

bien llevado a cabo por especialistas en distintos campos que se aproximan con rigor y sin caer en un ciego *taqlīd* (imitación servil) a un tema en el que se han querido dilucidar demasiadas veces cuestiones que tienen que ver más con las identidades del presente que con las del pasado.

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BERGER, Albrecht (ed.), *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, «Millennium Studies» 7 (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 915 pp. ISBN: 978-3-11018445-7

The well-known scholar of Byzantine philology, Albrecht Berger, assisted by the erudite orientalist G. Fiaccadori, painstakingly prepared this voluminous book that encompasses an edition and translation of the *Acts of Saint Gregentius of Taphar*, known also as “the Dossier of Saint Gregentius of Taphar (i.e Zafār in Yemen)”, a thorough introduction and a complete bibliography.

Numerous scholars have worked on this highly controversial dossier about Gregentius and have expressed different points of view touching upon its philological, theological, legal and historical aspects. It should be noted that while the various parts of St. Gregentius’ dossier are all useful, the historical elements concerning the relations between Yemen and Ethiopia and the Byzantine policy in the Red Sea in the 6th century A.D. are of paramount importance because of the paucity of the sources in this field.

Berger’s careful editing and translation of this dossier provides a long overdue, solid basis for a trustworthy textual reference which greatly facilitates any further research. St. Gregentius’ dossier includes a *Bios* (*Life*) which is a narration of the life of St. Gregentius, thought to be the archbishop of the land of the Himyarites, the *Nomoi* (*Laws*), a number of legal canons supposedly applied by the Ethiopians to the Yemenite kingdom during their indirect occupation of this country (ca. until 570), and the *Dialexis* (*Disputation*) of Gregentius with the Jew Herban.

After a thorough examination of the vocabulary and the syntax of the three parts (*Bios*, *Nomoi*, *Dialexis* and the relevant historical events), Berger concluded that they were all written by the same unknown author in the 10th century (p.43-45). Although no definitive conclusions can be drawn based on the linguistic evidence of these three texts in Gregentius’ dossier because of the elusive nature of the Greek language of the middle Byzantine period, Berger’s arguments seem valid. The unknown author of the dossier skillfully linked the *Bios* which forms the

core of the “Acts” in which the adventures of St. Gregentius from birth to death are narrated, the *Dialexis* between him and a Jewish Yemenite Arab and the *Nomoi*, a series of canons supposedly applied by the Ethiopian occupation forced upon Yemen under the spiritual leadership of St. Gregentius. Berger reports that a passage in *Bios* records a prophecy predicting St. Gregentius’ trip to Yemen, his appointment as an archbishop of the Himyarites and his discussion with a learned Jew there (text in ch. 6, p. 338, 149-151). Thus a link between the *Bios* and the *Dialexis* is well established. Nevertheless, Berger’s assumption that the unknown author first wrote the *Dialexis*- because he was interested in the differentiation of dogma between Christianity and Judaism – and that he later wrote the *Bios* with “the explicit intention to provide the fictitious historical background for the *Dialexis*” seems less probable. On the contrary, while some Byzantine anti-Jewish works were solely inspired by dogmatic differences, Gregentius’ *Dialexis* was appended to the *Bios* in order to show that the king of the Himyarites, Dhu Nuwās, overthrown by the Christian Ethiopians, had supported Judaism in his country and persecuted his Christian population.

The reader who makes a thorough study of the dossier of St. Gregentius understands that the focus of the author is the apostolic mission of the protagonist to preach and establish Christianity among the local people in the remote country of the Himyarites (called “Homeritai” in Greek) which included Yemen and Hadramawt. True, as Berger reports, the part of the dossier which records the activities of St. Gregentius in Yemen in the “Vita” is by far shorter than the rest (p. 11), but it is the actual core, the real focus, around which all of his other adventures have been added. I. Shahid correctly pointed out that the *Vita* of St. Gregentius is composed of two parts: the first which is fictitious and describes his birth and adventures mainly in Western Europe, and the second inspired by St. Gregentius’ activities as a Byzantine missionary in Yemen within the frame of historical reality in the 6th century (I. Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najrān, New Documents*, Brussels 1971).

There is no doubt that the immensely long passages of the adventures of Gregentius greatly surpass the succinct narration which describes his missionary activities in Yemen. This is not unusual for such narrations. Thus, in the *Narration of Nilus Sinaiticus*, the central topic of the story, i.e. the abduction of Saint Nilus by the Arabs, is buried in myriads of other episodes. (V. Christides, “Once Again the ‘Narrations’ of Nilus Sinaiticus”, *Byzantion* XLIII [1973], 39-50).

All the topics treated in this book are well balanced and deserve praise. Above all, there is finally a much needed complete edition of the text following an

analytical description of all relevant manuscripts, previous editions and translations (p. 142-187).

From Berger's description of the manuscripts it is obvious that of the three parts, *Bios*, *Nomoi*, *Dialexis*, the third has been the most popular, especially after the 16th century. It is after this period that a number of paraphrases appeared - mainly but not exclusively- of *Dialexis* reaching even into the 19th century. Of particular importance is the MS *Batopediou, Athos, cod. 92* (19th c.). Berger remarks that on p. 236 of this manuscript a new conclusion is added: "Patriarch Nektarios of Jerusalem (1661-1669) is mentioned as an authority for the continuing existence of the Christian Homerites up to his time" (p. 157).. Unfortunately, Berger does not offer us any additional details of this remark. Is it mentioned in this important manuscript that by that time (17th c.) the land of Himyarites had become part of Islam? Does it record whether any church buildings had been preserved there at that time?

Another interesting manuscript is Gregentius' "κατά των τα άζυμα φρονούντων", first noticed by the present author (see Berger, p. 159 and note 12). Berger does not clarify whether it is a paraphrase of Gregentius' *Dialexis* or an irrelevant anti-Jewish treatise wrongly ascribed to Gregentius. Berger was the first to pinpoint that there are also some Arabic translations of Gregentius' *Dialexis*. Are these literal translations or paraphrases? (p.163 and note 25). More details would have been useful.

Berger's lucid and correct translation of Gregentius' dossier demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the Medieval Greek language which is also demonstrated in his comprehensive short section "The language of the Dossier of Gregentios" (p. 135-140). There is a useful list of "words with unusual application of prefixes", i.e. "ατοιμασία", to which of course there are many more to be added as for example "έμπηξις" (*Bios*, p. 346, §7,4), "επέραστος", a.o.

A shorter and rather incomplete list of technical vocabulary composed of only four words is added (p. 140, no. 5). Actually some very important terms are included in Gregentius' dossier relevant to taxation: "ρόγα", "φιλοτιμία", "άννωνα" (*Bios*, p. 408, 10⁶²); to navigation, "αρτέμων", "κουφίζω" (*Bios*, p. 242, 3¹), "ναύκληρος" (*Bios*, p. 437²³⁷), and to administration, "άρχοντες" (*Nomoi*, 448⁵²²), "γειτονάρχης" (*Nomoi*, p. 442⁴³³), "μεγιστάν" (*Nomoi*, p. 410⁷⁰), a.o. In addition to the above administrative terms, special mention should be made of the term "ethnarhes" applied by the unknown author to the son of the martyr Arethas, who was killed in Nejran at the turn of the sixth century (*Bios*, p. 394¹⁶²). It seems

that the holder of this title was a religious and administrative leader of the city of Nejran in Yemen.

For the reader's better understanding of St. Gregentius' supposed indefatigable travels in Western Europe, as it appears in his *Bios*, Berger describes in detail the places Gregentius visited and traces the possible sources used by the unknown author (p. 1-47). St. Gregentius started from Lyplianes, his native land, which Berger identifies with Ljubljana in Slovenia, and proceeded to Moryne, Antenora (identified with Murano and Padua), Milan and a number of other towns in Northern Italy. Berger persuasively concludes that obviously the unknown author simply borrowed a number of place names and some information from a northern Italian source and "everything else in this part of the *Bios* is the product of his fancy".

Following the discussion of Gregentius' travels in northern Italy, Berger describes his further trips starting from the town of Agrigentum in Sicily. After thorough research, Berger concluded persuasively that most probably the unknown author never traveled to Agrigentum and used as his source, the *Bios of Gregorius of Agrigentum*, dated roughly between 750-828. Berger's theory that it is from this source that the unknown author coined the name of his hero Gregentius, after a twisting of the name of Gregorius seems plausible (*Bios*, p. 30).

Gregentius' next destination was Carthage and Rome. Berger successfully traces the main source of Gregentius' trip to Rome, which in reality he never visited. This source may have been a pilgrim's report supplemented with other minor sources, all written ca. the tenth century. Gregentius' trip to Carthage is totally fanciful, as Berger noted, but an additional comment was needed to clarify that Carthage did not even exist as an active port because it had been destroyed when it was conquered by the Arabs. (See Christides, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa*, BAR International Series no. 851, Oxford 2000, p. 47, 79). Likewise Gregentius' journey to Alexandria was equally fictitious and there is nothing in its description which realistically reflects its actual situation. Thus, Berger's conclusion that the *Bios* of Gregentius was written in Constantinople in the 10th century by an unknown Byzantine author who used only the literary sources and his imagination and who never moved out of this city seems valid and well documented.

Gregentius' next imaginary journey was to Alexandria in Egypt; from there he sailed to Yemen. The description of this trip and Gregentius' activities in Yemen following his imaginary journey to Alexandria, which was inserted skillfully as an introduction to it, is the most important section of Gregentius' dossier concerning

historical events. It was discussed by G. Fiaccadori under the title “Gregentius in the Land of the Homerites” in Berger’s book (p. 48-82). Fiaccadori took meticulous pains to delineate the numerous relevant interwoven problems, based on the original sources and mainly on the modern works by A. Vasiliev (*Justin the First. An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great*, Cambridge, Mass. 1950), I. Shahid (*The Martyrs of Najrān, New Documents*, Brussels 1971) and V. Christides (“The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 A.D.)”, *Annales d’Éthiopie* 9 (1972), 115-146, which was revised in Christides’ article “The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Days After: History vs. Hagiography” *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 [1999-2000], 51-91). Fiaccadori correctly points out that the section of the land of Homerites was written “not too long after the events or in a milieu likely to keep their memory alive, but certainly long before the late tenth century when the whole of the “Bios” was compiled” (p. 50). Nevertheless, a more succinct clarifying statement was needed to emphasize that there was an original source- probably Greek- that described relevant historical events, written as early as the sixth century, which were incorporated *verbatim* into the later long narration of the *Bios*. This is not simply another source like the *Bios of Gregorius Agrigentum* used for some of Gregentius’ travels, but plausibly the source from which the whole narration of Gregentius’ *Bios* sprang and inspired the other two separate sections of the dossier, i.e. The *Dialexis* with the Jewish Yemenite Herban and the *Nomoi*.

Most of Fiaccadori’s topographical identifications of the geographical terms found in the *Bios* are successfully well documented and supported by the most recent archaeological findings. Nevertheless, more research is needed to substantiate his historical findings. A close scrutiny would be especially useful of a detailed correlation of the historical parts of *Bios* compared with those found in the *Martyrdom of Arethas* of the same historical period, as well as in the *Syrian Book of the Himyarites*. [See my relevant remarks in the review of Marina Detorakis’ book, *Le Martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses Compagnons (BHG 166)*, vol. I, Paris 2007, which will appear in *Antiquité Tardive* 16 (2008)]. In addition, a careful correlation with the relevant information found in the Byzantine historical sources, mainly in Malalas and Procopius, was necessary. In this edition the question of the possible sources of these two Byzantine authors concerning the relevant historical events in the *Bios* remains a desideratum. (The useful book by E. Jeffreys et al., *Studies in John Malalas*, Sydney 1990, is mute on this subject.) In any case, Fiaccadori’s section is a valuable building block for further research. Any meticulous analysis of Berger’s discussion of the two controversial separate units

in Gregentius' dossier the *Nomoi* and *Dialexis* goes beyond the scope of the present review.

It is sufficient to express here some brief remarks. Berger's most important contribution to the study of *Dialexis* is his comment concerning the biblical passage "God will come from Thaiman", which is discussed between Archbishop Gregentius and the Jewish Yemenite, Herban (p. 99-100, text on p. 518²⁹⁶). The relevant Hebraic word "teman" which appears in many passages of the Old Testament (Ezek. 20, 46; 25, 13 etc.) is translated into the Greek rendition of the O' as "νότος" (south). (See P. N. Simotas, *Αι αμετάφραστοι λέξεις εν τω κειμένω των Ο'*, Thessaloniki 1968, 73). Berger correctly states that in this passage there is no allusion to the Islamic orientation of prayer to the "south east" as "a reaction to the Islamic concepts of paradise", as asserted by modern scholars. Actually in the entire text of the *Dialexis* there is no clear reference to Islam or to the Moslem Arabs.

Berger reports another controversial passage from Gregentius' *Dialexis*, i.e. "στυγηρων Αγαρηνων" (p. 788⁵⁸⁴), which he translates "hated Agarenes", as a possible reference to Moslem Arabs (Berger, p. 98). But this passage, which can be better translated "abominable Agarenes", is actually targeted against the unholy pagan pre-Islamic Arabs and not the Moslem Arabs. Thus, the unknown tenth century author of Gregentius accurately transmitted the original Greek text of the 6th century of the Himyarite part of *Bios* and *Dialexis* without any contamination by later events and ideas.

Berger's discussion of the other unit *Nomoi* is more exhaustive (p. 82-91). Based on a number of previous studies, he correctly points out that the *Nomoi* were not to be construed as a code of laws by the Himyarites because they are unsuited for practical use. Nevertheless, in spite of his valuable remarks, a number of problems have remained unanswered. The main question is what were the primary sources of these *Nomoi*? Since the three units were written by the same 10th century author who used a number of extensive previous sources, from which accounts did he derive his relevant information concerning the *Nomoi* or was it all the product of his imagination? It should be noted that some of the *Nomoi* cannot be traced in the Byzantine legislation, i.e. the cruel corporal punishments for sexual crimes. Corporal punishments in the Byzantine legislation are not absent, but they cannot be compared with those found in Gregentius' *Nomoi*, i.e. castration for a sexual crime and mutilation of guilty women's breast (p. 416⁶⁹⁻⁷⁰) which remind us of similar punishments in the Code of Hamurabi. In the same vein, the mention of fines imposed according to the social status of the criminal (p.418¹⁰⁷) – common in

the Code of Hamurabi- cannot be found in Byzantine legislation. Perhaps such punishments reflect actual social conditions in Yemen in the 6th century.

In general, reading between the lines of *Nomoi*, we understand that, in spite of the elation of the author over the perfect justice which was imposed on the newly established Christian kingdom of the Himyarites, there was a harsh rule under the local magnates (ἀρχοντες, μεγιστάνες), and people were “full of fear and trembling” (p. 448⁵²²⁻⁵²⁵). Actually all relevant sources, Greek and Syriac, report that after the defeat of the Jewish king Dhu-Nuwās, the Himyarite country became a tributary state to the Ethiopians following a number of atrocities. (See Christides’ review mentioned above of Detorakis’ *Le Martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses Compagnons*, and Christides, “The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Days After: History vs. Hagiography” *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 [1999-2000], p. 75), where it is also mentioned that the μεγιστάνες corresponded to the *kabir* officers of the Himyarite inscriptions.)

To conclude this discussion, it should be mentioned that Berger’s book contains an exhaustive relevant bibliography and in general it is certainly a standard reference book on the subject of the so-called Gregentius, archbishop of the *Homeritai* (Himyarites), and on the study of the efforts of the Byzantines to expand their hegemony into the Red Sea and beyond.

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CAMPLANI, A. – G. FILORAMO (eds.), *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism. Proceedings of the International Seminar, Turin, December 2-4, 2004*, «Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta», 157 (Leuven-Paris-Dudley, Ma: Peeters, 2007), 364 pp.

El seminario celebrado en Turín a finales del 2004 sobre monasticismo tardoantiguo ve su luz en esta edición editada dos años después. El interés de los investigadores sobre la Antigüedad Tardía en las últimas décadas de siglo XX vuelve a tomar parte en una nueva monografía, en este caso concreto sobre las fundaciones de poder y los conflictos de autoridad en el monasticismo, tanto en la zona oriental del imperio como en la occidental. El monacato fue un fenómeno relevante durante el periodo de la tardoantigüedad que revolucionó a las formas de poder existentes en ese momento, y se consolidó en el contexto cristiano como una fuente de poder ineludible a todos los aspectos de la vida política, social, económica, religiosa y cultural.