that Sbordone’s critical choices were mostly arbitrary: “According to his stemma no one of these four traditions depends in origin on any of the others, but each, in spite of later modifications, goes back more or less independently to the archetype itself. This means that the choice of variants must often be arbitrary, since the readings themselves in many cases cannot be judged on the basis of their intrinsic merits.

it his oldest Greek witness, and to **G** by Perry/Offermanns for a similar reason, is stemmatically without any soundness (Macé 2021a, 80–82). The significance of the agreements between **II**, the Armenian version, and Latin γ was interpreted wrongly by Karneev and Sbordone, as Carmody has already pointed out.⁶

3. The Dates of the Translations

We studied the tradition of the oldest recension of the *Physiologus* in our 2021 book, taking all the ancient and medieval translations of that recension into account (Macé and Gippert 2021). Contrary to what Carmody claimed in the text quoted above, not “all” the versions showed “frequent agreements” with manuscript **II**. Our examination of two chapters (on the pelican and on the panther) indicated that the following translations rather agree with what I have called “redaction β ”, corresponding to Sbordone’s first to third classes, and, at best, represented by the second one, i.e. Greek manuscripts **Σas**: Latin x (Boodts and Macé, 143–47), Ethiopic (Villa 2021, 159–84), Syriac β (Aydin 2021, 198–209 and 210–17), Arabic α (Pirtea 2021, esp. 273–75) as well as the Slavonic translation (Styokova 2021, esp. 365–68). The versions that rather agree with **II** are: Latin γ and b (Boodts and Macé 2021, 209–10), Armenian (Muradyan and Topchyan 2021, 288), Georgian (translated from Armenian: Gippert 2021, 317–43) and Syriac α (Aydin 2021, 209–10 and 217–20).

None of the translations is dated with certainty. There are good reasons, both stylistic and based on early quotations of the Armenian text, to date the Armenian translation to the first half of the fifth century (Sirinian and D’Aiuto 2017, 278 and n. 22; Muradyan and Topchyan 2021, 287). In our 2021 article, Shari Boodts and I did not dare propose any dating for the Latin translations, but the oldest manuscript containing Latin version γ , Bern, Burgerbibliothek, lat. 611, was copied in the first quarter of the eighth century (Boodts and Macé 2021, 118), and the text it contains already presents secondary readings. It must, therefore, already be remote from the archetype (see the apparatus of Boodts’s editions in our 2021 book). Augustine of Hippo (died 430) referred to the chapter on the pelican (Macé 2021b, 420); he may have known it from Greek, but I do not see any reason why Latin translation γ could not have existed at the beginning of the fifth century (or earlier). Latin translation x is often considered older than version γ , but this impression may have arisen because of the poor and archaic Latin language used by the translator of version x , who may not have been a native speaker of Latin (Boodts and Macé 2021, 147). The dating of both Syriac versions to the sixth or seventh century is only deemed “likely” or “reasonable”

[...] Sbordone believes that **MI** contains on the whole the oldest and best tradition, though he offers no proof of this in his preface” (Perry 1937, 492).

⁶ Scott echoed Carmody’s criticism (Scott 1998, 431), but strangely stated that “[t]he younger Latin and Syriac versions, the Armenian, and also the Georgian are derived from the Byzantine recension” (Scott 1998, 431, n. 9), i.e. the second recension, a rather late reworking of the Greek text. Scott drew this wrong information allegedly from Perry 1937, 489, but Perry does not say such a thing, and it is unclear what Scott means by “younger” versions of the Latin and Syriac translations.

by Aydin (2021, 232–33). The Ethiopic translation was traditionally considered the oldest version of the *Physiologus*,⁷ and Massimo Villa considers that a dating in the fifth or sixth century is “not unlikely” (Villa 2021, 162), but other scholars have proposed the seventh century (Scott 1998, 432, n. 18). The Slavonic translation may have appeared in the tenth century (Stoykova 2021, 371), and Adrian Pirtea could identify the milieu of translation of Arabic α as Antioch in the first half of the eleventh century (Pirtea 2021, 269–70). This means that what I had called “redaction β ” must have existed before the date of its earliest translations, already in the sixth century if not before.

From now on, I will focus on the state of the text of the *Physiologus* in Π and the ancient translations close to it. Latin γ and b were edited by Francis J. Carmody in 1941 and 1939 respectively (on Carmody’s editions and their shortcomings, see Boodts and Macé 2021, 117 and 121–24). Version b is an expanded edition of Latin γ , probably based on an older and better state of the text of Latin γ than what is preserved in the direct witnesses; it was perhaps revised on another Greek *Vorlage* than that of Latin γ (Boodts and Macé, 133–37). The nature of Latin b as well as the difficulty of establishing its text with any confidence (Boodts and Macé 2021, 127–28) make it difficult to use for reconstructing the Greek *Vorlage*, this is why it will mostly be neglected here. The Armenian translation was edited and translated into English by Gohar Muradyan in 2005. Both the Armenian and Georgian versions had been edited by Marr in 1904. The Georgian translation is a very important witness to the Armenian one, because, whereas no Armenian manuscript is earlier than the thirteenth century, the Georgian translation was probably made before c. 715 (Gippert 2021, 343–45), and is preserved in a tenth-century codex (Gippert 2021, 310–12). Only one of the two manuscripts containing Syriac version α , Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken, Or. 66 Golius, is edited (Land 1875); the other manuscript (Vatican, BAV, sir. 555) contains only five chapters from version α . As Sami Aydin stated (2021, 232), Syriac version α , as preserved in the Leiden manuscript, is a very much reworked and rewritten version, with several expansions, which makes it of little usefulness for the purpose of the present study, except, as we will see, for the question of the chapter order in the *Physiologus*.

4. The Order of the Chapters in the *Physiologus*

Although some scholars claim that the order of the chapters in the *Physiologus* is arbitrary or haphazard (Pakis 2008, 732; Schneider 2021, 37), the agreements and disagreements between the Greek manuscripts and the ancient translations regarding the order of the chapters cannot have emerged by chance. Considered from a stemmatic point of view, these agreements should allow us to reconstruct a probable

⁷ Perry stated: “Der aithiopische Übersetzer hat den griechischen Text getreu, wenn auch nicht sehr intelligent wiedergegeben. Aus diesem Grund, und auch ihrer Vollständigkeit und ihres Alters wegen, ist die aithiopische Version besonders wertvoll als Zeuge für den frühen P[hyiologus]-Text” (Perry 1941, 1116).

primary order. As Nikolaus Henkel pointed out, “Es ist ein wesentliches Ergebnis der Physiologus-Forschung, daß die Übereinstimmung in der Kapitelfolge ein Zeichen der Verwandtschaft zwischen einzelnen Textzeugen ist” (Henkel 1976, 149). However, in that respect as in textual criticism, “Verwandtschaft” is demonstrated only by shared deviations from the primary order and not by a shared inheritance or observance of that order. The problem is, of course, that we do not know for sure what the original order was, even though sequences of chapters in the same order shared by witnesses that belong to different branches of the tradition may point to that archetypal order. This may have been the implicit reasoning behind Sbordone’s choice of an order for his edition, which is exactly the order of manuscripts **E** (as preserved in **A**) and **s** as well as the Ethiopic translation.⁸

Table I offers a comparison of the chapter orders in **Π**, the Armenian-Georgian translation, and Latin **γ**.⁹ The numbers refer to Sbordone’s edition, whose order serves as a basis for the comparison. To help the reader, a list of the traditional English translations of the animal names is given in Appendix 2 in the order they have in Sbordone’s edition.

The most striking difference between Latin **γ**, on the one hand, and **Π** and the Armenian version, on the other, is the position of the chapter on the “solar lizard” (σαύρα ἡλιακή, chapter 2 in Sbordone’s edition). It had already been noted by Karneev: “Nur der erste Artikel (σαύρα) steht ausser der richtigen Reihenfolge” (Karneev 1894, 29). It is easy to demonstrate that the position of that chapter in **Π** and the Armenian version is a deviation or, in stemmatic terms, a mistake. Indeed, in all other known witnesses to the *Physiologus*, direct (Greek manuscripts) or indirect (the translations and the other recensions of the *Physiologus*), the lion occupies the first position, and it begins, even in **Π** and in Armenian, with the words ἀρξόμεθα λαλῆσαι περὶ τοῦ λέοντος, τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν θηρίων [ἡτοι ζώων] (Sbordone 1936, 1, l. 2–3), “We will start talking about the lion, the king of the beasts [or animals]”:

8 Nowhere did Sbordone explain why he chose that order, which is not that of his preferred manuscript **M**, but Perry noted: “The order of the chapters [in **G**] [...] is often closer than **M** to the order of **A** and the Aethiopic, which has been adopted by Lauchert and Sbordone” (Perry 1937, 492). The order of the folios in **E** was very much disturbed when it was copied in **E'**, but was restored by Josef Strzygowski (Sbordone 1936, XXXVII–XL); this restored order is exactly that of **A**. For a synoptic table of the different orders in the Greek manuscripts, see Macé 2021a, 71–72 (Table 2.1).

9 For the Armenian version, see Muradyan and Topchyan 2021, 293–94 (Table 8.1); for the Georgian version, Gippert 2021, 347 (Table 9.1); and for the Latin one, Boodts and Macé 2021, 157–58 (Table 3.1). The order of the chapters varies a bit in the manuscripts of Latin **γ**, but the lion is always the first and the lizard always the last. No manuscript of version **b** (about which see Boodts and Macé 2021, 124–37) has preserved a chapter on the lizard, but Carmody, in his edition of version **b** (1939), included it as the last chapter on the basis of manuscripts of the *Dicta Chrysostomi* version (Boodts and Macé 2021, 127) and others, as a story about the *lacerta* (version **b**, chapter 37), which is clearly related to the chapter on the lizard except for the animal being a bird (*uolatile*) in some of the manuscripts. The fact that the solar lizard is identified as a bird in some versions of the Latin *Physiologus* could provide the beginning of a clue for the otherwise puzzling representation of the lizard as a bird in some sixteenth-century illustrated Greek manuscripts copied in Italy (Lazaris 2021, 207); cf. Henkel 1976, 185, n. 187: “Zur Eidechse als Tier, das fliegen kann”. It should also be noted that in Greek manuscript **a**, copied in Southern Italy in the eleventh century, the lizard is said to have wings (the illustration in that manuscript does not reflect this, however), probably under the influence of the story about the eagle (chapter 6): see below n. 9 in Appendix 3.

Table I: Comparison of the chapter orders in Latin γ , Π , and the Armenian version.

LATIN γ	GREEK MS Π	ARMENIAN
	2 (Lizard)	2 (Lizard)
1 (Lion)	1 (Lion)	1 (Lion)
36 + 37 + 39	36 + 37 + 39	36 + 37 + 39
3–14	3–14	3–14
40 + 15 + 34	15	15
43 + 41 + 44 + 42 + 45–48		
16–28	16–24 (part) + 34 (part) + 27–28 (in disorder)	16–26 + 34 + 27–28
33 + 30 + 29 + 31	33 + 30 + 29 + 31	33 + 30
38 + 35 + 32	32/38	
2 (Lizard)		

Π fol. 192v: ἀρχόμεθα λαλῆσαι περὶ τοῦ λέοντος, τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν θηρίων ἥτοι τῶν ζώων.

Armenian, chapter 2.1 (Muradyan 2005, 87): Սկսցուք ասել վասն առիւծուն, որ թագաւոր է ամենայն գազանաց կամ թէ ամենայն իսկ անասնոց; translation (Muradyan 2005, 141): “Let us begin to speak about the lion, the king of all the beasts or all the animals”.¹⁰

Latin γ , chapter 1, *Incipit* (Carmody 1941, 103): *Incipimus loqui de leone primum, rege omnium bestiarum*.¹¹

There are a few differences between the versions, but we will leave them aside for the time being. The important point here is that this sentence does not make any sense if the chapter on the lion is not the first in the collection. That the sentence was, nevertheless, preserved in Π and in Armenian, although none of these versions starts with the chapter on the lion, supports the conclusion that the displacement of the chapter was accidental and not deliberate.

¹⁰ Compare with the Georgian (Marr 1904, 2): ვიწყო ლომისათვის, რამეთუ შარავანდედ არს ყოველთა მშვეცთა ზედა და ყოველთა პირუტყუთა, “I shall begin on the lion, because he is the king over all the beasts or all the animals”. Both the Armenian and the Georgian texts are available in the TITUS database, <https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/arm/physiom/physi.htm> and <https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/cauc/ageo/satberd/satbe.htm>, respectively (accessed on 30 November 2023).

¹¹ Carmody mentions in his apparatus that Y3 (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, lat. 611) reads: *Incipimus loqui de leone rege omnium bistiarum et animalium*; cf. St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 230, p. 510: *Incipicemus loqui de leone rege bestiarum et animalium* (images available on e-codices: <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/searchresult/list/one/csg/0230>, accessed on 26 November 2023). On this last manuscript, which contains chapters from versions γ and b, see Boodts and Macé 2021, 129–30 (the chapter on the lion in that manuscript belongs to version γ).

The chapter on the lizard is the second in the collection in most Greek manuscripts other than **Π**,¹² as well as in Latin **x** (Gebert 2010, 374–75), in Ethiopic (Villa 2021, 195) and in Arabic **α** (Pirtea 2021, 279); the first four chapters are not preserved in Syriac **β**, and, thus, there is no trace of a chapter on the lizard in that version (Aydin 2021, 234). In contrast to this situation, the chapter on the lizard is the last one in Latin **y**, and this order must also have been the same in Syriac **α**. Aydin showed that the original order of that Syriac translation (and, therefore, of its Greek model) is lost in the Leiden manuscript, and the Vatican manuscript preserves too few chapters to make any assumptions in that respect; however, the copyist of the Leiden manuscript indicated the order that he had found in his model (Aydin 2021, 235, n. 143), and that order is largely in agreement with the order of Latin **y** (see Table II, with differences in bold).

Table II: Comparison of the chapter orders in Latin **y** and Syriac **α**.

LATIN y	SYRIAC α
1	1
36 + 37 + 39	36 + 39
3–14	3–14
40 + 15 + 34	15
43 + 41 + 44 + 42 + 45–48	
16–28	16–26
	32 + 40 + 34 + 43 + 41 + 44–48
33 + 30 + 29 + 31	28 + 33 + 30 + 29 + 31
38 + 35 + 32	38 + 42 + 35 + 27
2	2

Another confirmation that the original position of the chapter on the lizard must have been at the end of the collection is the fact that in both **Π** and the Armenian translation the chapter ends with these words:

Π fol. 192v: καλῶς οὖν ὁ φυσιολόγος ἐλάλησεν περὶ τῆς φύσεως ἐκάστου γένους.

Armenian, chapter 1.10 (Muradyan 2005, 87 and 141): Ասա ուրեմն բարուր խախեցաւ բարոյախաւս վասն անուանց իւրաքանչիւր ազգաց; translation: “So Physiologus [բարոյախաւս, lit. ‘the one who speaks about the habits’, see Muradyan 2005, 4, n. 22] spoke well concerning the names of each species”.¹³

¹² The chapter on the lizard is at the twelfth position in **a**, after the panther (Sbordone’s chapter 16); the positions of the lizard and the *caladrius* (Sbordone’s chapter 3) are inverted in **Γ**. The lizard is the second chapter, after the lion, in manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barocci 50, an early tenth-century manuscript containing a paraphrase of the *Physiologus*’ stories. About this last manuscript, see Macé 2021a, 105–06.

¹³ Compare with the Georgian: უკუე კეთილად სამე თქუა სახის-მეტყუელმან ქმულებად სახისად ურთიერთას თესლთად, “So the ‘Physiologus’ [*saxis-metq’umelman*, lit. ‘the one who speaks about the

This sentence, which, however, is not found in the corresponding chapter of Latin γ (at least in Carmody's edition), makes much more sense if the chapter is actually the last in the collection. If the chapter on the lizard was indeed the last one in the original collection, as it is in Latin γ and must have been in Syriac α , it is easier to understand how the accidental misplacement of that chapter may have occurred in the common *Vorlage* of Π and the Armenian translation. In a codex in which the lizard was copied on the last folio, that folio fell off and was mistakenly placed at the beginning rather than the end of the collection. Then, this manuscript, with the lizard now at the beginning, was copied into another codex, which became the ancestor of the model(s) of Π and the Armenian translation. Before discussing the codicological implications and likelihood of this scenario, I would like to proceed further on the philological consequences of this material accident.¹⁴

5. A Proposal for a New Stemma of the *Physiologus* Tradition

If we admit that the lion was the first and the solar lizard the last in the original order of the chapters, then why is the lizard the second chapter in so many witnesses to the oldest recension of the *Physiologus*, including the Ethiopic version and Latin x ? My hypothesis is that in the Greek exemplar upon which all these witnesses ultimately depend, the obvious misplacement of the chapter on the lizard was remedied by putting it immediately after what presents itself as the first chapter. In that hypothesis, all witnesses (except for Π , Latin γ , the Armenian-Georgian version, and Syriac α) descend from a hyparchetype, which itself depends upon a faulty ancestor, where the chapter on the lizard was at the first position, i.e. the very same ancestor (Φ) also shared by Π and the Armenian-Georgian version. Furthermore, Π and the Armenian version share some peculiarities that are found neither in the other Greek manuscripts nor in Latin γ , especially the loss of chapters 35 and 40–48. It is, therefore, necessary to postulate a common hyparchetype (Ψ) for Π and the Greek model of the Armenian translation (Fig. 3).

If this hypothesis is confirmed, it will be clear that the other manuscripts in Sbordone's fourth class cannot belong to the same branch as Π , but depend on the hyparchetype X , in which the chapter on the lizard was moved to the second position. Since Sbordone considered that E was closer to Π than the other Greek manuscripts in the fourth class (Macé 2021a, 75), E should be, in fact, closer to hyparchetype X .

appearance', see Gippert 2021, 342] spoke well of the emergence of the appearance of each species" (Marr 1904, 2). The *Vorlage* of the Georgian translation must have had something like "nature" (Greek φύσις is generally translated by *puwp* "habit(s)" in the Armenian *Physiologus*) and not "names" (անուանց) as in the Armenian manuscripts, because the Georgian translator provides a kind of doublet in ქმნულებზეა სახისაჲ *kmmulebay saxisay* "emergence of the appearance" with სახე-ი generally representing *bark'* in the *Physiologus* (Gippert 2021, 343).

¹⁴ On the concept of "material accident", see Irigoin 1986. I presented some of the material for the present article at a conference entitled "Identifying Models and Copies on the Basis of Material Evidence: At the Intersection Between Manuscript Studies and Philology", held in Hamburg (Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures) on 10–11 November, 2022, at the invitation of Giovanni Ciotti and José Maksimczuk.

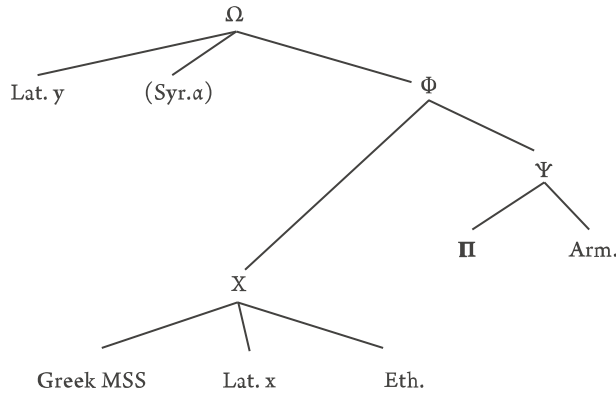


Fig. 3: New schematic representation of the early history of the *Physiologus* tradition.

Amongst the manuscripts of Sbordone’s fourth class, **E** is the oldest and could be the ancestor of the others in that class (except **Π**). This manuscript was copied in the eleventh century in the Stoudion monastery in Constantinople and was later kept in Smyrna until it disappeared during the fire, which destroyed the Christian and Jewish quarters of the city in 1922. It is mostly famous because of its illustrations that were unique in many ways. The dating of the handwriting and illumination has been a subject of debate (summarised in Lazaris 2021, 28–33). Most of **E**’s illustrations are preserved in photographs (Bernabò 1998), but its text is only accessible through a seventeenth-century copy identified by Sbordone (**E**’).

According to this new scenario, we must abandon the terms “redaction α ” and “redaction β ”. Indeed, **Π** together with the Armenian-Georgian translation and Latin **y** are the closest we can get to the original text of the *Physiologus*, and not a “redaction” of it. The nature of what was called “redaction β ” needs to be further refined, but it is a derived state of the text, with some mistakes and also some corrections, as well as rewriting and reorganisation of the text. That state of the text is at best (i.e. before most of the redactional work occurred) preserved in **E** and Latin **x**, whereas the Ethiopic translation probably derived from a state of the text that had already been further modified and redacted (**T**), as in the other Greek manuscripts (**saΣ** in the first place; see Macé 2021a, 82–83). This conclusion emerges from the comparison of the versions of the chapter on the lizard (see Appendix 3). It should be reassessed by an examination of the whole *Physiologus*. In the meantime, the following schema of transmission seems the most probable:

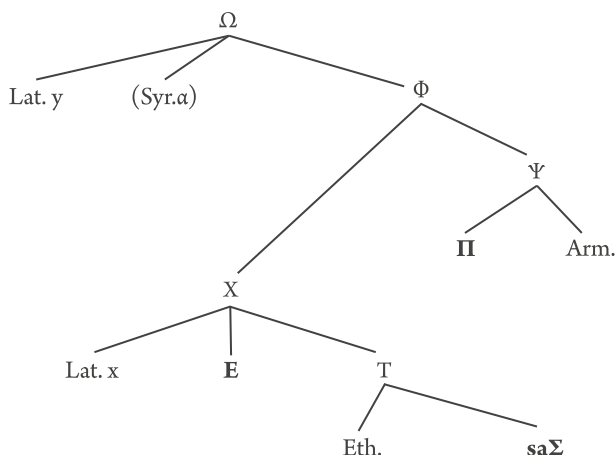


Fig. 4: The *Physiologus* tradition.

6. Codicological Features of the Lost Ancestor of Π and the Armenian Version

The Greek model of the Armenian translation, dated to the fifth century, must have been written in majuscules.¹⁵ At least one mistake of Π can be explained as a misreading of a majuscule. The name of the antelope (chapter 36 in Sbordone's edition, chapter 3 in Π and the Armenian-Georgian version, chapter 2 in Latin γ), which seems to be an invention of the *Physiologus*,¹⁶ can be reconstructed as *autholops* (cf. Arm. ալթողոփոս) on the basis of Latin γ and the Georgian translation, whereas it was disfigured in Π and the Armenian manuscripts (Macé 2021a, 99–100). The reading of Π (fol. 193r), λυθίωψ, can be explained as a misreading of Λ for A at the initial of the word, and the simplification of -ΩΛΩΨ into -ΙΩΨ.¹⁷

If we imagine that the folio on which the chapter on the lizard was written had come loose and was misplaced at the beginning of manuscript Φ, which was presum-

¹⁵ On the basis of one mistake in the Armenian translation, Anna Sirinian and Francesco D'Aiuto inferred that the Greek model did not use the *nomen sacrum* for σωτήρ, which is an indication of an early dating of that model to the fourth or fifth century (Sirinian and D'Aiuto 2017, 282). About this *nomen sacrum* in early Christian papyri, see Mugridge 2016, 129.

¹⁶ About that name, see the entertaining, albeit unconvincing, notes in Wiener 1921, 68–74. Emmanuelle Kuhry and I are preparing an article on that chapter within the framework of a PPP/PHC Procope Project funded by the DAAD in Germany and Campus France in France. The source of the *Physiologus* for that chapter seems to be a fable of Aesop involving the stag.

¹⁷ The confusion of Λ/A is a typical example of the misreading of uncial script (Irigoin 2003, 15–18). One of the anonymous reviewers of the present article suggested that a false association with the word Αἰθίωψ might also have played a role in this mistake. It is, of course, possible and I am grateful for this suggestion, although the fact that Αἰθίωψ is obviously not the name of an animal makes it rather unlikely in my opinion.

ably a codex,¹⁸ the chapter must have stood alone in that folio, the text probably covering the recto and the verso of the last folio of the codex. If the text had started on a verso (the recto being occupied by the end of another chapter) or if it had covered only a recto with the verso being left blank, the misplacement at the beginning of the book would not have been that easy.

We must further assume that the folios were not foliated, the chapters were not numbered, and there was neither an *incipit* nor an *explicit* for the whole work. The absence of such features seems relatively common in early codices.¹⁹ The reading aids must have been minimal in the supposed models of the Armenian translation and **Π**, because some strange elements in these two witnesses can be accounted for only if no basic guidance for readers (or subsequent copyists) was present. The chapters do not bear any titles in **Π** or in the oldest Armenian manuscripts.²⁰ It is not always clear where a new chapter begins, because the only indication of this in the oldest Armenian manuscripts are the numbers of the chapters in the margins (sometimes added by a second hand) and the majuscule initial letter used in the text. The numbers and initial letters are not always placed exactly where a chapter begins, but rather where the animal is named for the first time. We have exactly the same situation in **Π**: a majuscule letter in red is used to indicate the first letter of the sentence beginning with *ὁ φυσιολόγος ἔλεξεν* or *ἔστι ζῶον* and the like (and the number, also in red, is placed in the margin facing the initial letter). However, that kind of sentence is preceded by a biblical quotation (whose relationship to the rest of the chapter is usually very loose) in many of the chapters.²¹ The initial biblical quotation is, therefore, often considered the conclusion of the preceding chapter in **Π** and the Armenian translation.²² The first chapter to have a number in the margin of **Π** is the one on the sawfish (fol. 193v), which is the fifth in the manuscript but bears the number four (δ), because the preceding two chapters, on the antelope and the fire-stones, were merged together. The first chapter for which a number is given in the margin in the Armenian manuscript M2101 is the third (γ), on the antelope (fol. 70v). It is, therefore, highly probable that the chapters had no titles

18 The codex would have been the usual book form to receive a Christian work in the fourth or fifth century: see e.g. Hurtado 2006, 49. This does not mean that the *Physiologus* was written in the fourth century, but only that the archetype of the tradition (the oldest point we can reconstruct) is likely to have emerged at that time.

19 Mugridge 2016, 71–91. About reading aids in early Christian books, also see Batovici 2020, with previous bibliography.

20 I could see images of M2101 and M2174. On these Armenian manuscripts, see Muradyan and Topchyan 2021, 283–84.

21 On the typical structure of the chapters, see Schneider 2021, 37–39.

22 An example is the first sentence of the chapter on the sawfish in Latin γ (chapter 4.1 in Carmody's edition): *bene Physiologus dixit de abstinentibus in omnia, et non in fine permanentibus* (cf. Mt. 24.13). In Muradyan's edition, a similar sentence is the first of the chapter on the antelope (chapter 3.0), and, in **Π**, it is the last sentence of the chapter on the lion (fol. 193r), just before the beginning of the chapter on the antelope: *ἀλλὰ περὶ πολιτευομένων καὶ μὴ περιμεινάντων εἰς τέλος*. That sentence is omitted in all other Greek manuscripts. In fact, it would fit better content-wise, especially in the form it has in Latin γ, as the final sentence of the chapter on the fire-stones (Sbordone's chapter 37, Carmody's chapter 3, Muradyan's chapter 4; merged with the preceding chapter, on the antelope, in **Π** fol. 193v). Also see Macé 2021a, 77–78.

or numbers in the exemplar(s) of **II** and the Armenian translation, and that the transitions between the chapters were not clearly indicated.

The chapter on the lizard in **II** comprises 625 characters without spaces (*scriptio continua*). If we assume that the text occupied one recto and, at least, a large part of the verso, this amount of text could have been written at a ratio of about 20 characters per line and about 15 lines per page (or the other way around) on each face of the folio. Browsing through Alan Mugridge's Table 11, listing the numbers of letters per line and lines per column in early Christian papyri, the manuscript whose average number of letters and lines would be the closest to what we assume for the chapter on the lizard is n° 334 in Mugridge's catalogue, with an average of 21.5 letters and 15.5 lines, that is, 333.25 letters per page (Mugridge 2016, 509). Manuscript n° 334 is P. Bodm. XIII, a fragment of a papyrus codex dated to the fourth century CE containing parts of Melito, *De Pascha* (CPG 1092).²³ Considering every chapter in the *Physiologus* as having the same length as that on the lizard (which is a simplification: if we look at Carmody's edition of Latin *γ*, several chapters are longer and a few are smaller) and three times adding to the 48 canonical chapters two others where the animals have three natures (the lion, the snake, and the ant), we arrive at 51 chapters, each occupying one folio, i.e. 51 folios, which could constitute a small single-work codex.

For the sake of completeness, I am also mentioning here the only preserved papyrus containing fragments from two chapters of the *Physiologus* (chapters 41 and 42), Florence, PSI XVI 1577, dated to the sixth century (Stroppa 2011, 173–74).²⁴ A column in that papyrus must have contained about 990 characters (17 lines with c. 60 characters per line), according to Marco Stroppa's reconstruction (185). This fragment is, in any case, younger than the model of the Armenian translation, and it also seems to be a rather exceptional manuscript, not a codex, but a *rotulus*, a format that seems related to an educational context.²⁵ This peculiar papyrus does not help much in reconstructing the earliest state of the text and already presents obvious secondary readings,²⁶ but it attests to the diffusion of the *Physiologus* in Egypt and to the varied contexts in which this work was read.

7. Conclusion

Vollenweider considered that the search of an origin might make little sense, although he recognised that the difficulty of identifying an “Urschrift” in the tradition of the

²³ Mugridge (2016, 318) notes that particularly in this papyrus “α is sometimes difficult to distinguish from λ”.

²⁴ See <https://www.psi-online.it/documents/psi;16;1577> (accessed on 26 November 2023).

²⁵ Stroppa 2016, 170; cf. also Stroppa 2019, 43, and, generally about the use of *rotulus* in Christian literary papyri, Stroppa 2013.

²⁶ About the position of this papyrus in the tradition of the *Physiologus*, see Macé 2021a, 84–90. It is very difficult to classify the text of the papyrus because of the fragmentary state of the text it contains; in addition, chapters 41 and 42 are absent from **II** and the Armenian translation.

Physiologus “complicates the chronological fixation” of the work.²⁷ On the contrary, I think that this question is unescapable and cannot be considered insoluble until it has been thoroughly examined. The hypotheses put forward in the present article are far from answering all questions concerning the origins of the *Physiologus* text, but they offer the best explanatory narrative so far to account for the complicated relationships between all the witnesses to the early history of the transmission of that work in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. This narrative will have to be tested on a completely new collation, comparison and philological analysis of all chapters of the *Physiologus*.²⁸ The text of the chapter on the lizard in **II** is edited anew in Appendix 3 with a few philological comments, thus, paving the way for a future new edition.

Muradyan had already “listed objections” against my present hypothesis in her 2005 edition of the Armenian *Physiologus*:

[...] in 28 cases the Latin confirms the readings of the archetype of the Armenian version, that differ from **II**. There are other 28 cases in which the Latin version γ corresponds to the readings of the Greek **II**, differing from the Armenian version, which are supported by other Greek manuscripts [...] We may conclude that the thesis of one common archetype of the Greek MS **II**, of the Latin version in the form of recension γ and of the Armenian version should be refined: it might have had three independent developments already in Greek; two of which became originals for the versions (Muradyan 2005, 57–58).

Indeed, these arguments will need to be addressed, something I cannot do in the framework of the present article. It is clear that **II** presents singular mistakes. The other cases, i.e. where Latin γ and **II** agree against the Armenian version and other Greek manuscripts, should be assessed one by one. Different problems must be taken into consideration in that respect. Firstly, until recently, the text of **II** was accessible to scholars only through Karneev’s edition (1894), which is not exempt from mistakes (Macé 2017).²⁹ Secondly, Carmody’s edition of Latin γ is not totally reliable, and a new edition should be made (Boodts and Macé 2021, 121–22). Thirdly, a greater attention should be paid to the Georgian version when assessing the text of the Armenian translation, because the Georgian version kept original readings of the Armenian text which were lost in all known Armenian manuscripts.³⁰ Finally, cases of polygenesis should be excluded (especially small omissions that can appear independently in unrelated witnesses).

27 Vollenweider 2019, 93–94: “Zusätzlich erschwert wird die chronologische Fixierung durch die für diesen Typ von Literatur charakteristische Vielfalt an Versionen, die es nicht einfach (und womöglich auch nicht sinnvoll) macht, eine „Urschrift“ zu identifizieren”. See Macé and Gippert 2021, 18–19, for an answer to this rather widespread kind of scepticism.

28 This will be the purpose of a joint DFG-ANR research project which Emmanuelle Kuhry and I received and which will start on 1 June 2025.

29 For examples of Karneev’s inaccurate renderings of the text about the lizard in **II**, see Appendix 3.

30 For examples, see Gippert 2021, 338; my edition of the pelican chapter in Macé and Gippert 2021, 433, n. 2 and 3; and the edition of the Armenian chapter on the panther, *ibid.*, 531, n. 5–8; see also Appendix 3 below.

The future will tell whether my hypotheses about the origins of the *Physiologus* stand to reason or not.

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Appendix 1: The Greek Manuscripts Referred to in this Article

For the Greek manuscripts, in addition to the bibliography in *Pinakes* (<https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>), see Macé 2021a, 53–66.

- a** = Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, E 16 sup. (Diktyon 42678), region of Otranto, eleventh century (?)
- A** = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2426 (Diktyon 52058), Venice, *anno* 1562
- E** = Izmir, Evaggelikē Scholē, B8 (Diktyon 34075), Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople, *circa* 1065
- E'** = Athos, Panteleēmōnos, 245 (Lambros 5752) (Diktyon 22384), seventeenth century
- G** = New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS, M.397 (Diktyon 46625), Calabria, end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century (?)
- I** = Athos, Ibērōn, gr. 377 (Diktyon 23974), fourteenth century (?)
- M** = Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, A 45 sup. (Diktyon 42172), region of Otranto, twelfth century (?)
- O** = Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barocci 95 (Diktyon 47382), Italy, first half of the fifteenth century
- s** = Oxford, Bodleian Library, Seld. Supra 15 (Diktyon 48460), sixteenth century (?)
- W** = Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, theol. gr. 128 (Diktyon 71795), second half of the thirteenth century (?)
- Γ** = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2509 (Diktyon 52141), end of the fourteenth century (?)
- Π** = Moscow, Gosudarstvennyj Istoričeskij Musej (GIM), Sinod. Gr., 467 (Diktyon 44092), *anno* 1041
- Σ** = Moscow, Gosudarstvennyj Istoričeskij Musej (GIM), Sinod. Gr., 298 (Diktyon 43923), Trebizond (?), second half of the thirteenth century (?)

Appendix 2: Traditional English Translations of the Animal and Other Names in the Order They Have in Sbordone's Edition

1 Lion	17 <i>Aspidochelone</i>	33 Swallow
2 Lizard	18 Partridge	34 <i>Peridexion</i>
3 Caladrius	19 Vulture	35 Dove
4 Pelican	20 Ant-lion	36 Antelope
5 Owl	21 Weasel	37 Fire-stones
6 Eagle	22 Unicorn	38 Magnet
7 Phoenix	23 Beaver	39 Sawfish
8 Hoopoe	24 Hyena	40 Ibis
9 Wild donkey	25 Otter	41 Wild goat
10 Viper	26 Ichneumon	42 Diamond
11 Snake	27 Crow	43 Elephant
12 Ant	28 Turtledove	44 Agate and Pearl
13 Sirens and onocentaurs	29 Frog	45 Donkey and Ape
14 Hedgehog	30 Deer	46 Indian stone
15 Fox	31 Salamander	47 Heron
16 Panther	32 Diamond	48 Sycamore

Appendix 3: The Chapter on the Solar Lizard in Π

A Note on the Witnesses

The text edited below is that of **Π** and not a reconstruction of the oldest state of the text of the first recension of the *Physiologus*. Significant variants in the other witnesses are given in the comments after the text. Only **Π** was collated anew, the other Greek manuscripts, Latin translation γ (Lat. γ), the Armenian and Georgian translations (Arm.-Georg., unless they differ) are quoted according to their respective editions: Sbordone (1936) and Offermanns (1966) for manuscript **G**, Carmody (1941), Muradyan (2005), and Marr (1904). Regarding the Greek manuscripts, I am only considering the most important ones (and **E*** stands for “**AEI**” in Sbordone's apparatus). Latin x (Lat. x) is quoted as in Gebert's edition of one of the two known manuscripts (Gerbert 2010), and the Ethiopic version (Eth.) is mentioned according to the Italian translation revised by Massimo Villa in Zambon 2018, 72–121.

The chapter on the lizard is the only one included in Pseudo-Eustathius' compilation (ed. Allatius, in *PG* 18, 745.24–32), in which not only the story about the animal, but also the moralistic interpretation is preserved. However, Pseudo-Eustathius' text (Ps.-Eust.) is not very usable for text-critical purposes, because the story is summarised and the interpretation is paraphrased.

A Note on the Text

Accentuation and iotacisms (e.g. τύχον/τύχου instead of τοῖχον/τοίχου) or vowel lengths are tacitly corrected (only for animals' names, which function like proper names, orthographic discrepancies are noted); the punctuation and divisions of the text are mine. Otherwise, the text of manuscript **Π** has not been altered: the *-v ephelkystikon* is kept before a consonant, the accentuation of the *enclitica* and the *gravis* before a weak punctuation are preserved. The grammar, at times awkward or even faulty, is left untouched.

Edition

Tit. (fol. 192r) Πέτρου ἐπισκόπου Ἀλεξανδρείας

- (1) Ἔστιν καλουμένη σαύρα ἡλιακή, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Φυσιολόγος.
- (2) Ὅταν γηράσῃ, ἐμποδίζεται τῶν δύο ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ πηροῦται μὴ βλέπουσα τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς. Τί οὖν ποιεῖ τῇ ἑαυτῆς καλῇ φύσει; Ζητεῖ τοῖχον βλέποντα εἰς ἀνατολὰς καὶ εἰσβαίνει εἰς ῥαγάδα τοῦ τοίχου, προσβλέπουσα τῇ ἀνατολῇ, καὶ ἀνατέλλοντος τοῦ ἡλίου, ἀνοίγονται αὐτῆς οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ νέα γίνεται.
- (3) Τοῦτο καὶ σὺ, ὦ ἄνθρωπε. Εἰ τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον ἔχεις ἔνδυμα, βλέπε, μήποτε οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῆς καρδίας σου ἐμποδισθῶσιν, ζήτησον τόπον νοερὸν ἀνατέλλοντά σοι ἡλίον, | (fol. 192v) τὸν σωτήρα ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, οὗ τὸ ὄνομα ἀνατολὴ καλεῖται ἐν τῷ προφῆτῃ, καὶ οὗτος ὁ ἥλιος τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἀνοίξει τοὺς νοεροὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα τοῦ παλαιοῦ νέον ἐν σοὶ γένηται.
- (4) Καλῶς οὖν ὁ φυσιολόγος ἐλάλησεν περὶ τῆς φύσεως ἐκάστου γένους.

Translation

Tit. Of Peter, Bishop of Alexandria

- (1) There is a lizard called solar, as the Physiologus says.
- (2) When it gets old, it is hindered from both its eyes and is blinded as it cannot see the sun's light. What does it do then by its beautiful nature? It searches for a wall looking to the direction of dawn and it goes in a fissure of the wall, it looks at the dawn, and when the sun rises, its eyes open and it becomes new.
- (3) This also [applies to] you, O man! If you have the old man as garment,¹ look, may the eyes of your heart never be hindered, [but] search for a spiritual place where the sun rises for you, [i.e.]

¹ Cf. Col. 3.9 (NA28): ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ ("for you have put off the garment of the old man with his practices").

our saviour Jesus Christ, whose name is called “dawn” in the Prophet,² and this sun of justice³ will open your spiritual eyes, and the garment of the old will become new in you.⁴

(4) Thus, the *Physiologus* spoke well about the nature of each species.

Philological Comments

Tit. The attribution of the *Physiologus* to Peter, bishop of Alexandria is peculiar to manuscript **Π**, it is not found in any of the other witnesses. The first Peter known as bishop of Alexandria is Peter I (d. 311), but nothing in the few fragments kept of his writings or in his biography (Le Boulluec 2012) would hint at the possibility of him being the author of the *Physiologus*. It is likely that the exemplar of **Π** did not bear any title.

No biblical quotation opens the chapter, which is not exceptional; chapters 36–46, for example, also do not have an introductory biblical quotation. The σαύρα appears once in the Septuagint in a list of impure animals (Lev. 11.30).

(1) σαύρα **Π**. The name σαύρα (or σαῦρα) ἡλιακή is found in the *Cyranides*, in which three types of lizard (ζαύρα) are distinguished: ζαυρῶν δέ εἰσι γένη τρία. ἡ μὲν ἡλιακή λέγεται, ἡ δὲ χαλκή, ἡ δὲ χλωρά (*Cyranides*, II, 14, see Kaimakis 1976, 139).⁵ Since the *Cyranides* sometimes borrows stories from the *Physiologus* (cf. Macé 2021b, 422), it is possible that, at other times, it may also have borrowed an animal’s name, without the story. This hypothesis is not necessary, however, and the name σαύρα ἡλιακή may have been common at least in Egypt. It is also present in a treatise on venomous animals, attributed to Aelius Promotus (Alexandria, first half of the second century CE; see Nutton 2006), in the chapter on the ἀσκαλαβώτης (gecko), telling that the gecko “looks like the solar lizard, but with a smaller body and a slightly flattened head”.⁶

Ephraim of Salamis obviously refers to the *Physiologus* story in his *Panarion* when he compares the sect of the Sampsaeans (Σαμψαῖοι) to the σαύρα ἡλιακή.⁷

2 Cf. Zach. 6.12 (Rahlfs): καὶ ἐρεῖς πρὸς αὐτόν· Τάδε λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ· Ἴδοὺ ἀνὴρ, Ἀνατολὴ ὄνομα αὐτῷ, καὶ ὑποκάτωθεν αὐτοῦ ἀνατελεῖ, καὶ οἰκοδομήσει τὸν οἶκον κυρίου (“and you shall say to him [Jesus, son of Josedek]: this is what the Lord almighty says: behold, a man, Dawn is his name, and he will rise from below him and he will build the house of the Lord”); cf. Lc. 1.78–79: διὰ σπλάγχχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν, ἐν οἷς ἐπισκέπεται ἡμᾶς ἀνατολὴ ἐξ ὕψους, | ἐπιφάνει τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις, τοῦ κατευθῆναι τοὺς πόδας ἡμῶν εἰς ὁδὸν εἰρήνης (“because of the inner sweetness of the mercy of our God, whereby dawn shall visit us from on high | to reveal itself to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”).

3 Cf. Mal. 3.20 (Rahlfs): καὶ ἀνατελεῖ ὑμῖν τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά μου ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἴασις ἐν ταῖς πτέρυξιν αὐτοῦ (“and for you who fear my name will rise a sun of justice and a healing is in its wings”).

4 Cf. Col. 3.10 (NA28): καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν (“and you have put on the garment of the new one, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his creator”).

5 Stavros Lazaris (2021, 208) claims that the solar lizard “n’existe pas”. Indeed, several of the creatures in the *Physiologus* cannot have “existed” anywhere, but this is not relevant. Sbordone (1936, 8, in the *apparatus fontium*) already mentioned the reference to the *Cyranides* (“Hermes p. 60”).

6 Περὶ τῶν ἰοβόλων θηρίων, chapter 14 (Ihm 1995, 50, l. 35–51, l. 1): ἔοικε δὲ τὸ μὲν εἶδος σαύρα ἡλιακή, μικρότερος δὲ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἡρέμα πως ὑποπλατυνομένην ἔχων.

7 Ephraim, *Panarion*, 53, 2, 3 (Holl 1922, 316): ταύτην γὰρ σαύραν οὕτω κυκλήσκουσιν ἡλιακὴν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. χεῖρων δὲ ἢ αἶρεις αὐτῆς τῆς σαύρας, μὴ δὲ τὸ ἀκαριαῖον τῆς ὠφελείας αὐτῆς ἔχουσα. ἐκείνη γὰρ ἀμβλυωπήσασα χρόνῳ ἀναβλέπει διὰ ἡλιακῆς στροφάλλιγος· ἐν φωλεῷ <γὰρ> πρὸς ἀνατολὴν προσέχοντι ἑαυτὴν προσθλίψασα καὶ νηστεύσασα πρὸς ἀνατολὴν <τε> κατανοοῦσα ἀποτίθεται τὴν ἀμβλυωπίαν. This passage was mentioned by

The *Cyranides* provides a likely context for the creation of the story of the *Physiologus*, as it mentions the practice of using a lizard or an amulet representing a lizard to cure people's blindness.⁸

As Sbordone noted in the *apparatus fontium* of his edition (Sbordone 1936, 8), the story of the snake that regenerates its skin and eyes by entering a crevasse (Sbordone's chapter 11, first nature) influenced the chapter on the lizard (or the other way around). The way in which the ageing eagle renews its wings and eyes, which were weighed down by age, is different, but the moralising explanation, although more elaborate, has some exact textual parallels in the chapter on the lizard (Sbordone's chapter 6).

The adjective ἡλιακή is found in all Greek manuscripts (except **Γ**) and in Lat. *y* (*eliace*); cf. Lat. *x* (*aesaure elicae*) and Eth. ("a proposito della lucertola che si espone al sole"; Zambon 2018, 75). In Arm., *arag noy* [արագ նոյ] is a corruption of արեգակնային, as Muradyan noted (Muradyan 2005, 86, n. 3.), or արեգնի, as proposed by Gippert, since Georg. has an adjective related to the sun, but not quite a correct form either (Gippert 2021, 336). Ps.-Eust. simply has σαῦρα.

(2) Arm.-Georg. adds "and" after "Όταν γηράση. Instead of ἐμποδίζεται – φῶς, **a** reads βαρύνονται αὐτῆς αἱ πτέρυγες καὶ ἀμβλυοπεῖ.⁹ The genitive τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν was changed into the accusative or the dative in some manuscripts; δύο is omitted in all Greek manuscripts except **E*** (its equivalent is present in Lat. *y*, Arm.-Georg., and Lat. *x*, but not Eth.).

Instead of Τί οὖν ποιεῖ τῇ ἐαυτῆς καλῇ φύσει (supported by **E***, Lat. *y*, Arm.-Georg. and Lat. *x*), Sbordone edited τί οὖν ποιεῖ ἐν ἐαυτῇ ἡ καλῇ φύσις, which is the reading of **Γ**, supported, with small variants, by **Σas** and **G**; **M** and **WO** omit ἐν ἐαυτῇ ἡ καλῇ φύσις. The whole question is omitted in Eth. (and in Ps.-Eust., whose text is very condensed).

Instead of ζητεῖ, Arm.-Georg. has "it goes to search", which is not supported by Lat. *y*.

Part of the sentence καὶ εἰσβαίνει εἰς ῥαγάδα τοῦ τοίχου προσβλέπουσα τῇ ἀνατολῇ is omitted in Arm. (by *homoioteleuton*, as Muradyan 2005, 86, n. 7 noted), but this must be a mistake in the hyparchetype of the extant Armenian manuscripts and not in the translation, because Georg. has that part of the sentence (and so Lat. *y* and Ps.-Eust.). Eth. does not have something like καὶ εἰσβαίνει εἰς ῥαγάδα τοῦ τοίχου προσβλέπουσα τῇ ἀνατολῇ. Sbordone has put the words προσβλέπουσα τῇ ἀνατολῇ in brackets, because it is omitted in **MT(+G)ΣWO**.

Instead of καὶ νέα γίνεται, Sbordone's edition has καὶ γίνονται πάλιν ὑγιεῖς (as in the majority of the Greek manuscripts). The reading of **Π** is supported by **E***, Lat. *y*, and Arm.-Georg. The sentence is omitted in Lat. *x*; Eth. follows the reading of the majority of the Greek manuscripts. Ps.-Eust. has καὶ ὑγιῆς ἀποκαθίσταται.

(3) Τοῦτο is the faulty reading of **Π** (and it was kept in **E***!), tacitly corrected into οὕτω by Karneev, which is, indeed, the reading reflected in Lat. *y*, Arm.-Georg., and Ps.-Eust. (Οὕτω δὴ). Sbordone edited τοῦτον οὖν τὸν τρόπον on the basis of the other Greek manuscripts.

Sbordone in the apparatus of his edition (Sbordone 1936, 8–9). About the systematic comparison of heretics with poisonous animals, see Verheyden 2011 (esp. 167 for this passage).

⁸ See Schneider 2021, 43–45. The passage in the *Cyranides* is translated and commented upon in Grimm-Stadelmann 2020, 345.

⁹ The reading of **a** was obviously induced by the similarities between the chapter on the lizard and that on the eagle (chapter 6, cf. Sbordone 1936, 22, lines 4–5). See n. 9 above.

Lat. x omits the whole sentence from Τοῦτο καὶ σὺ – βλέπε. Eth. reads (in the Italian translation): “Anche tu, o uomo che possiedi l’abito antico”.

Instead of εἰ τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον ἔχεις ἔνδυμα in **Π** and **E***, Sbordone edited εἰ τὸ τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχεις ἔνδυμα. The reading of **Π** and **E*** is more difficult, but still understandable. It seems that Lat. γ and Arm. confirm the reading edited by Sbordone: *si ergo ueteris hominis indumentum habes* / թէ զիին մարդոյն ունիցիս հանդերձ “if you have the garment of the old man”, but Georg. has something quite different, which is closer to the reading of **Π** and **E***: ძეგლი ოგი თუ ქმნულეზაჲ გაქუნდეს სამოსლად “if you had the old making as garment”. This means that the reading of the Armenian archetype may be an attempt at smoothing a difficult reading closer to the (original) text of **Π** and **E***. The Latin translator may have independently decided to render the text easier to understand, and the expression *ueteris hominis indumentum* is found, for example, in Ambrosius, *Explanatio super Psalmos XII*, cap. 22, § 2.

Instead of βλέπε μήποτε οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῆς καρδίας σου ἐμποδισθῶσιν, supported by **E***, Lat. γ, Arm., and Lat. x, Sbordone edited καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῆς καρδίας σου ἀμβλυσποῦσι on the basis of the other Greek manuscripts (confirmed by Eth.).

Instead of ζήτησον τόπον νοερόν ἀνατέλλοντά σοι ἥλιον, τὸν σωτήρα ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, supported by **E***,¹⁰ Sbordone edited ζητησον ἀνατέλλοντα τὸν ἥλιον τῆς δικαιοσύνης, Χριστὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῶν. The alleged omission of τόπον in **Π**, reported in Sbordone’s apparatus, is, in fact, a mistake of Karneev. Lat. γ reads: *requiras intellegibilem orientem solem dominum Iesum Christum*; Arm., on the other hand, reads: խնդրես տեղի ինչ զիմանալի, ուստի ծագեսցէ քեզ փրկիչն Յիսուս Քրիստոս, “find an intelligible place, whence the Saviour Jesus Christ¹¹ will rise for you”.¹² Thus, Lat. γ does not have τόπον, σοι, and σωτήρα, Arm.-Georg. does not have ἥλιον. But taken together, the differences between the two translations can better be explained as decisions of the individual translators on the basis of a common Greek source closer to the text given by **ΠE***.

Both Lat. x and Eth. represent Greek texts having more similarities to the one edited by Sbordone. Lat. x reads: *Quaere ergo qui oriri facit solem iustitiam, dominum Ihesum Xristum*, and Eth. (in the Italian translation): “cerca vegliando il muro del soccorso, finché non sorgerà per te il sole della misericordia del nostro Signore”.

Sbordone put the relative clause οὗ τὸ ὄνομα ἀνατολὴ καλεῖται ἐν τῷ προφῆτῃ in brackets, because it is omitted in **M** (and, by chance, also in **I**), but all the other Greek manuscripts (including **G**) and the translations (Lat. γ, Arm.-Georg., Lat. x, and Eth.) have it.

Instead of καὶ οὗτος ὁ ἥλιος τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἀνοίξει τοὺς νοεροὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα τοῦ παλαιοῦ¹³ νέον ἐν σοὶ γένηται, Sbordone edited καὶ αὐτὸς ἀνοίξει τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας σου (Ps.-Eust. has τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀναβλέψης ὀφθαλμοῖς). The adjective νοερός appears only in **Π**, Lat. γ (*intellegibiles oculos cordis tui*), and Lat. x (*intellegibiles oculos cordis*).

¹⁰ Instead of τὸν σωτήρα ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν in **Π**, Karneev wrote τὸν Σωτήρα Χριστόν, without any mention in his apparatus.

¹¹ Georg.: ახალი მცნელი ზუენი “our new saviour”.

¹² Translation by Muradyan (2005, 141). As she noted (2005, 87, n. 15), զիմանալի is a correction by Marr on the basis of the Georgian version: საგონებელი (M2 101 has զարմանալի).

¹³ Karneev added ἀνθρώπου in brackets

It is omitted in Arm.-Georg.¹⁴ Possibly, the original reading was that represented by Lat. γ: τοὺς νοερούς ὀφθαλμούς τῆς καρδίας σου. The mention of οὗτος ὁ ἥλιος τῆς δικαιοσύνης in **II** is at another place in all other Greek manuscripts, but at the same place as in Lat. γ, and Arm.-Georg. The sentence καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα τοῦ παλαιοῦ νέον ἐν σοὶ γένηται is omitted in all other Greek manuscripts, Lat. x, and Eth. (in Ps.-Eust. as well, but the text is a paraphrase).

(4) Καλῶς οὖν ὁ φυσιολόγος ἐλάλησεν περὶ τῆς φύσεως ἐκάστου γένους. As has already been mentioned above, this sentence is present only in **II** and Arm.-Georg.

Abbreviations

- CPG Maurits Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, 5 vols. Turnhout: Brepols 1974–1987
 Jacques Noret, CPG, III. 2nd edn. Turnhout: Brepols 2003
 Maurits Geerard, Jacques Noret, *Supplementum*. Turnhout: Brepols 1998.
<https://clavis.brepols.net/clacla/Default.aspx> (accessed on 20 November 2023)
- MLP *The Multilingual Physiologus: Studies in the Oldest Greek Recension and Its Translations*, ed. Caroline Macé and Jost Gippert. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021.
- NA28 *Novum Testamentum graece post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle*, ed. Barbara and Kurt Aland, 28th edn Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012. <https://www.die-bibel.de/bibel/>
- PG Jacques-Paul Migne. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*, I–CLXI. Paris, 1857–1866.
- Rahlfs *Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXXX interpretes*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1953. <https://www.die-bibel.de/bibel/>

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¹⁴ About the meaning and importance of the adjective νοερός in the *Physiologus*, see Macé 2021c, 503 and n. 40.

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