
THOMAS DAIBER, *Vita des Konstantin-Kyrill: altkirchenslavischer Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz 2023. 480 pp. – ISBN 978-3-447-12023-4

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One of the most intractable problems of mediaeval Slavonic studies is presented by the text of the *Vita Constantini* (VC). A ninth-century text to which there are no witnesses earlier than the fifteenth century offers a considerable challenge to textual criticism, and the critical edition on which MARIO CAPALDO and CRISTIANO DIDDÌ have been working for many years has yet to appear, although the project was described as being ‘in its final phase’ a decade ago. The present contribution by THOMAS DAIBER does not seek to pre-empt the critical edition, though it is in its way no less monumental a project.

It is not, in fact, conceived as a new edition at all: the Slavonic text that it gives is that printed in 1960 by GRIVEC and TOMŠIČ, itself an edition of Hilandar MS 444. This, and the German version of the text, with their very extensive apparatus, make up more than half the volume. It is preceded by a relatively brief, but nonetheless detailed introduction explaining the book’s aims and methodology, and, instead of a historical preface (which in the author’s opinion would have to embrace a far wider range of sources than the VC), a *Zeittafel* listing events from 710 to 894 in order to provide a context for the life. The bibliography is extensive and comprehensive, and a valuable contribution in its own right, though the alphabetisation is a little eccentric: one does not expect to find Bärš after Butler or Pánek after PSRL. It may be that this is the result of entrusting the ordering of the entries to a computer rather than to a human being. Similarly, Greek text sometimes appears with the full set of diacritics, sometimes as if it were Modern Greek with only the τόπος, and sometimes as a hybrid with full diacritics but the acute replaced by the τόπος. This is a common side-effect of electronic typesetting, and one wishes that proofreaders were more alert to it.

The Slavonic and German texts alternate: each chapter of the VC is presented first in Slavonic, then in German. Both are provided with very extensive apparatus, to the extent that it is frequent for a page to bear only one or two lines of text, the rest being apparatus; indeed, on pp. 344–345

there is no text at all, only commentary. The apparatus to the Slavonic text is ‘quantified’, that is to say one reads, for example, ‘съли] 11: послѣ, 2: посланници’, meaning that eleven manuscripts contain the variant послѣ and two have посланници; anyone wanting to know which manuscripts contain which variant will have to consult GRIVEC and TOMŠIČ. This reflects the fact that this edition does not aim to elucidate the relationships between manuscripts and groups of manuscripts in the manner of traditional textual criticism, but rather to reconstruct an original on the basis of which the extant text as represented by the whole range of manuscripts could have arisen.

Besides textual variants, the apparatus to the Slavonic text contains grammatical, lexical and other linguistic commentary, where appropriate making reference to Greek usage to elucidate the Slavonic. The apparatus to the German version relates more to the meaning of the text, with frequent reference to the theological and historical background. There can, obviously, be no absolute distinction between the two, and where appropriate there are cross-references between the two apparatus. Both are based on an extremely close reading of the text. Inevitably, amid such a mass of detail, every reader will find individual points with which to disagree, but not such as to undermine confidence in the study as a whole. It is founded not just on an intimate knowledge of the VC itself, but equally upon an impressively wide reading of the literature surrounding not only the text as such, but its linguistic background, Slavonic and Greek, and likewise the cultural context in which it was written. Only occasionally does one note a lapse in attention: thus the present reviewer was surprised to read that ‘Die Zweifel an der historischen Glaubwürdigkeit von VC teilt noch Cleminson (2015)’, when in fact I argued the exact opposite.

It should be emphasised that the German text is not a translation but an interpretation. It is in fact the most significant final component of the work, expressing as it does the reconstruction of the underlying original that is the book’s principal objective. This can be quite bold. Thus VC XV.10, *аще чловѣка оубиѣтъ кто, три месеци да пиѣтъ въ дрѣвѣнѣ чаши, а стѣклѣне се не прикасаѣ* becomes ‘Wenn jemand einen Abendmahlskelch zerbreche, solle er drei Monate mit einem hölzernen Becher die Messe feiern, aber einen gläsernen nicht benutzen’. The arguments for such an interpretation are set forth at length in the apparatus, as they are throughout for less radical conjectures. The German text is thus the reconstruction which was the aim of the book – not, so to speak, what the Urtext was, but what it said. As a reconstruction, it is more or less by definition largely conjectural, so

that its evaluation will depend to a large extent on an individual's attitude towards conjecture as such, but as a commentary its value is undeniable. It will be very interesting to see, when the critical edition finally appears, to what extent their conclusions coincide.

Keywords

Old Church Slavonic hagiography; Moravian Mission