

**LUIGI SANTAGATI, *Storia dei Bizantini di Sicilia*, Edizioni Lussografica Caltanissetta, Caltanissetta 2012, pp. 421.**

Many years ago A. Guillou wrote in his work about Byzantine Sicily: *Nessuna ricerca approfondita è stata condotta sinora sulla Sicilia bizantina da parte degli studiosi di storia del mondo bizantino*<sup>1</sup>. Since that time the research on the Byzantine era of the island has moved on a lot. Among the books dedicated to its history there is that written by Luigi Santagati.

The monograph has been divided into four major parts dealing with sources and current state of research (book I, *Introduzione ad una storia dei Bizantini di Sicilia*, p. 13–45), Sicily's history in late antiquity and early Byzantine era (book II, *Tra la Sicilia romana e bizantina (440–535)*, p. 49–125), life and culture of the Byzantines in Sicily (book III, *Vita e civiltà dei Bizantini di Sicilia (535–827)*, p. 129–198), and finally the struggle against the Arabs (book IV, *L'invasione araba e la resistenza bizantina, 827–1061*, p. 199–352).

The chapters in each part have been devoted to particular problems. And thus two chapters of part one (*Lo stato dell'arte*, p. 15–23; *Le fonti della conoscenza storica e geografica*, p. 25–45) present the state of research on Byzantine Sicily, as well as the sources on which the research is based. Santagati has also pointed out the difficulties of the examination into the history of Byzantium due, among other things, to the destruction of imperial archives commenced by participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> crusade and finished by Turks (p. 51).

Part II, dedicated to political history of the island contains the chapters which discuss its history at the end of the West Roman Empire (*Fine di un impero*, p. 49–54), barbarian raids and recapturing of the island by Justinian the Great (*Dai Vandali agli Ostrogoti ed ai Bizantini*, p. 55–75), finally the Byzantine rule (*La Sicilia tra il VI e l'VIII secolo*, p. 77–113; *La Sicilia tra l'VIII ed il IX secolo*, p. 115–125). While dis-

cussing the history of the island during Justinian's war with the Goths, the author has devoted much space to the attack of Totila, reconstructing the route of the Gothic army and the list of conquered Sicilian towns. He has emphasized the scale of destruction – *quello che non distrussero i Vandali lo distrussero i Goti* (p. 72). Much attention has been paid to emperor Constans' stay on the island, mutinies of Mezesius Sergius, first Arabic invasions, organization of the Church in Sicily and its civil administration.

In part III the author discusses the problems of Sicilian culture and economy under Byzantine rule. The first chapter (*Gli insediamenti abitativi tra il V e l'VIII secolo*, p. 129–154) has been devoted to the reconstruction of the settlement network on the island, based on written and archeological sources. Chapter Two (*La Sicilia bizantina*, p. 155–198) discusses various aspects of civilization and culture, such as architecture, communication routes, administration, courts, religion, agriculture, language, trade, medicine, everyday life, literature and poetry.

The author pays much attention to the problem of settlement on the island, precisely reconstructing the network of towns, villages and fortresses which used to exist from the beginning of 5th century. To do that he has referred to the antic works by Cicero, Strabo and Ptolemy and early medieval ones by Stephan of Byzantium, Procopius of Caesarea, Leo of Ostia, Constantine Porphyrogenetus, as well as by an anonymous author from Ravenna and another anonymous of *Descriptio orbis Romani*. Santagati has also reconstructed the network of communication routes, ways and bridges, inherited from antic Rome. The remaining chapters of Part Two are much more general in nature. Particular problems are presented in relatively short, 2–4 pages long notes. Some of the author's remarks are certainly worth to be mentioned. Describing the economy of the island he has noted that Arabic influence on the development of the island's agriculture is overrated (p. 169). While discussing the problem of the language he agrees with the opinion

<sup>1</sup> A. GUILLOU, *La Sicilia Bizantina. Un bilancio delle ricerche attuali*, ASSi 4, 1975/1976, p. 45 [= A. GUILLOU, *La Sicile byzantine. Etat de recherches*, BF 5, 1977, p. 95].

of Biaggio Pace that the Greek culture in Sicily was limited to educated people and clergy (p. 181). Presenting prominent Sicilians he emphasizes that on the island there were good conditions for education, particularly that which prepared to ecclesiastic career (p. 190).

In the six chapters of part IV (*L'invasione araba e la prima linea di resistenza*, p. 199–225; *La seconda linea di resistenza*, p. 227–244; *Lo sgrelolamento della Sicilia bizantina*, p. 245–269; *La caduta di Siracusa*, p. 271–286; *L'inizio delle fine*, p. 287–317; *La caduta delle ultime roccaforti siciliane*, p. 319–140) the author discusses the advancement of Arabic invasion and Byzantine resistance. The author has devoted much room to different versions of sources concerning the rebellion of Euphemius, which had been a kind of “invitation” for invasion (p. 201–205). He subsequently tries to reconstruct the route of the Arab forces and their conquests. Much attention has been dedicated to Italy being threatened by the Saracens from Sicily and the changes in settlement caused directly or indirectly by the invaders. The last chapter is devoted to Byzantine attempts to return to the island (*Tra Arabi e Normanni*, p. 341–351) – the expeditions of Orestes, Leo Opos and George Maniakes.

The monograph is supplemented by numerous appendices with the information about religious settlements, Sicilian saints, *strategoï*, Byzantine measures and weights, bridges and fortifications. The author has found room for a translation of the letter from patriarch Photius to Leo, archbishop of Calabria. Using the book is facilitated by personal and geographical indices and maps.

The work has been based upon a vast, although much incomplete base of sources and even more incomplete literature on the subject. The author cites almost exclusively the works of Italian authors, or these non-Italian ones whose works have been translated into Italian. He has particular esteem to Michele Amari – he wants to see his own monograph as *sorta di modesto preambulo* to Amari's monumental *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (p. 22). It is difficult to underrate the role of Amari – the eminent historian and Arabist, whom we owe (among others) the translation of Arabic

sources about Sicily – in examining the island's history, geography and economy. Still, Amari's work was written in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (the fact that Santagati cites a contemporary edition of that is of secondary importance) and since then a lot has been written, of which Santagati should be aware. I cannot understand why the footnotes and bibliography lack the works of the authors of whose contribution in the development of the knowledge of Sicily's history the author himself writes in the first chapter of Part One (such as Vera von Falkenhausen, André Guillou, Marius Canard, Alexandr A. Vasiliev, Ewald Kislinger and many others). Similarly, the author has not reached for some important works of his Italian fellow-scholars, to mention P. Corsi, B. Bavant, L. Bernabò Brea, O. Bertolini, G.P. Bognetti and many others. By the way, for some reasons some works cited in the footnotes have not found themselves in the bibliography.

Not all of the sources discussed in the same chapter (p. 28–42) have been effectively used. It is a mistake to refer to Amari (leaving completely aside the sources, even when they are mentioned in the main text – see p. 106, 124) when discussing Arab invasions on the island. Similarly, Gregory of Tours has been through Biaggio Pace (p. 141). L. Santagati likes quoting the Italian translations of Greek or Arab sources. Although it is acceptable, albeit with longer – sometimes a few pages long – quotations it would probably be better to move them to annexes. The problem is that the aforementioned sources have not been subject to any critical analysis – they serve solely as an illustration. As a result the reader must himself make interpretation, e.g. of the letter of monk Theodosius relating the siege of Syracuse by the Arabs (p. 274–282), sources describing the attempts to help the besieged city (p. 284–286), relating the downfall of Taormina (p. 308–309) or defeat of the Byzantines at Rometta (p. 327–330). The problem lies in the fact that such an analysis would have to be done on the original text.

The author is certainly more interested in the era after 827, which is pointed out by the disproportion between the parts about the political history of the island under Byz-

antine rule (fewer than 50 pages) and the big chapter of over 150 pages, devoted the struggle against the Arab invasion (827–967). For some reasons unknown to me, that first part is very superficial, which leads to many simplifications, to mention just a few.

The thesis that from 535 until 1860 (i.e. for 1325 years!) the island was separated from the rest of Italy (*si andò staccando dal resto d'Italia* – p. 75) is quite surprising. In fact Sicily was one of the two major Byzantine centres in the West, and after the downfall of the Exarchate of Ravenna it remained the only one. The territory of southern Italy was subordinated to the *strategos* of Sicily and during the greatest territorial expansion of the Theme of Sicily also part of Calabria and the territories of Otranto, Gaeta and Naples<sup>2</sup>. If we talk of separation then, it was that separating Sicily and southern Italy from its northern part.

It is not certain if the whole of Sicily found itself under the Vandal occupation (p. 58–59). F.M. Clover suggests that they made use of the difficult situation of Odoacer to force a tribute from the province upon which they had not had real control<sup>3</sup>. F. Giunta has presented a different views on the Vandal rule over Sicily. He himself, by interpreting the testimony of Victor of Vita and Procopius, comes to a conclusion that it was the control rather than the rule<sup>4</sup>.

One needs to be really careful in the assessment of the attitudes of the inhabitants of Byzantine provinces in the Middle East to the Arab invaders. It is certainly not true that

they perceived the Arab rule to be so much better than the Byzantine one to give their support or welcome the invaders (p. 83–84, 121). Although at that time the Arabs were fairly tolerant, as far as religious affairs were concerned, we must remember that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century it was economy rather than religion that motivated them. To support his thesis, Santagati cites only one source – an Arab chronicler al-Baladhuri. A historian should not put so much trust in a testimony of just one side, completely leaving aside all sources of the other. And for example in the Syrian sources the Muslim invasion was interpreted as the punishment of God.

It is not certain if the first Arab raid on Syria took place in 652 (p. 84). I myself would not exclude some local *razzia* to obtain spoils, but we must also consider the doubts by many scholars. The information in *Liber pontificalis* must raise doubts, as we read there that *profectus est Siciliam* [i.e. Olimpius – T.W.] *adversus gentem Saracenorum qui ibidem habitabant*<sup>5</sup>. The Arabs certainly did not live in Sicily in 652! Theophanes dates the raid to the year 6155 (= 662/663)<sup>6</sup>, but at the same time he refers to the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of Constans' rule (=664) and the 8<sup>th</sup> year of rule of Mu'awija.<sup>7</sup> Al-Baladhuri's testimony speaks most loudly against dating the invasion to 652. According to him,

<sup>5</sup> *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Romae*, ed. L. DUCHESNE, vol. I, Paris 1955 (cetera: LP), p. 338.

<sup>6</sup> *Theophanis Chronographia*, AM 6155, rec. C. de BOOR, vol. I, Lipsiae 1883 (cetera: THEOPHANES), p. 348. It is interesting that in Theophanes there is no information about the invasion after Constans death, which D. MOTTA (*Politica dinastica e tensioni sociali nella Sicilia bizantina: da Costante II a Costantino IV*, Man 1.2, 1998, p. 676) explains by political grounds.

<sup>7</sup> According to A. STRATOS (*The Exarch Olympius and the supposed Arab Invasion of Sicily in A.D. 652*, JÖB 25, 1976, p. 69) the eighth year of Mu'awija fell in Theophanes on the year 664, although the Syrian administrator became a caliph as late as in 661. Still, Theophanes does not mention another caliph after 656 (when a war between Ali and Mu'awija).

<sup>2</sup> T. WOLIŃSKA, *Sycylia w polityce bizantyńskiej w VI–IX w.* [*Sicily in the Byzantine Policy, 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Century*], Łódź 2005, p. 58, an. 177–180.

<sup>3</sup> F.M. CLOVER, *A Game of Bluff: The Fate of Sicily after A.D., 476*, Hi 48.2, 1999, p. 238. E. KISLINGER (*Zwischen Vandalen, Goten und Bizantinern: Sizilien im 5. und frühen 6. Jahrhundert*, [in:] BSC, vol. II, ed. A. RÓZYCKA-BRYZEK, M. SALAMON, Kraków 1994, p. 41) is of similar opinion. According to him the Vandals might only have few posts on the island.

<sup>4</sup> F. GIUNTA, *Gensericus e la Sicilia*, Kōk 2, 1956, p. 104–142 (partic. 117–118).

the first assault on the island took place during the Caliphate of Mu'awija (661–680)<sup>8</sup>. It is on that ground (among others) that A. Stratos has questioned the previous datation. The scholar has concluded that the first Arab invasion took place most likely on the turn of 669/670 (i.e. after the death of Constans), and Theophanes must have mistaken Sicily for Cilicia<sup>9</sup>. Olimpius explained his expedition to Sicily by the invasion, but for the rebellious exarch it may have been just a comfortable excuse. In the opinion of Andreas Stratos, Olimpius had planned his Sicilian adventure to capture the island for just himself, not to fight the invaders<sup>10</sup>. It should also be emphasized that contrary to what Santagati thinks (p. 86), Olimpius never reached Sicily – Andreas Stratos says the epidemics had killed him already in Italy.

The author cannot decisively say who actually created the theme of Sicily. At first we read that it was *probabilmente* or even *quasi sicuramente* the idea of Constans II (p. 86–87), later however (p. 107–108) he attributes it to Justinian II. In fact, the date of introducing the thematic reform in Sicily is controversial. A. Stratos is a proponent of the thesis that it should be attributed to Constans rather than to Justinian<sup>11</sup>, but it is

more likely that the emperor's stay at Syracuse only commenced the evolution that eventually led to the formation of theme. Many scholars point to Justinian II as the author of that reform and they date it to the end of 7<sup>th</sup> century, between 692 and 695<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, E. Eickhoff believes that the theme of Sicily was created by Justinian II,

writing that Constans failed in organizing defence of the province, whereas founding a theme was a permanent value.

<sup>12</sup> Among others: F. BURGARELLA, *Bisanzio in Sicilia e nell'Italia meridionale: I riflessi politici*, [in:] *Storia d'Italia*, ed. G. GALASSO, vol. III, *Il mezzogiorno dai Bizantini a Federico II*, Torino 1983, p. 196–197; R.M. CARRA-BONACASA, *Testimonianze bizantine nell'Sicilia Occidentale: situazione degli studi e prospettive di ricerca*, [in:] *Géographie historique du monde méditerranéen*, ed. H. AHRWEILER, Paris 1988, p. 47; L. CRACCO RUGGINI, *Tra la Sicilia e Bruzzi: patrimoni, potere politico e assetto amministrativo nell'eta di Gregorio Magno*, [in:] *Miscellanea di studi storici*, vol. II, Genova 1982, p. 67; A. GUILLOU, *La Sicilia bizantina*, [in:] *Messina. Il ritorno della memoria*, Palermo 1994, p. 25–26; IDEM, *Géographie administrative et géographie humaine de la Sicile byzantine (VI<sup>e</sup>–IX<sup>e</sup> s.)*, [in:] *Philadelphie et autres études*, ed. H. AHRWEILER, Paris 1984, p. 135 (and other works by this author); M.I. FINLEY, *A History of Sicily. Ancient Sicily to the Arab Conquest*, London 1968, p. 186; J. FERLUGA, *L'Italia Bizantina dalla caduta dell'esarcato di Ravenna alla metà del secolo IX*, [in:] *Bisanzio, Roma e l'Italia nell'Alto Medioevo*, vol. I, Spoleto 1988, p. 179; IDEM, *L'esarcato*, [in:] *Storia di Ravenna*, vol. II.1, *Dall'eta bizantina all'eta ottoniana. Territorio, economia e società*, ed. A. CARILE, Ravenna 1991, p. 370; V. LAURENT, *Les sceaux byzantins du Médailleur du Vatican*, Città del Vaticano 1962, p. 121; N. OIKONOMIDIS, *Une liste arabe des stratèges byzantines du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle et les origines du thème de Sicile*, [in:] IDEM, *Documents et recherches sur l'institutions de Byzance (VII–XV siècle)*, London 1976, VII, p. 127–130; A. PERTUSI, *Il „thema“ di Calabria: sua formazione, lotte per la sopravvivenza, società e clero di fronte a Bisanzio e Roma*, [in:] IDEM, *Scritti sulla Calabria greca medievale*, Soveria Mannelli 1994, p. 51 (*un po' prima del'700* and others whom I mention in my monograph about Byzantine Sicily

<sup>8</sup> 'AHMAD 'IBN YAHYÀ 'AL-BALADURI, *Conquisti de [varii] paesi*, trans. M. AMARI, [in:] *Biblioteca arabo-sicula*, ed. M. AMARI, vol. I, Torino–Roma 1982, p. 268.

<sup>9</sup> A. STRATOS, *Byzance au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. II, trans. A. LAMBERT, Lausanne 1985, p. 218–220; IDEM, *Exarch Olimpius...*, p. 70. E. KISLINGER (*Regionalgeschichte als Quellenproblem. Die Chronik von Monembasia und das sizilianische Demenna. Eine historisch-topographische Studie*, Wien 2001, p. 120–121) conforms to this datation.

<sup>10</sup> A. STRATOS, *Exarch Olimpius...*, p. 73. Similarly K.P. CHRISTOU, *Byzanz und die Langobarden. Von der Ansiedlung in Pannonien bis zur endgültigen Anerkennung (500–680)*, Athenai 1991, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> A. STRATOS, *Expédition de l'empereur Constantin III surnommé Constant en Italie*, [in:] *Bisanzio e l'Italia. Raccolta di studi in memoria di Agostino Pertusi*, Milano 1982, p. 356; IDEM, *Byzance...*, p. 240; IDEM, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, vol. IV, Amsterdam 1980, p. 58–59, 143. The author (*Expédition...*, p. 357) contradicts himself

but he locates the event at the beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. during the second reign of the emperor (705–711)<sup>13</sup>. This opinion is shared by W. Enßlin, H. Ahrweiler, S. Borsari and others<sup>14</sup>. Also H. Gelzer shows the 8<sup>th</sup> century as the beginning of the theme<sup>15</sup>. B. Pace goes even further and pushes the forming of the theme to mid-8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>. In the Byzantine sources the post of strategos of Sicily was first mentioned in relation to the events of 718<sup>17</sup> and the first certain strategos was Sergius, the same who in 717 rebelled against the emperor<sup>18</sup>. Still, before him the post had probably been taken by Theodor, who at the times of pope Constantine was sent to Ravenna (709/710) by Justinian II to punish its inhabitants for the acts of hostility during

his first reign<sup>19</sup> and who welcomed the pope in Sicily while on the way to Constantinople<sup>20</sup>. It is possible, though, that Sicily had had a strategos even earlier and that it had been a man named Theophylact, who later became the exarch of Ravenna<sup>21</sup>. V. Laurent has discovered and published that official's seal, which he dates to the end of 7<sup>th</sup> century. As Theophylact became the exarch in 701, he must have been the island's strategos about the year 700. A new research by M. Nicianian and V. Prigent<sup>22</sup>, which is known to Santagati (p. 108), shows yet another person – a certain Salventius, who could have occupied the post from ca. 685. The above data let me share the opinion of these scholars who see the founder of the theme of Sicily in Justinian II and leads me to the conclusion that it must have been founded at the end of 7<sup>th</sup> century.

There is no hard evidence that Constantine IV landed in Sicily after his father's death (p. 88), which version is present in some eastern sources. According to Theophanes and others the young emperor personally set off with a huge fleet to avenge the death of his father and suppress the mutiny<sup>23</sup>. It was there that he

– T. WOLIŃSKA, *op. cit.*, p. 52–72 and partic. 56, an. 155–166).

<sup>13</sup> E. EICKHOFF, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik zwischen Islam und Abendland. Das Mittelalter unter byzantinischer und arabischer Hegemonie (650–1040)*, Berlin 1966, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> A. AHRWEILER, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1966, p. 48; P. BORSARI, *L'Amministrazione del tema di Sicilia*, RSI 66, 1954, p. 138; W. ENSSLIN, *Zur Verwaltung Siciliens vom Ende des Weströmischen Reiches bis zum Beginn der Themenverfassung*, [in:] *Atti dello VIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini*, Roma 1953, p. 364 [= SBN 7, 1953]. W.E. KÆGI (*Byzantine Military Unrest 471–843. An Interpretation*, Amsterdam 1981, p. 227–228) lists it among the themes that existed at the beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>15</sup> H. GELZER, *Die Genesis der Byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, Amsterdam 1966, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> B. PACE, *I Barbari ed i Bizantini in Sicilia*, ASS 36, 1911, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> THEOPHANES, AM 6210, p. 398; NIKEPHOROS PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Short History*, 55, ed. et trans. C. MANGO, Washington 1990, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup> G. AGNELLO, *Palermo bizantina*, Amsterdam 1969, p. 7; V. LAURENT, *Une source peu étudiée de l'histoire de la Sicile au Haut Moyen Age: La sigillographie byzantine*, [in:] *Byzantino-sicula*, vol. I, Palermo 1966, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> *Mittens Justinianus imperator Theodorum patricium et primi exercitus Siciliae cum classe, Ravenna civitatem coepit* (LP, p. 389). AGNELLO (*Liber pontificalis ecclesiae ravennatis*, 137, ed. O. HOLDER-EGGER, [in:] *MGH.SRLI*, vol. I, Hannoverae 1878, p. 367) named him *monostrategos*.

<sup>20</sup> LP, p. 390. The pope was travelling through Naples where he was greeted by John Rizocopus, *patricius et exarchus*, and then went to Sicily, greeted by Theodor, already a *patricius* and *strategos* of the island.

<sup>21</sup> *Cubicularius, patricius et exarchus Italiae* (LP, p. 383). He was the exarch in 701–705. The seal of Theophylact, *cubicularius* and *strategos* of Sicily was published by V. LAURENT (*Sceaux byzantins...* p. 120–121).

<sup>22</sup> M. NICHANIAN, V. PRIGENT, *Le stratèges de Sicile. De la naissance du thème au règne de Léon V*, REB 61, 2003, p. 97–141.

<sup>23</sup> THEOPHANES, AM 6160, p. 352. Besides him Constantine's expedition was described by Agapius, George the Monk, Leo Grammaticus, Cedrenus, Zonaras, Manasses, Michael the Syr-



would have captured the usurper, sentenced him to death, along with his father's murderers and returned to Constantinople. Western sources, including *Liber pontificalis* and Paul the Deacon, are silent about Constantine IV's expedition to the island. In the light of their relations, that were the western troops that had set off against Mezesius, they arrived in Syracuse and killed Mezesius himself and many of his supporters and their bodies, along with Mezesius' head were shipped to Constantinople<sup>24</sup>. A. Stratos, although ready to admit that

ian, Joel (we know from him that Constantine was nicknamed *pogonatus* when he returned with the beard from the Sicilian expedition – GIOELE, *Chronographia compendiaris*, ed. et trans. F. IADEVAIA, Messina 1979 p. 101). Information about the expedition can be found in eastern chronicles – *Dionisius reconstituted*, *Chronicon ad a. 1234* and in some western ones (Otto of Freising, Dandolo, Martinus, Ekkehard). Information about participation of the emperor can be found neither in patriarch Nicephorus, nor in most western sources. It is not totally unlikely in the light of an obscure note in *Continuatio Isidoriana: Constans apud Syracusam audiens seditione suorum occisum patrem cum classe qua potuit, palatium petiit et tronum gloriose triumphando concendit* (*Continuatio Isidoriana Byzantia-Arabica et Hispana*, cap. 26, ed. Th. MOMMSEN, Th. NÖLDEKE, [in:] *MGH.AA*, vol. XI, Berolini 1894, p. 345). John the Deacon at first informs of suppression of the mutiny by western troops and sending Mezesius' head (GIOVANNI DIACONO, *Istoria Veneticorum*, I, 36, ed. L.A. BERTO, Bologna 1999, s. 82) to write later on that it was the emperor who punished him (I, 39, p. 84). Many contemporary historians accept the information of Constantine IV's expedition. Cf. W. HAHN, *Mezesius in peccato suo interit*, JÖB, 29, 1980, p. 62; W.E. KÆGI, *op. cit.*, p. 166. J.F. HALDON (*Byzantine Praetorians. Institutional and Social Survey of the Opsikion and Tagmata c. 580–900*, Bonn 1984, p. 472) on the one hand doubts in Constantine's visit in Sicily, on the other he writes of the emperor's expedition with the Opsikion troops (*ibidem*, p. 195).

<sup>24</sup> Pauli *Historia Langobardorum*, V, 12, ed. E. BETHMANN, G. WAITZ, [in:] *MGH.SRLI*,

the mutiny was suppressed by western troops, believes that Constantine may indeed have visited Sicily<sup>25</sup>. He emphasizes that the exarch of Ravenna would not command the forces out of his own area without special imperial consent, that he had no power on Sicily and that it was only the emperor himself that could have the rebels executed because of their high ranks. In my opinion these arguments may not be decisive. The emperor, informed of what was going on on the island and of the participant of the rebellion could issue the appropriate orders on paper. The fact that they such an order has not been preserved is not surprising. In addition to this, Stratos is inconsequent, as he maintains somewhere else that in 713 strategos Theodor commanded both the forces of the theme of Sicily and of the exarchate of Ravenna, in the absence of the exarch<sup>26</sup>. In 668–669 the situation could have been just the opposite.

It seems more important why so many eastern sources keep telling about Constantine's expedition to the west. In spite of them, we may not ignore the opinion of E.W. Brooks, who has questioned the possibility of personal participation of the young emperor in the expedition<sup>27</sup>. His arguments must be taken seriously: a) had the emperor personally arrived in Sicily, Mezesius' head would not have needed to be sent to Constantinople; b) the author of the *Life of Adeodatus* in *Liber pontificalis* wrote it soon after the described events and could not have been unaware of the emperor's arrival along with his fleet; c) Constantine IV could not leave the capital city, neither during the mutiny of Saborius,

vol. I, Hannoverae 1878; *LP*, p. 346. *Reginonis ablati Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, a. 576–604, ed. F. KÜRZE, [in:] *MGH.SRG*, vol. L, Hannoverae 1890, p. 30; *Ptolomei Lucensis Historia ecclesiastica*, XII, 21, ed. L.A. MURATORI, [in:] *RIS*, vol. XI, Mediolani 1727, col. 942.

<sup>25</sup> A. STRATOS, *Byzantium, in the Seventh Century*, vol. V, Amsterdam 1980, p. 10–13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> For details cf. E.W. BROOKS, *The Sicilian Expedition of Constantine IV*, *BZ* 17, 1908, p. 455–459. D. MOTTA (*Politica dinastica e tensioni sociali nella Sicilia bizantina: da Costante II a Costantino IV*, *Man* 1.2, 1998, p. 671) is of similar opinion.

the ally of the Arabs (668), nor later when he commanded the defence against Yazid's attack (669). In Brook's opinion when the fleet set off from Constantinople, the mutiny on the island had already been suppressed. In fact, the testimony of the western sources seems to be decisive here. It is difficult to imagine that chroniclers would fail to notice the presence of another East Roman emperor after Constans in Sicily.

It is not true that the wife and two sons of Constans II *lo raggiunsero solo alcuni anni dopo a Siracusa* (p. 86). The eastern sources tell of the ruler's plans to move his family to the West, which however would have been prevented by the people of Constantinople. It is not unlikely that such plans may have existed. Although there is no evidence to support that, we can imagine that following Maurice's example, also Constans may have thought of giving the West to a son of his. This, besides the natural longing for the family, could explain the plan of bringing the younger sons to the West. It may not have concerned his eldest son, who had been entrusted the government at Constantinople. This way or the other, those plans were never accomplished.

The objection from the popes against iconoclasm was not the sole reason for the decision to confiscate the income from papal estates in Sicily, Calabria and Illyricum (p. 100). More important was to obtain the means for the struggles against the Arab invasion – let us remain that it was just during the reign of Leo III that the most dangerous siege of Constantinople took place.

Scholars have not been able to determine which of the rulers: Constans II or his son Constantine IV was nicknamed *pogonatus* (bearded). The author of the foreword to the Greek version of *Hypomnesticum Theodorii*<sup>28</sup> calls Constans like this. Many other scholars maintain that it is him, not Constantine IV that should be named this way<sup>29</sup>, but there is no general

<sup>28</sup> R. DEVRESSE, *Le texte grec de l'Hypomnesticum de Théodore Spoudée*, AB 53, 1935, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> E.W. BROOKS, *Who was Constantine Pogonatus*, BZ 17, 1908, p. 460–462; P. CHARANIS, *Some Remarks relating to the History of Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century*, [in:] *Byzance. Hommage à A. Stratos*, vol. I, Athenes 1986, p. 60; A. STRATOS, *Byzance...*, p. 38.

consent about it<sup>30</sup>. L. Santagati thinks that both could have been called like that (p. 86–88), which indeed cannot be excluded.

Some of the author's theses have not been sufficiently proven. I would like to know, for example, who exactly thinks that it was the Church of Sicily that contributed to Constans' murder in 668 (p. 87), where is the source informing of the Byzantine attack against the Muslims in Africa in 688–689 (p. 97) or what evidence proves that the Sicilians adhered closer to the Church *di origine latina* than *di origine greca* (p. 121).

Interesting is the author's opinion that the failure in Sicily meant the total failure of the passive system of defence, developed in the empire along with the thematic system, and that no conclusions were drawn from that defeat (p. 225). It should be regretted that this thought has not been further developed. Another interesting supposition is that that the reason why Sergios did not proclaim emperor himself was that as an eunuch he could not pretend to the throne, but due to the lack of sources we can only guess.

Similarly lacking evidence is the opinion of the misfortunes that Constans' stay at Syracuse would bring to the Sicilians (p. 88). The issue, however, is more complicated. Not negating the fiscal pressure, we may not forget of its advantages, as well. The emperor's stay at Syracuse certainly contributed to its development, as it became an imperial seat (*sedes imperii*)<sup>31</sup>. It is not accidental that the pretences of the Church of Syracuse appeared just at that time<sup>32</sup>. Constans'

<sup>30</sup> R. MAISANO, *La spedizione italiana dell'imperatore Costante II*, SG 28, 1975, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> The emperor would encourage his companions to build mansions in the city *in eis aulis sibi aedificare et possessiones atque bona acquirere* (*Chronicon anonymum ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, part I, CXXXVII, CXXXIX, ed. I.-B. CHABOT, Lovanii 1937 [CSCO 109, ser. 3, Scriptorum Syri 14], p. 220, 223). A similar statement can be found in Dionysius, according to whom the emperor encouraged to buying estates to provide means for the living (*Dionysius reconstituted*, 113, [in:] *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, ed. A. PALMER, Liverpool 1993, p. 187).

<sup>32</sup> The first time in *Vita Zosimi* from the end of 7<sup>th</sup> cent. (bishop of Syracuse 654–662). The leg-

reforms gave a decisive impulse to the militarization of the island and introducing the thematic system on it.

L. Santagati likes digressions, sometimes interesting, but not always justified by the subject he writes about (information about literary texts devoted to Belisarius, p. 55, a vast part concerning the Lombard invasion in northern Italy, p. 77–79, or the description of Rome by Al-Idrisi, p. 251–253). These passages could have been removed in favour of expanding

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end can also be found in *Vita P. Marciiani, Vita P. Pancratii* and *Encomium* of St. Martian.

the parts more important to the main subject of the book.

What I have above should not discourage the reader to reach for the book by Luigi Santagati. It is certainly an interesting attempt to make the reader acquainted with a fairly unknown history of Sicily at the times when it was a part of the East Roman Empire. I am particularly enthusiastic about the authors careful reconstruction of human settlement on the island and I am glad to recommend it to the readers.

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**БИСТРА НИКОЛОВА, *Монашество, манастири и манастирски живот в средновековна България* [Monasticism, Monasteries and Monasterial Life in Medieval Bulgaria], vol. I, *Манастирите* [Monasteries], vol. II, *Монасите* [Monks], Алфаграф, София 2010, pp. 861.**

The topic of monasticism in medieval Bulgaria has attracted unceasing interest of scholars for some time now. Numerous separate studies have touched upon almost all aspect of that movement. It is surprising that we had to wait until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for its monograph. The reason for that might lie in the peculiarity of the source material, which does not present a coherent picture of the history of Bulgarian monasticism. To complain about the small number of preserved sources would be an exaggeration, but in comparison to source materials on Byzantine or Serbian monasticism there are some easily recognizable and scholarly troublesome deficiencies: not one of the medieval Bulgarian *typica* has been preserved (existence of one – John of Rila Testament – is still a matter of debate), only a small number of donative documents survived, while majority of monasterial manuscripts have been lost.

The matter of monasticism in medieval Bulgaria is a complex and vast area of study. The author's monograph consists of a staggering 850 pages, although, as she remarked

at the beginning of her work (p. 8), she has not presented a fully exhaustive analysis of the subject but only her subjective overview of it. The volume of the work is partly affected by the author's methodology. She has devoted a lot of space to a detailed description of the discovered by archeologists monasterial locations and she has included a number of side subjects.

The first volume focuses on monasteries, their architecture, material conditions of monastic life and on selected issues that archeological discoveries have brought to daylight. It is composed chronologically, with consecutive chapters relating to: monasteries from the 9<sup>th</sup> until the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, from the period of Byzantine reign and the Second Bulgarian Tsardom. Because of the peculiarity of the subject and the problem of dating such sights a whole separate chapter has been devoted to the presentation of materials on rock monasteries. It is clear that the author's interest focuses on the earliest period of Bulgarian monasticism, since the first chapter takes half of the volume.