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REVIEW ARTICLE

JUAN SIGNES CODOÑER, *The emperor Theophilos and the East, 829-842. Court and frontier in Byzantium during the last phase of Iconoclasm* [Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies, vol. 13, Ashgate 2014] pp. X + 518. ISBN 978-0-7546-6489-5

This is a lengthy book (X + 518 pages, with a chronology of Theophilos' reign at pp. 461-466, a Bibliography at pp. 467-506 and an Index at pp. 507-518). The bibliography is extensive but incomplete, with the most notorious absences being those of P. Yannopoulos¹ and Patricia Karlin-Hayter², both well known specialists on these topics, besides Každan's relative studies in Russian and some, rather serious in my view, studies in modern Greek (contemporary Greeks speaking almost the same language with the Byzantines [Krumbacher], can in some cases better understand the connotation of Byzantine sentences – not the immediate translation that can be accessible to everyone – that a modern translation is unable to interpret). These absences can be partially explained by the current method of ascribing to the most recent researcher (Pratsch) what has been said much earlier (Bury), e.g. on the patriarch Theodotos Melissenos Kassiteras (815-821). In other words, it is a book written mainly on the basis of the most recent bibliography, somewhat neglecting the older – and in most cases classic–bibliography.

On p. 4 the author (henceforth JSC) rightly states that what is needed “is mainly a more careful approach to the texts that must consider the aims and scope of their authors, the source they used or the literary codes that unavoidably determined

1. P. A. YANNOPOULOS, *La société profane dans l'empire byzantin des VIIe, VIIIe et IXe siècles*, Louvain 1975.

2. P. KARLIN-HAYTER, *Etudes sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III*, *Byz* 41 (1971), 460-474.

their task". We should also add their political and social context since medieval sources interpret matters rather differently than we do today. Immediately after that, on p. 5, JSC correctly cites Speck (*Kaiserliche Universität* but in many places he cites only the title in abbreviation without the page number,) on the slander against the Iconoclasts, though he omits Ostrogorsky's pioneer work (*Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites*, Breslau 1929), which constitutes the origins of Speck's thoughts. But we must clarify since the very beginning that JSC's favouritism of *Theophanes Continuatus* (since his early days) vis-à-vis Genesis³ is fully justified, as Genesis' narrative is substantially less credible than that of the *Theoph. Cont.* as Každan pointed out. Besides, JSC deals mostly with elucidating relations between persons, e.g. their iconoclast or their iconodule beliefs, but very rarely advances further, that is, to the political or social relations regarding different social groups, or relations between persons within a particular social group (e.g. the age of Theophilos' five daughters, p. 118 and many other points). Returning to p. 1, one has to keep in mind that Theophilos enjoyed a relatively mild treatment not only vis-à-vis Leo III, Constantine V and Leo V, but also vis-à-vis his own son Michael III (a point of great importance). This means that under the Macedonian emperors the first criterion of evaluating emperors was not their iconoclast or iconodule attitudes, but some other criteria.

The chapter on Iconoclasm in the empire (p. 20 ff.), followed by "socializations" under Constantine V, in Greek *κοινωνσεις* in Theophanes, 440,5, 443,1-3, 448,26 and 489,12 (the last refers to the reforms of Nikephoros I who in many aspects followed iconoclast-like social policies without an ideological cover), is contemporary with the almost complete agrarization of the eastern provinces. The agrarian populations now followed their natural leaders, the Isaurian warlords (*strategoï*). Since the latter accepted the restoration of images at Nicaea II (787) there began the revolts of inferior officers leading agrarian populations (e.g. *turmarchs* of the Armeniacs in 792, Thomas the Slavonian who was also a *turmarch*) without any iconoclast cover. As the new social elite (military leadership and higher clergy) proved too strong to be overthrown, Leo V and Theophilos made a doomed attempt to re-install Iconoclasm. All this has been established.

Regarding the Anatolian themes, at the very beginning, only the Anatolics, the Thracians and the Bucellarians embraced Iconoclasm openly. The Opsikians

3. A. P. KAŽDAN, Iz istorii vizantijskoj chronografii X v. "Kniga carei i žizneopisanije Vasilija", *Viz. Vrem.* 21 (1962), 95-118.

(mainly infantry, *τὰ κατὰ τὴν Βιθυνίαν πεζικὰ*) and the Armeniacs, who had a pronounced ancient-like appearance⁴, were against Iconoclasm (see the case of Artabasdos and his military followers). Leo V and Theophilus had to face a social context very different from that of the eighth century. Thomas the Slavonian led a very broad but mostly agrarian uprising against Michael II, under whose nominal domination were the following individuals: the patriarch Anthony Kassymatas (821-837), the *synkellos* John the Grammarian, the patricians Olbianos of the Armeniacs and Katakylas of the Opsikians, the ex-patriarch Nikephoros, and the “bulwark” of iconodule Orthodoxy, Theodore Studites. From all these leaders, so to speak, of the iconodule ruling class, only the future patriarch under Theophilus, John the Grammarian (837-843), would later express iconoclast beliefs. Thomas and his partisans (pp. 24-25) seem to have been convinced that under Michael II there was hope of returning to an eighth century pattern of governance. Thus, ingeniously in my view, JSC concludes (pp. 25-28) that Thomas was a “superficial” image worshipper; on the other hand, the so-called iconoclast emperor Michael II seems to have been known well to whom he owed his crown, position and authority. Though a native of Amorion in the Anatolic theme, Michael II was hated by the entire army of that theme⁵.

Further, on p. 34 it must be pointed out that a *τουρμάρχης τῶν φοιδεράτων*, apparently the most well-known *turmarch* of the Anatolic theme, acted as second-in-command in the region. Besides Leo the Armenian and Thomas the Slavonian, we have a third *turmarch* of the *foederati*, most probably in the first half of the ninth century⁶. In fact (pp. 40-45) JSC seems to adopt an intermediate or mitigated position to the effect that Thomas began his rebellion under Leo V and extended it under Michael II. One can agree on the participation of Paulicians in Thomas’ army but the assertion that his army was an army of barbarians could hardly be compatible with the fact that this army was eager, if not anxious, to conquer a town or city. According to *Theoph. Cont.* (p. 67), “they did not expect that their

4. (Collective work), *Η Μικρά Ασία των Θεμάτων. Έρευνες πάνω στην γεωγραφική φυσιογνωμία και την προσωπογραφία των βυζαντινών θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας (7ος -11ος αι.)*, Athens 1998 [hereafter: MAΘ].

5. Genesisus, 23: *μισητὸς παρὰ παντὸς τοῦ τῶν Ἀνατολικῶν στρατεύματος*. Cf. also *Theoph. Cont.*, 52.

6. Nasir (?), *σπαθάριος, τουρμάρχης τῶν Φοιδεράτων* (G. ZACOS – A. VEGLERY, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, I, Basel 1972, no 3148). Cf. F. WINKELMANN, *Byzantinische Rang- und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jh.*, Berlin 1985, 120, n. 5.

domination should be restricted in country areas for so long” (*οὐκ εἰς τοσοῦτον χρόνον ἐπαθῆναι τὴν αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς ὑπαίθροις διατριβὴν προσδοκῆσαντες*). And, by anticipation (p. 56 and Ch. 13.2), the fact that the Studites sided with Michael II is a “*clear proof that Michael’s Constantinopolitan camp was an iconophile camp beyond any doubt*”. There is not a single moment in Byzantine history in which the Studites did not support orthodox, that is, Roman views.

Further: in Section II (pp. 61 ff.) one could add some indispensable studies, such as Každan’s and Vlyssidou’s⁷, from which it emerges that the aristocracy around Theophilos and especially around Michael III was Armeno-Paphlagonian and not simply Armenian (if we take into account what the *Life of Theodora* 2, 2-3, p. 257, tells us). Regarding pp. 53 and 89-90 it seems that amongst the Anatolian themes of the eighth and ninth centuries the Opsikion and the Armeniakon (both loyal to Michael II during the revolt of Thomas) were somewhat more “ancient shaped” and consequently less prone to welcoming novelties compared with the daring “iconoclast” themes of the Anatolikon and the Thrakesian. Such distinctions could be useful, in my view, in order to avoid lengthy, detailed accounts on the basis of “iconoclast” or “iconophile” persons. Despite the fact that the letter of Michael II to Louis the Pious points out the continuity with the reign of Leo V (and not the opposite), the sources underline that Michael was elected because he was the liberator of the “novelties” imposed by Leo V, that is, iconoclast militarism. Under this scope the execution of the murderers of Leo V by Theophilos signifies the approval by the latter of Leo V’s policies and not only the image of justice. Apparently Michael II was insecure since he was surrounded during the years 821-823, something that could lead to very interesting speculations of the “accidental death of Gregory Pterotos” (pp. 71-72). Connected with all the previous, even Michael II’s marriage with Euphrosyne could be understood as an attempt to underscore not only his allegiance to the policies of Constantine VI, but also to those of Eirene the Athenian. In general, the aims and intentions of social groups offer, in most of cases, better insight than those of isolated persons whose acts can sometimes deviate from their original dependance.

7. A. P. ΚΑΖΔΑΝ, *Armianie v sostave gospodstvuyuščego klassa v IXom i Xom veke*, Erevan 1975 and IDEM, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Ruling Class, predominantly in the Ninth through the Twelfth Centuries, Medieval Armenian Culture*, Chico California 1983, 439-451 as well as B. ΒΑΣΙΛΔΟΥ, *Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες και εξουσία (9ος-10ος αι.) Έρευνες πάνω στα διαδοχικά στάδια αντιμετώπισης της αρμενο-παφλαγονικής και της καλπαδοκικής αριστοκρατίας*, Thessaloniki 2001.

The only certain evidence we have about the patriarchs of the ninth century is that all of them from Tarasios (784-806) to Photios (858-867) were of noble origin, something suggesting that the upper clergy belonged to the aristocracy (old and new, according to the terminology of the so-called *Chronicle of 811*: ἄρχοντες ἀρχαῖοι τε καὶ νέοι). Whether they were iconoclasts or iconophiles is a secondary matter given the circumstances of the time. According to the same principle, the “national” or “tribal” origin of each individual is useful but of less importance. The epithet “Amalekite” is in most cases used to designate someone hostile to the “chosen people”.

On p. 89, besides the *PBMZ*, complete lists of the generals of the Anatolian themes (and of all their subordinate officials) are given in *MAΘ*⁸. Regarding pp. 92-98, the reference provided by the Logothete: ὀνομασιότατος στρατηλάτης πάντων τῶν ἐν Ἀνατολῇ suggests that Manuel could have commanded both the Anatolikon and the Armeniakon (as a *μονοστράτηγος*) and that this high-ranking post may have incited him to rebel against the emperor, or at least to be suspected of fomenting a rebellion. We may be argue about the exact date of the campaign against Zapetra but the substance is to be detected in the relations not between mere persons, but between persons on one side and institutions on the other. A further and useful observation: the apparent identity between the names *Γυβέρι* (the noble Cappadocian family of the ninth century) and *Γοῦβεο* can be better understood by connecting them with the so called *Life of Eirene of Chrysobalantou*⁹. Thus Manuel was most reasonably despised by the Armeno-Paphlagonian aristocracy. That goes together with author’s conclusions (pp. 99-101) that Manuel agreed with the policies of Leo V and Theophilos but not with that of Michael II (who was supported by the aristocracy, I should add).

Now all this has been accepted since Každan wrote that *Theoph. Cont.* (with all its deficiencies due to the constraints of historiography in the tenth century¹⁰)

8. *MAΘ*, 351-489.

9. Ed. ROSENQVIST, *Uppsala* 1986 (BHG 952), Introduction, p. XXXII, n. 27, wrongly cited as Bulgarians. 3, p. 10, 25-12,3. In the texts of *Cont. Georg. Mon.*, 833 and Leo Gramm., 247, both speaking of the Logothete of the Dromos in 866, we read *Γοῦμεο* instead of *Γοῦβεο* something that might be due to a simple palaeographical confusion.

10. The formula “Armeno-Paphlagonian” and not merely “Armenian” (concerning the Krinites-Musele, Doukai, Martinakioi, Baboutzikoi and others) was established by Vlyssidou who demonstrated the endeavours of the Macedonian emperors to support and elevate the position of the Cappadocian aristocracy (Phokades, Maleinoi, and to a certain degree, also

is a much more reliable source than Genesis, whose account is on occasion vague and inaccurate. Thus if Genesis had Pontic roots (p. 113) then he was an Armeno-Paphlagonian, and his text (written under Macedonian supervision in the tenth century) is clearly pro-Amorian until 855. But if we accept the term Armenian, we could easily miss the political context of the time and turn to nationalistic speculations¹¹. Nationality had no significant role almost throughout the whole of Byzantine history.

On p. 119 it must be reiterated that according to Ibn-al-Athir (Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 360), Alexios Musele was called “roi des Grecs de Sicile”. This could be important since Alexios was not present during the first triumph of Theophilos and the emperor chose him as a groom for his youngest daughter. Especially towards the end of his reign (pp. 124-126). Theophilos must have felt somewhat inundated by the increasing influence of his wife’s relatives (Bardas and Petronas) and submitting step by step central power. Theophilos’s Iconoclasm was (to a certain extent) a reaction against the onslaught of the Armeno-Paphlagonian aristocracy but his attempt achieved almost nothing judging by speech he addressed to the senate from his deathbed¹², a speech aimed only to solidify his succession by Michael III (born in 840). In my view there is no evidence that the family of Theodora constituted a reliable basis for his power (Petronas had already been severely punished, flogged according to some sources¹³). In fact, he must have felt powerless vis-à-vis the onslaught of the new, steadily rising (and Iconophile) aristocracy (so Thümmel, *Bilderstreit und Bilderlehre*, cited by the author, p. 126, n. 4).

Moreover and speaking of military commands under Theophilos, it could be added (pp. 126-136) that Manuel must have been the *domestic of the scholae* between 830 and 838¹⁴, while Theophobos must have been only a patrician.¹⁵ Apparently he

the Argyroi). After the latter’s decay towards the end of the tenth century, the Armeno-Paphlagonians would re-appear in strength mostly under the Doukai, the Komnenoi and the Dalassenoi.

11. VLYSSIDOU, in *Σύμμεικτα* 10 (1996), 75-103.

12. Theoph. 138. Skylitzes, 79.

13. *Τύπτει κατὰ τὰ νῶτα σφοδρῶς*. Leo Gramm., 216. Cont. Georg. Mon., 794. Pseudosymeon, 628.

14. Theoph. Cont., 113, 120, 127. Skylitzes, 67-68, 75, 81, passim. Cont. Georg. Mon., 798, 802.

15. Genesis, 38 and 40. Theoph. Cont., 112. Skylitzes, 67.

was never promoted to the rank of a *domestic* of the guard units¹⁶. When contrasted with Manuel's fortune, this observation might be of some importance at a time when high military commands were entrusted to close imperial friends. This goes together with the statement of Genesisios (p. 42) on the (alleged?) *συκοφάνται*, rightly pointed out by the author (p. 134), but the question remains open.

Ch. 9 of section III (pp. 137-143) seems a useful introduction to the political and military use that Theophilos made of contemporary eastern religious movements against the Caliphate. Here (p. 137) it could also be noted that the main support of the Armenian Chalcedonians on Byzantine soil came from the ancient (apparently since 628) theme of the Armeniacs, mostly labeled as *φιλόχριστον* (=Chalcedonian) and never iconoclast with its most illustrious example, that of "emperor" Artabasdos (741-742). In ch. 10 (pp. 145-152) JSC opposes H. Grégoire's view that Nasr and Theophobos were the same person based mostly on a distinction between Arab letters (p. 146) and the date of Nasr's flight to Byzantium (833, 834 or 837). These are useful speculations and considerations but they are accompanied by verbs such as "I think", "I suspect" and "I consider", which show that he puts forward his views with reservations. It also has to be pointed out that the *turmarchs of the Phoiderati* in the ninth century and earlier were subjected to the theme of the Anatolics (as also the *turmarchs of Sozopolis*) and not of the Armeniacs, something that could be more fitting because Persian detachments such as *phoiderati* in the Anatolic theme¹⁷ could not be totally excluded, being a rare case (p. 152).

JSC puts forth own approach at many instances. In ch. 11 (pp. 153-172) he rightly states that Theophobos was one of the people that Theophilos trusted most. This is indirect proof that Theophilos distrusted his wife's relatives (i.e. the rise of the so-called Armeno-Paphlagonian aristocracy). The detailed account of his birth, the social status of his parents, and further justifications of Theophobos' fame going back to Jesus Christ (*proskynesis* of the newborn); The refutation of Grégoire's assertion that the monks forged these details (version B must be true according to parallel passages found in Genesisios and *Theophanes Continuatus*, pp. 154-161, trying to prove that the *Theoph. Cont.* followed the version A of the *Life*). In any

16. There is no clear evidence on the domestics from 838 (Manuel domestic) and 856, when Bardas is promoted to this rank.

17. That would mean that *Phoiderati* were recruited and enlisted from eastern nations while in early Byzantine times they were mainly (if not exclusively) western, predominantly Goths.

case, the facts regarding the childhood of Theophobos (how many years passed until Theophobos was raised to the rank of *patrikios*) are ambiguous criteria. Contacts through embassies of the Persian Khurramites only allegedly may be “identified”. An excursus on ancient Greek and Roman habits follows. There are equally logical conclusions about the father of Theophobos on p. 161: here the author re-asserts his former (1995) conjecture about Nasr the Khurramite (father of Theophobos). In any case, the position of a *turmarch* of the important unit of the *Phoiderati* could not mean anything else but an immediate subordinate of the general (*strategos*) of the Anatolics in the ninth century¹⁸. Five former holders of this rank (Leontios, Leo III, Leo V and, afterwards Nikephoros II, John I and Nikephoros III) were made emperors¹⁹. This underlines that the Anatolikon theme (and not the command of the *phoederati*) was a sort of cradle of “self-made emperors”.

I cannot comment on the assertion (p. 162), that “the current idea, advanced by Grégoire and accepted until now by all scholars, that the Theophobos of the Greeks and the Nasr of the oriental sources were one and the same person must be discarded”²⁰, because I think that it needs more concrete evidence (that is, references in the sources) and not only conjectures (the whole story of Theophobos’ past seems rather imaginary). Further the mention of Theophilos “*χάρισι δὲ καὶ τιμαῖς διαφερόντως περὶ τὸν Θεόφοβον*” (*Theoph. Cont.* p. 114) does not (I repeat, not) mean that the emperor rewarded every one led by Theophobos but not Theophobos himself; but that he simply rewarded the military unit under Theophobos. Such foreign chieftains doing marvels under Byzantine leadership or simply in Byzantine military service were active since the beginning of the fifth century without being harassed for their religious beliefs. The problem of Theophobos is indeed a very complicated but, by all means, not a major one.

The work is indeed a tough; on one page alone (p. 165) we can find the following: “it is difficult to say”, “it is more problematic to assess”, “we cannot further explore”, “but if we suppose”, to be concluded by “this is undoubtedly a highly conjectural hypothesis, which does not explain...” (p. 166). This somewhat complicates the reader’s attempt to follow author’s investigation. What is more,

18. It is to be noticed that while Leo the Armenian was *turmarch* of the *Phoiderati*, the sources (*Theoph. Cont.*, 13, *Skylitzes*, 11 and *Genesisius*, 8) make use of the term *ὑποστράτηγος* or *ὑποστρατηγῶν*.

19. *ΜΑΘ*, 69.

20. In case of two persons, there could arise –in my view- more problems to be elucidated.

minor points are dealt together with important ones with many speculations about the age of the relevant persons (mostly known from the *PMBZ*). In any case, JSC could not be very wrong in accepting (pp. 167-168) that if Theophobos had been made *καῖσαρ*, this must have happened earlier than the nomination of Alexios Musele to this same dignity. The term *ἐξουσιαστής* (pp. 168-172) is very rare in Byzantine sources²¹, but the author's conclusion regarding these known references (p. 170, i.e. that Theophobos intended to rule over the Persians in their own country) is rather unexpected. Generally speaking, Theophobos must have spent most of his time far from Constantinople (this seems to me what the term *ἐξουσιαστής* is suggesting, somewhat approaching the connotation given later by Kekaumenos) thereby justifying his revolt in Sinope²², as well as his proclamation as *king*, which goes together with the title attributed to Alexios Musele by the Arabs. JSC is right when he asserts (p. 179) that the *droungarios* of the watch Ooryphas easily captured Theophobos²³. As I already went too far with this assumption, I cannot make any further comment on this (the various uses of the verb *ἡγεμονεύω* throughout the Byzantine centuries needs more investigation).

Further (p. 176) JSC returns to his assumption (in ch. 8. 2) that Alexios Musele could have been advanced by traditionalists in the capital as a convenient substitute for Theophilos after the defeat of Anze(n or s), and this just after stating in his previous paragraph that "the sources do not allow any firm conclusion on this point". He could have also repeated the same thing here. It is difficult to believe that Alexis Musele could not be loyal to Theophilos, especially after his return from the West but let us say that this was so. However, the author is certainly right when he concludes (p. 180) that the influence of the Persian *tagma* had probably

21. To the references on p. 169 one should add: As early as I can record, there is a unique mention in the *Vita Theodori Sykeotae* (Festugière, 39, 18-25: *ἐξουσιαστής Χριστός*. Further in Theophanes, 367 (under Justinian II), a certain *Στέφανος ὁ Πέρσης, σακελλάριος καὶ πρωτοευννοῦχος* (sic). Afterwards in Kekaumenos LXXXIX, p. 314 Litavrin: *τοπάρχης καὶ ἐξουσιαστής*. Finally, in Acropolites, 181 Heisenberg, in Pachymeres II, 32 = I, 219-220 Failler and in Gregoras IV, 5, 1, p. 97-98 CSHB, *ἐξουσιαστής* is attributed to Venetian representatives in Byzantium, e.g. the *βάιλος*.

22. In my opinion, Georg. Mon. Cont., 803 CSHB shows a hardly hidden sympathy for Theophobos in open contrast to Theoph. Cont. and Genesisius.

23. Here (Genesisius, 35 and 43. Theoph. Cont., 81 and 136 and Skylitzes, 46 and 80) starts in my view the career of the Ooryphas family, firmly loyal to the Amorians and later rather Anti-Macedonian and, as it seems, closely connected with the command of the fleet during more than one generation.

ended in 839. The creation of new themata under Theophilos²⁴ should be ascribed to the impulse of the rising local aristocracies of Paphlagonia and Cappadocia respectively, something that underlines the new “Aufschwung” (according to Grégoire, Ostrogorsky) of the Byzantine armed forces which start to gain victories on the eastern front already under Michael III.

JSC illustrates his –mostly chronological – aims, which appear to be “to a great extent hypotheticals” as he himself admits on p. 463 (no blame at all, as it is only a conjecture), by describing the warfare against the Arabs (lengthy section IV, pp. 181- 336). He starts by stating that caliph Mamun (813-833) was directly involved in the civil war of Thomas and that the latter’s end coincides with a provisory end to the Muslim attacks in the East. In my view, the letter of Michael II to Louis the Pious of 824 is not to be taken *à la lettre* besides its general aims. Unfortunately, the details are given by the more extensive Greek sources. It seems that JSC’s view in 2014 is more correct than that of 1995 (p. 185, n. 5) and many repetitions of lengthy texts on different occasions could lead to some confusion. Thus the crucial mention of Genesisios on p. 23: *ὁ μὲν Μιχαὴλ παρὰ παντὸς τοῦ τῶν Ἀνατολικῶν στρατεύματος ἐτύγγανεν στυγητὸς* which refers to Michael’s submission to the Constantinopolitan aristocracy against which the Anatolics so many times had fought in the past, is reduced to almost nothing. Unfortunately (sic iterum) the generals of the Anatolics during the first half of the ninth century are not well known²⁵ as, unlike Winckelmann, *Rangstruktur*, the author does not deal with the prosopography of the Anatolian themes while he seems rather to concentrate his

24. Certainly the theme of Cappadocia, if not also that of Paphlagonia which could have been created somewhat earlier, under Michael II, as the seals of the generals of Paphlagonia (so far) appear slightly earlier than those of the generals of Cappadocia. Cf. also below, note 28.

25. From Aetius (800-802, according to Theophanes, 475 and ZACOS – VEGLERY no 1690A, who attribute the seal to Aetius of the fall of Amorium in 838) and Bardanes Tourkos (Theophanes, 479. George the Monk II, 772. Genesisios, 6. Theoph. Cont., 6 and 8. Life of David, Symeon and George 17= AB 18, 1899, 231-232. Leo Gramm., 202. Theod. Melit., 139 Tafel. Zonaras III, 303. ZACOS – VEGLERY no 1750) to a certain Romanus (Theophanes, 491), Leo the Armenian (some 11 historiographical texts, 4 Lives of Saints and DO Seals 3, 86, 55), Krateros (in 816-819, Life of Theod. Stoudite B, PG, 99, 296B, a certain Manuel (813- 829? Theoph. Cont., 110, Skylitzes, 65), Photeinos (823-827; Theoph. Cont., 76, Skylitzes, 43), Aetius of Amorium (838, Theoph. Cont., 126. Skylitzes, 75), Theodotos Mellisenos (843-852, Theoph. Cont., 165. Skylitzes, 92). I am sorry being compelled to cite all these generals who are very easily discernible in MAΘ, 354-355, an equally lengthy book but dealing with too many topics during almost five centuries.

attention on the ethnic origin of individuals (Thomas, Khurammites, Armenians, “Scythes” and so on, according to the various versions of the texts). The question of whether *Theoph. Cont.* and Genesisios had two different versions regarding the person of Thomas (p. 187) or not seems to be the easiest solution to the problem. Such confusions are a usual phenomenon in Byzantine literary tradition (the author admits on p. 188 that the two versions about the origins of Thomas are irreconcilable) and personally I remain faithful to the dictum *personae non sunt multiplicandae sine necessitate*. The fact that what we have here is a civil war and not a foreign invasion is testified by the typical motto of every civil war in History: *fathers took up arms against their sons, brothers against those born of the same womb, and finally friends against those who loved them the most*²⁶. Besides, all descriptions of Thomas’ army speak of a large irresponsible band of vagabonds, meaning low-born people. This underlines the class-qualification of a rebellious multitude that could not afford to remain indefinitely in country areas without taking possession of a single (fortress) town²⁷.

The warfare against the Arabs in the East during the first half of the ninth century is closely connected not only with the civil war but also with the thematic administration of Asia Minor. According to the most authoritative textbooks, Michael II and Theophilos created the themes of Cappadocia and Paphlagonia in the East²⁸. Something was bound to change in Asia Minor during the reign of Michael

26. *Theoph. Cont.*, 49-50, cited by the author, p. 188, n. 14. Theodore Studites (*Letters*, 478, n. 862 quoted also by the author p. 198, n. 48) expressly speaks of an *ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος* and so does the *Life of St Peter of Atroa* (author, p. 199). The Greeks in 1946-1949, like Spaniards much earlier (1936-1939) and in a broader extent, had to endure such painful situations. Personally, I do believe that Thomas rebelled only after the overthrow (by murder) of Leo V with whom he was in the same anti-aristocratic camp, which was “rammed” by the defection of Michael the Amorian in 820. The latter should have been very satisfied at having convinced Louis the Pious that Thomas was an incorrigible rioter against imperial *τάξις* or *εὐταξία* and not against a defector to the formerly enemy aristocratic camp just like Michael II, now together with generals Olbianos and Katakylas of the Armeniacs and the Opsikians, that is, the most “traditional” (and orthodox!) contingents amongst the Anatolian themes.

27. *Theoph. Cont.*, 67: *οὐκ εἰς τοσοῦτον χρόνον ἐκαταθῆναι τὴν αὐτῶν διατριβὴν ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ προσδοκῆσαντες ...*

28. L. BRÉHIER, *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1949, 352-353. N. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 348-354 and notes. The apparently contemporary theme of Chaldia (Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 349) did not play a significant role in these times, unlike Paphlagonia and Cappadocia. On p. 352,

II and Theophilos, something that would destroy the balance of forces under the “five themes” and bring on violent encounters. This was the institution of the *domestic of the scholae*. The post was established at the beginning of the so-called “five themes period” (i.e. Anatolics, Armeniacs, Opsikians, Thracians and Bucellarians) through the military reforms of Constantine V)²⁹. In the third or fourth decade of the ninth century the *domestic of the scholae* became the commander-in-chief of the entire eastern army³⁰. Immediately after the reign of Michael II (d. 829) the *domestic of the scholae* gained both power and prestige, as shown by the example of Manuel, the uncle of Theodora³¹, who appears to have been a very powerful and influential leader from the very beginning of the reign of Theophilos, to be followed later (under Michael III) by Bardas and Petronas. Moreover, the social status of the *turmarchs* seems to have changed especially in Paphlagonia after the reign of Michael II. If someone was *turmarch* or even a *drungarios* in the native land of the empress Theodora, he could not be *ἄσημος ἢ ιδιώτης τὴν τύχην*, according to *Theoph. Cont.* (89). This testifies that the *turmarchs* enjoyed a better position in Byzantine society in the times of Theophilos. It seems to me that the real context is far from the question of how many Thomases existed and the like, but such conjectures may also be useful sometimes. Independent of the fact that the rebel army of Thomas consisted of various nationalities and included warriors from many themes³², its basis was the theme of the Anatolics which constituted the most reliable bulk of the Byzantine armed forces in Asia Minor. The letter of Michael II to Louis the Pious clearly and, I would also add deliberately, points out to his brother-emperor the “infidel” and “impious” element in Thomas’ deeds and acts in order to ensure the Frankish-Christian-Orthodox solidarity. Thus, in my view, some aberrant assertions such as “son of Mosmar” which cannot be interpreted (p. 193).

n. 12 (and referring to Treadgold) JSC asserts that the themes of Paphlagonia and Chaldia were created by Leo V. Leo V did not create any theme to the best of my knowledge. Both Paphlagonia and Chaldia were created later.

29. Cf. *Theoph. Cont.* 6: *τῶν πέντε θεμάτων τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀνατολήν*, almost literally repeated in Theodore Studites, *Epistulae* 407, 53 = Fatouros II, 566: *ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν πέντε θεμάτων τέθεται*.

30. On the institution of the *domestic of the scholae* between 767 and 829, cf. H. -J. KÜHN, *Die byzantinische Armee im 10. und 11. Jh. Studien zur Organisation der Tagmata*, Wien 1991, 73-74.

31. *Theoph. Cont.*, 128. Skylitzes, 81. *Georg. Mon. Cont.*, 798.

32. P. LEMERLE, Thomas le Slave, *TM* 1(1965), 285-288.

The identification of two Thomases in one single person, the Armenian and the Slav, a difficult problem already pointed out by Bury in 1912 (p. 195) could convince whoever wishes to be convinced but I am attempting to suggest a different way of thinking: the interpretation of the sources in accordance with what was most likely to happen under the conditions mentioned by them, and taking into account some occasional or even surreptitious references made *en passant* by Byzantine authors who, generally speaking, sometimes enjoy hiding things and deeds. At the end, JSC states that “we do not know how Thomas the Armenian reacted, faced by the invasion of Thomas the Slav” (p. 195). Indeed we do not. JSC is right in suggesting that the Arabs may have been rather numerous in Thomas’ army.

No one can tell whether Crete had been “bereft of its Greek population” or “abandoned by the Byzantine troops and officials” in the early twenties of the ninth century as JSC suggests (p. 202). Both assertions seem unlikely, but it must be said the Arabs met almost no resistance when they conquered of the island. The first attempts to regain Crete by Photeinos and Damianos, the doomed attempt of the Kibyrrhaeotic fleet under Krateros in 827³³, the gathering of huge forces at Kepoi in 866, the rather detailed descriptions in the *De Cerimoniis*, the failed attempt by Gongyles in 944, and the victorious expedition of 961 under Nicephoros Phokas testify that the Byzantines must have felt that they had suffered a heavy blow and never ceased to attempt to recover an (almost empty in 823/824?) island. Whatever the case, JSC suggests a close connection between the revolt of Thomas and the conquest of Crete by the Arabs (p. 206/207), which must be taken into account for any further investigation. The controversial point, however, resides in the fact that the whole narrative of the reign of Michael II in *Theoph. Cont.*, in Genesis (but also in the “Logothetan” versions) consists of these two events, that is, the revolt of Thomas and the loss of Crete; thus they are *a priori* connected to each other. On the other hand, no one denies that Thomas’ army included many

33. The institution of the drungarios of the Imperial fleet did not exist then and Thomas’ thematic navy has been dispersed without any engagement (p. 204-205); the first drungarios of the fleet appears only in the sixties of the 9th century (Nicetas Ooryphas and some others mentioned by patriarch Photius). I dare here quote my book *Byzantium in Eastern Mediterranean. Safeguarding East Roman Identity*, Nicosia 2010, where, I think, I try to disentangle some thorny questions of the Byzantine navy. In the same book I have tried to insinuate that the reform of the Kibyrrhaeotic theme and fleet ended under Basil I and Leo VI when this squadron appears again with reduced numerical strength and confined this time in the Aegean without sailing to Italy any more.

Arabs. But the Byzantines did not consider this mostly agrarian revolt as a foreign invasion whatever the intentions of Michael II towards Louis the Pious or the strategy of the Caliph al- Mamun might have been³⁴. Besides, the rebellion of one more *turmarch*, Euphemios in the West (p. 213), could eventually complete the series of the rebellious *turmarchs* after the Armeniacs (792) and Thomas, with the aim of releasing themselves from the command of the *strategoï*, something partly visible in various chapters of the *De administrando imperio* one century later³⁵. The privileged administrative and social position of the *turmarchs* at the beginning of the tenth century is given by the Arab author Ibn Hauqal³⁶.

Ch. 14: JSC states that Cappadocia was organized as a theme (p. 215). This was suggested ten years earlier than Métivier's study cited by JSC³⁷. Everyone can, of course, cite whomever he wishes to cite, and can also include lengthy passages in Greek and in English translation, make two citations for the same thing (p. 218, n. 14 and 15) and some repetitions. In any case, the author's point of view (suggested by Vasiliev and Treadgold) that Theophilos won his victory at Charsianon, then in the Armeniacs, seems to be correct (p. 219/220) if one takes into account that the fortress of Charsianon must have been turned into a *kleisoura* around 863 and into theme (with Kaisareia as its capital!) around 873. In my opinion, we should not require from Byzantine texts such as *Theoph. Cont.* (Prokopios, Nikephoros, Psellos and other classicizing authors constitute a different case) absolute obedience to classical rules of grammar (since they were sometimes acquainted with pleonasm), and JSC admits that the Arabs had won an earlier victory (830?, p. 221). The great Byzantine victory by many thematic units in 863 (Lalakaon, Poson, Bishop's Meadow) was won on Byzantine soil. A victory on friendly soil permits an invasion of enemy territory, but I do not wish to put forward mere conjectures and there can be only an approximate chronological classification of the events. This is valid

34. "In a certain sense Mamun 'delegated' participation in the military expedition of Thomas" (p. 212).

35. Cf. *DAI* 45, 81-86, p. 208 Moravcsik - Jenkins. *DAI* 46, 76-79, p. 218. *DAI* 50, 140-146, p. 158 and 158-159, p. 240. The *turmarchs* act in total independence from their former superior officers, the generals of the themes.

36. A. A. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* II, 2, Bruxelles 1950, 413.

37. Cf. my study "The Evolution of Thematic Encounters in Asia Minor and the Reign of Michael II", in the Colloquium *Byzantine Asia Minor*, Athens 1998, 52-58. Cf. also *MAO* 259-274 and 441-446.

for the fortification of Loulon as well (p.232-233)³⁸, which led to Mamun's second campaign in Cappadocia (A.D. 832, p. 234 and 465). Theophilos seems to have paid much more attention to the newly created Cappadocian theme³⁹ than to that of Paphlagonia, from where his wife's relatives were descended. JSC undertakes a thorough analysis of the style in the letters between the emperor and the caliph, although he notes that "we do not know when Mamun wrote his answer to the emperor" (p. 237). He also includes many details from former works (pp. 238-241). Apparently Cappadocia was strong enough to discourage an attack by Mamun's forces against Constantinople in 833. In 838 Mutasim had to be satisfied with the destruction of Amorion, but the whole expedition did not advance further. The loss of some fortresses in the long-term disputed areas was a usual phenomenon (pp. 214-243).

JSC deals at length with military campaigns, insisting on an accurate as possible chronology and he combines well the references in Byzantine and non-Byzantine sources. But speaking of the Armenians, we must take into account that they had a prominent role in Mutasim's campaign of 838 against the Byzantines⁴⁰. JSC's views regarding the composition of the troops in the years 834-836 are similar to his previous ones (p. 248, n. 11). It would be a happy event if we could be certain that the Khurramites had their headquarters in Amaseia, capital of the Armeniakon, but this is only a conjecture. JSC attempts to situate the Byzantine attacks prior to Mutasim's campaign against Amorion in 838. This is an error that is based on brief accounts (p. 251)⁴¹, but he insists on it (p. 252-253). JSC's remark (p. 254/5, n. 34, made already in 1995) on the meaning of *αῦθις* is accurate: it points out the immediate succession of the campaigns. Compared with the relevant chronology of Vasiliev⁴², the "tentative chronology" attempted on pp. 257-259 (to compare with the complete chronology on p. 465/6), avoids intermediate events, which could change the context. Generally speaking, JSC provides very interesting information and many details (sometimes too many) on the Khurramites, the Melitenians (those under the emir of Malatya) and so on, but I strongly doubt if we are in position to

38. In. p. 465 (Chronology) author is right (in my view) in dating the events of the year 831. There is no need for lengthy comments.

39. As it appears also from both Lives of St. Eudokimos (Life A, 7-8. Life B, 207).

40. During their participation in the Arab campaign the Armenians were headed by the "archon of the archontes"; cf. Theoph. Cont., 126. Skylitzes, 75. Genesisius, 47.

41. Theoph. Cont., 137 and 203 on Abasgia.

42. A. A. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 440-441.

distinguish between victory and defeat in Theophilos' interrelated campaigns given the context of the sources. It seems that we are doomed to discuss them endlessly (pp. 260-261, thus justifying Michel the Syrian's way of writing (Theophilos abandons bed and clothes, etc). The author's conclusion is that a victory and a defeat are equally possible (p. 261) and that Theophilos was not defeated in 835 (p. 262). There are hopeful guesses.

It has been long established that the sack of Sozopetra took place in the early years of Theophilos' reign; thus "anew" (pp. 263/4) would certainly mean "a second time". It is not certain (albeit not excluded) that Theophilos engaged the still heathen Bulgars in his eastern campaigns because Masudi said so (Vasiliev translated the passage, p. 265)⁴³. Michael the Syrian read two different versions of the same event in two different sources, which probably made common use of a third one. I cannot comment on that. But given that all the other sources date the siege of Sozopetra under the caliphate of Mutasim there is no reason to try to justify Michael the Syrian's mistake (given also the troubled chronology of the events in Tabari, p. 267). Just like we easily and rightly reject excessive numbers provided for the Byzantine army (according Tabari, p. 269), we could also reject some excessive testimonies of Arab, Byzantine and Armenian sources. Well informed on the eastern sources, JSC is certainly right in saying that the emperor could not lay camp in the heart of the caliphate (p. 271), but the mention of *Ancli* (p. 272, n. 22) could possibly refer to the *castellum Ἀγγλῶν* in Persarmenia, mentioned by Prokopios⁴⁴. Thus the problem of Angk (pp. 272-276) could be somewhat more briefly decided. Nevertheless, the author seems about to construct a very tempting pedestal for the second triumph of Theophilos.

It becomes more and more apparent that in JSC's eyes the foreign element in Byzantium was preponderant in the ninth century. In ch. 17 (pp. 279-28) it is true that "Amorion was at the time perhaps the only major city in Anatolia": (p. 285), that is, in the Anatolian centre, besides coast cities like Ephesus (also in reduction), Nicaea and perhaps Amastris in Paphlagonia and Sinope⁴⁵. Amorion in 838 was a point of defence, a bulwark connecting the military units of the Anatolics (general Aetius) and those of the Bucellarii (Theodore Krateros)⁴⁶, whereas the Thracians,

43. Totally different is the case when the heathen Bulgars reinforce the Byzantines during the siege of Constantinople by the Arabs, as it happened.

44. Procopius, *Bella II*, 25, 5, II, 25, 10 and II, 25, 15 = I, 264-265 Haury-Wirth. Cf. also B. RUBIN, *Das Zeitalter Justinians*, Berlin 1960, I, 342.

45. Theoph. Cont., 124-125, 1325. Skylitzes, 74. Genesisius, 41-43.

46. Should that mean that the map on p. 288 by author has to be slightly modified

the Opsikians, the Armeniacs and the Paphlagonians apparently did not take part in the defence as they were to do somewhat later in 863 (p. 286 and notes). As JSC admits (p. 287, n. 42), Vasiliev, I., 144-177 has the best modern description of the campaign. What we may presume is that besides the poor repairs of its walls, the fortress of Amorion (p. 297) did not have the necessary reinforcements, which should have been sent by Theophilos if he did indeed split his army into at least two contingents. JSC seems to admit this rather silently.

It is also interesting to note that JSC makes great use of the individual attitude of persons (for instance the various attitudes of Theophilos, especially in the events of 837/8 down to p. 305, the lengthy chapter on treachery, pp. 293-297, and others). Ch. 17 (Assessment) repeats in brief what has been already said.⁴⁷

A little further and citing the famous “Papyrus of St. Denis” (p. 324-328)⁴⁸ it is to be noted that it was the alliance between Louis the German and Charles the Bold that hampered and finally reduced to nothing the common Byzantine-Frankish campaign in Southern Italy (probably under the overall command of the future Louis II of Italy⁴⁹) against the Arabs and not, as erroneously stated by *Theoph.*

with regard to the movements of the Byzantine army from the Bucellarian theme, directly to Amorion in a more vertical line? There is confusion reigning about the general of the Armeniacs in 838; cf. *MAΘ*, 379-380. It is doubtful that Theophilos was “provoked to leave his troops at the north edge of the Halys” (p. 289/90). The same should be valid regarding the assertion that the Byzantine army “may have been divided into two contingents” (p. 290) in that crucial moment and given the main threat. The garrison of Amorion must have been left without any reinforcements (p. 290/91). Moreover there is a clear mention in Genesisios, 49: ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς πρὸς τε Νίκαιαν καὶ τὸ Δορύλαιον διεκαρτέρει, noted on the map. p. 288, but not interpreted accordingly (retreat of Theophilos, p. 293). Cf. also *Theoph. Cont.*, 126.

47. W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2: Polonius: *What do you read mylord?* *Hamlet: Words, words, words.* I would not insist on minor remarks such as the correction to Κρατερός (and not Καρτερός) in the name of the Byzantine envoy under Theophilos to Cordoba in 839 (Ch. 18.2, p. 318/319).

48. JSC rightly cites Dölger and Ohnsorge regarding the famous “Papyrus of St. Denis” (but not what followed, albeit he repeats on p. 325 almost word by word what is said on p. 171 of the non-cited book of 1980 and in its further development in *Διπλωματία και πολιτική. Ιστορική προσέγγιση*, ed. by S. ΠΑΤΟΥΡΑ, Athens 2005, 244-248).

49. Louis II of Italy must have been *το ἡγαπημένον τέκνον ὁ ῥήξ* in l. 8-9 of the text. Genesisios here must have been misinformed or he deliberately changed the aim of the common campaign. Here the “limits of Christianity” must be taken as an allusion to the limits of the Christian Roman Empire under Constantine I and his successors.

Cont. (135) the arrival of a Frankish army at Constantinople⁵⁰. The embassy should be integrated in the series of Byzantine diplomatic missions to the Carolingians, beginning in 798 under Eirene and continuing for many years (802, 803, 810, 811, 814, 816, 817, 824, 827, 833 and 839).

As previous scholars, JSC focuses on Theophilus's wars in the East, but there was no campaign in the East since the embassy of 841/2 (that is at least what one can presume from the silence of the sources unless we take into account raids and skirmishes on both sides of the border, pp. 328-333)⁵¹. The main narrative is based on conjectures but it provides some information on Byzantine naval action on the Syrian coast (an attack on Antioch requires a landing at the Orontes estuary and sufficient ground forces or an assault against the walls of the city). At the end we must agree with JSC that "the reign of Theophilus was not as negative, as is sometimes suggested"; this takes into account the entirety of his reign and not only "the situation caused by the sack of Amorion". Despite (temporary) defeats, Theophilus sought to maintain a standing army (and navy) ready to attack or to retreat. He showed utmost care for Sicily, Venice, the West and the Steppe Peoples, including the Rhos (in the embassy to the West of 839, according to the *Annales Bertiniani*) at a very early stage of their history. Given this complicated international context, Rosser's attempt to label Theophilus "the Unlucky" (ὁ δυστυχῆς) according to Genesis and to *Theoph. Cont.*⁵² (both referring mostly to his iconoclast beliefs), was most unfortunate.

Following lengthy quotations in Greek and their compulsory translations (pp. 335-340), JSC deals with the Khazars, a very interesting topic. It seems that the general international political context agrees with author's opinions (and not with C. Zuckerman's dating) on an earlier date for Petronas's sending to the Khazars and the building of Sarkel (p. 343)⁵³. I do not believe that the strategic purpose of Sarkel

50. The last similar event occurred to the best of my knowledge under Tiberius Constantine (578-582), according to Theophylact Simocattes III, 12, 8, 134 de Boor. Theophanes, p. 251 de Boor. and Evagrius V, 14, p. 209 Bidez-Parmentier.

51. Attention must be given to JSC's note 62, p. 329 regarding the campaigns of 839, notwithstanding if Treadgold is right or wrong. Unfortunately, I must confess that I know almost nothing on the Khurramites and I cannot comment on them.

52. Genesis 37. *Theoph. Cont.*, 135 and 139. Both sources make great use of derivative terms.

53. It seems to me that both sources (i.e. the *DAI* and the *Theoph. Cont.* cited by author) give the impression that the building of Sarkel was completed while Theophilus was alive. Thus it may have commenced much earlier.

was related to a policy against the Khazars, a policy that began with the strongly anti-Semitic reign of Basil I (867-886) and continued until the reign of Basil II⁵⁴. It is certainly not to be excluded that the Magyars might have been the foe against whom Byzantium needed a stronghold (p. 344-345) as the previously close ties with the Khazars had not yet been weakened.

The advantage of scholarly writing is that it is encapsulated in a sound narrative and the much praised βραχυλογία, that is, conciseness of narrative, although books from Birmingham do not often follow this pattern. Wordiness is a persistent shortcoming of this book (see, for example, the discussion on pp. 279-282). The re-telling of events that have been described and elucidated time and again since the nineteenth century (e.g. the attempted transport of the descendants of the Macedonians captured by Krum in 813, p. 350, only to conclude in p. 351 that the Bulgarians appear as allies of the Magyars, something that would have hampered the Rhos from reaching Constantinople by the Black Sea coast, followed by an *excursus* on the title of the Khagan adopted or not by the Rhos, in p. 353). JSC's conclusions are based on sound judgement, but he often returns to previously discussed topics only to insist on some other aspect (see for instance p. 352, n. 9 on the *Life of George of Amastris*; V. G. Vasiljevsky's views are known through Treadgold and Sevčenko). It is true that Wahlgren's edition of the Logothete must have posed many questions to someone who has dealt with *Theophanes Continuatus* and *Genesios*. From Bury to Shepard through Levchenko, Pashuto, Sacharov and others we know that the contacts between the Byzantines and the Rhos were continuous and rather peaceful after the embassy to Louis the Pious and up to their raid on Constantinople in 860. JSC rightly agrees with this, citing *Genesios* and Blöndal-Benedicz (p. 355, n. 20). But this is a way to set up many shorter studies in scholarly reviews by analysing well-known stories anew, while in such an extensive book On p. 354 we are back to Petronas and Sarkel and to what we have formerly admitted. Grand strategy considerations in p. 354/355. Regarding the date of the Khazar conversion to Judaism (pp. 355-362), I have only to repeat that the anti-Jewish policies of Basil I mentioned by the texts are "justified" by the more or less recent conversion of the

54. I am abstaining from citing my book on the *DAI* of 1990, since *graecum est, non legitur*. But in two of my studies (Über die zwei gegensätzlichen Richtungen der byzantinischen Außenpolitik im osteuropäischen Raum im 10. Jh., in: *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa 950-1453*, Hg. von G. PRINZING – M. SALAMON, Wiesbaden 1999, 35-43 and: Byzantine Political Encounters concerning Eastern Europe (V-XI centuries), in: *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* 5, 2007, 63-70), I think that I fully explained what I mean by that.

Khazars (Artamonov, Pletneva), without any other comment⁵⁵. The good relations between Byzantium and the Bulgars since the times of Omurtag are testified by Protobulgarian inscriptions (Beševliev, p. 156).

In each chapter JSC devotes much time in analysing and also criticizing his predecessors. The same is to be observed in section VI (The Melkites, pp. 367-420); the Byzantines enlarged the text of a {much} previous letter and made {substantial?} interpolations to it. The author prefers the linguistic criteria or “three types of styles” (Harvalia-Crook) ascribing type I to the alleged original in order to add new arguments (p. 370). Once more, he includes lengthy passages from texts with an English translation, and a detailed analysis of previous views⁵⁶. Here there is a favourable presentation of Kresten’s (arbitrary, I would say) views, and a relevant objection to them (pp. 376-378). The conclusion after several considerations (having also to do with an alleged council in Constantinople under Theophilos in 837 or 838 in p. 381/382)⁵⁷ is not very clear but I may be wrong in this case. Thus, JSC goes back to Chrysostomides who tried to support the view that the synod was being prepared since 836 by Antonios Kassymatas (821-837) only in order to reject it, citing further views that certainly embellish but do not clarify the context. On p. 383, he asserts that “as the matter stands, an iconoclastic council in Constantinople summoned by Theophilos can be considered not only a historical plausibility, but also a necessity after the wavering political and religious situation during the reign of Michael II”. Here I can only cite the old BZ judgement: *Es scheint mir stärkerer Argumente zu bedürfen*. The numbers of participants depend on various circumstances and the author usually deals with philological patterns (cf. the “levels of style” on p. 384 ff. and elsewhere) and not so much with the historical context.

55. The fact that under Justinian II and Constantine V the Khazar princesses still had Khazar names and as empresses were to be re-named to Theodora and Eirene respectively could show something.

56. *En passant*: it could be noticed in p. 374/375 that the title accorded to Theophilos *νικητῆς τροπαιοῦχος* is nothing less than the Greek equivalent of the Latin (= Late Roman) *victor ac triumphator*. *Αἰώνιος αὔγουστος* = *perpetuus augustus* etc. In my opinion the term *δεσπότης* in the given text must be taken only together with the epithet *θεοτίμητος* which refers to a godly act. Regarding the term *δεσπότης* as used to designate the emperor one can begin with 416 (Theodosius II in Marcellinus ad. an. = *MGH AA*, XI, 73) and Anastasius (difficult to be dated in *CJ XI*, 48, 19 = *Regesten* 202).

57. Generally speaking, “heretical” councils gathered more participants than the orthodox ones.

Ch. 21.4 (pp. 384-390) is a more or less theological interpretation, which I am unable to expand. But on p. 389 I have a rather serious objection: the word *ἀπαρεγγεῖρητος* is not at all similar to the adjective *ἀχειροποίητος* as JSC claims: while the latter means “not hand-made”, the former should be translated as “inviolable” or better yet “not to be affected by human action”⁵⁸. Such serious blunders should be avoided and the interpretation on p. 389/390 should also be revised accordingly. Besides JSC’s questionable understanding of connotations in Greek and smaller confusions like that between Treadgold and Métivier (pp. 352 and 215 respectively, cf. above), he claims to know the Arab texts in the original (p. 414, n. 24, while in p. 423, n. 2 one could conclude the opposite), but unlike Vasiliev, Rosen and others he cites only translations. Thus the Khurramites and the Melkites are his firm stand.

Regarding the “gifts from God” mentioned in the (original) letter of the patriarchs to Theophilus and referring to his victories, one could also quote an almost parallel passage in the so called *Life of Emperor Basil* (= *Theoph. Cont.* V, 89, 7-37, p. 288-290 ed. Sevčenko) dealing with the building of the Kainourgion Palace, where the emperor is depicted receiving his conquests in the East from his lieutenants/generals (*ὑποστράτηγοι*)⁵⁹ as gifts from God. It has often been noted that the reign of Basil I recalled in some aspects that of Theophilus⁶⁰. This anticipates a Byzantine reconquest of the East much earlier than the times of Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes (p. 398/399). Moreover, it seems difficult to deal with the *Annals* of Eutychius Alexandrinus as a whole unless we take seriously his statements regarding the empress-widow Theodora’s confession of the alleged repentance of Theophilus before his death, p. 402/403. Without rejecting this conclusion, I must say that the problem remains open. I must also agree with JSC’s acceptance that forgeries were a common phenomenon in Constantinople (p.

58. Cf. Σ. ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΟΣ, *Λεξικὸν τῆς ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσης*, Athens 1884, 137: Ἀπαρεγγεῖρητος: Εἰς τὸν ὅποιον δὲν δύναται ἢ δὲν τολμᾷ τις νὰ βάλῃ χεῖρι. Cf. F. ADRADOS, *Diccionario Griego-Espanol*, s.v. ἀπαρεγγεῖρητος: 1. intacto, no retocado 2. intangible, inviolable 3. que no se deja manejar.

59. In order to avoid misunderstandings: quite differently by translating the term *ὑποστράτηγος* in Modern Greek; it corresponds to a major-general, while *ἀντιστράτηγος* corresponds to the modern lieutenant-general. *ὑποστράτηγος* in the Byzantine thematic hierarchy means always second-in-command and we do have *ὑποστράτηγοι* in the themes of the Anatolics, of the Opsikion of the Thracians or of Thrace; cf. *ΜΑΘ*, 55-57, passim, 537.

60. VLYSSIDOU, *Αριστοκρατικές* (as in n. 7), 65, 84, 96 passim.

406/407) and also with the lack of decision on all other matter (of course before 843, p. 408). His conclusions on the *Letter to Theophilos* (repeated on p. 409) are not to be rejected. On the contrary, it seems to me – although I am not a specialist on the matter nor on apocalyptic texts – that they should be supported by further research. I would add that the Byzantine reconquests in East and West are depicted in a masterly way and *according to the treaties* in the *Eisagoge*, independent of any eastern expectations, prophecies (p. 413). Further I think that there was no need at every instance to cite at length (e.g. the *Life of Theodore of Edessa* in order to conclude that the caliph in question is identified with al-Mamun in the Arab version (p. 416-417). This could have been more succinct.

JSC sometimes abuses the “classical” subterfuge of some scholars that a medieval author uses two different or even several sources in his narrative. His investigation is not of equal value in all places, moreover when a lengthy passage ends by an: Whatever the case, or be that as it may, whatever the cause etc. Many of his *Ausführungen* seem to belong to previous and distinct studies.

JSC describes thoroughly military campaigns, makes many remarks and suggests some new insights; some of them might be very useful while others could be subjected to criticism since his interpretations can be understood in different ways? (cf. above). But this is a shortcoming of all studies that get into too many details regarding a specific topic⁶¹. I would here humbly insinuate that Byzantine prestige in the Middle East was still dominant in the seventh century, even during its second half (witness the treaties under Constans II and Constantine IV) but these were treaties with what was still the “Roman” Empire. This idea was considerably weakened during the eighth century only to re-emerge (under a rather different empire) with the *Aufschwung* spoken of by Grégoire and adopted by Ostrogorsky, beginning with the reign of Michel III or the restoration of the icons. John the Grammarian’s encyclopaedism, al-Mamun’s philhellenism (author p. 417) and other factors (p. 428 ff.) certainly contributed to this development. JSC deals with too many issues in ch. 23 but makes the fortunate conclusion that “much research must be done before we are able to construct a holistic theory that could explain the nature of the intellectual and cultural exchanges between the two empires” p. 425)⁶².

61. With some exceptions: Somewhat unexpectedly JSC (p. 293) declares that Tabari’s very detailed account of Amorion’s siege is not worth repeating here

62. The probable hypothesis is that Photios never visited Baghdad and that the foreword of his *Βιβλιοθήκη* was invented because of his envy towards Leo the Philosopher and John

What else could we add to that?

JSC seems to distinguish between the heirs of the Greek classical heritage in the East; he considers the Melkite safeguarding of Greek culture as part of the Melkite cultural heritage (p. 428) and points out the demands of the caliphs for books from Constantinople, to which Theophilos responded, as well as Arab scientific expeditions into Byzantine territory. The question he poses on p. 431 (if the Byzantines contented themselves with occasional missions) is impossible to answer except by mere conjecture (Byzantine patriotic stance as a possible trigger)⁶³, as the author also seems to admit. Here expressions like “it is difficult to answer” (p. 431), “it is questionable if...” (p. 432), “it is doubtful that...” (p. 433) abound. Theophilos’ “patriotic stance” (p. 436-437) can be also detected in the sack of Zafetra and in some other events, but it cannot be considered as a general rule of Byzantine behaviour.

A lengthy book requires a rather lengthy review. Thus, for making an overall judgement on a useful book, one is compelled to finish it first in order to be able to criticize it partially, while being in some difficulty to combine piece after piece the whole context at the very end. Certain parts (I insist on that) are useful but others are not since they mainly repeat former research. In many footnotes the author cites only the study and its year without references to page numbers. The best parts in my view start from the section on chronology (pp. 463-466), which is the connecting link between twenty four rather loose empirical entities (cf. for instance the reader’s need in ch. 22 to go back to chapters 18.1 and 5.4 in p. 415), and go back to every questionable or disputed point. In my opinion, the book could have been more concise, without so many repetitions of well-known facts and lengthy narratives (cf. p. 433-435, closing on n. 25 with *Thousand and One Nights*, which may be a coincidence). Even the sources in the Bibliography are cited twice: (once in the section *Sources* and again in the section *Bibliography*), while the citations of sources are less numerous than the citations to modern authors. In fact, the Byzantine revival since Leo the Philosopher (p. 443) is testified by the reference to Michael II “despising Greek education”⁶⁴ and, further, an organ was sent to France

the Grammarian (p. 434/435-439 sqq.) who had visited Baghdad. This is dealt by the author in p. 427 and he admits clearly and correctly this point of view in p. 442, n. 49.

63. We eventually could add as a mere conjecture that the possession of the Pseudo-Dionysius by Louis the Pious since 827 for instance could have been Hincmar’s model by composing later the *De ordine palatii*.

64. Theoph. Cont., 49: ... τὴν ἐλληνικὴν παιδείουσιν διαπτύων (Michael II).

in 757 to Pippin the Short, that is, much earlier than the reign of Charlemagne⁶⁵. But everyone can express his own opinion as he likes. JSC concludes that “obviously a more comprehensive study will be needed in order to make a definitive assessment of the historical role played by Theophilos, an assessment based on objective standards”. To this I can only add that the book has an overall “handsome-looking” presentation (Ashgate γάρ), and fully complies with modern patterns of today’s scholarly market.

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65. Mentioned by the *Annales Mosellani*, the *Annales Mettenses priores*, the *Annales Sithienses*, the *Annales regni Francorum*, the *Annales Fuldenses priores*, the *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, the *Annales Laurissenses* and the *Annales Lamperti* all of them dating in 757: *organa venerunt in Franciam*.