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Review Article: The de thematibus (“on the themes”) of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Translated with introductory chapters and notes by John HALDON [Translated Texts for Byzantinists, v. 11], Liverpool University Press 2021

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The De thematibus (“on the themes”) of *Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*. Translated with introductory chapters and notes by John HALDON [Translated Texts for Byzantinists, v. 11], Liverpool University Press 2021, 283 pp. (Bibliography and Index, pp. 212-283). ISBN 978-1-800-85998-2

1. Prominent British scholars, such as John Bagnell Bury and Romilly James Heald Jenkins, have done great work in the past by dealing with the works of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, mostly on his *De administrando imperio* [hereafter: *DAI*]. Recently Anne Moffatt and Maxeme Tall have offered an English translation and Commentary on the *De Cerimoniis* (Canberra 2012) [hereafter: *De Cer.*]¹. Here we have an English translation of the *De Thematibus* [hereafter: *De Them.*] based on Agostino Pertusi’s edition² by John Haldon, President of the International Association of Byzantinists (Liverpool UP 2021, 283 pp.). Besides the translation “in itself”, one must not escape the temptation to deal with its “tools” that is the relevant bibliography, which is unavoidably large (pp. 213-250), but, most of all, to be acquainted and to deal with the method, the analysis and the conclusions, i. e. the whole context of the work at hand. In any case, we have initially to do with a very polished work, from many sides.

2. I must confess, that as a native Greek (acquainted with ancient, medieval and modern language), I cannot fully understand **the specialists’ need** (just like

1. I had not yet the chance to deal with the most recent and monumental *De Cerimoniis*, from the French byzantinological team: *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, Le Livre des Cérémonies*, sous la direction de G. DAGRON (†) et B. FLUSIN, t. I - V [CFHB 52/1-5], Paris 2020.

2. *Costantino Porfirogenito de thematibus*. Introduzione - testo critico - commento a cura di A. PERTUSI [StT 160], Città del Vaticano 1952 [following references to chapters, page and line numbers of this edition. Subsequent citations from *DAI* follow the edition by G. MORAVCSIK - R. JENKINS, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio* (CFHB 1), Washington DC 1967].

a common reader's need) **for a foreign translation of a Greek text**, given that the reviewed book is full of bibliographical titles and lengthy footnotes (which usually testify a broad scientific erudition), something current in our days. At a first glance and mostly because of the length of the footnotes, it seems that almost nothing related to the topic has been omitted by the author. *Sed talia tempora, tale saeculum nostrum*, and we must submit to it. I would rather suggest that the author should cite only the titles of works which were the most useful "tools" in his endeavour. His aims seem to be rather different. In our days the bibliography is rather uncontrollable and, thus, not so easily accessible in its entity. Few great names, "scarce" originality and thousands of studies, while Byzantine History and Civilization remain *grosso modo* somewhere between 1940 (Ostrogorsky's first edition) and Kazhdan's brilliant "steps in unknown paths" in the sixties and seventies. On the other hand, very happily and up to our days, numerous editions of Byzantine texts (mostly in the *CFHB* but also elsewhere) mark a gigantic step forwards and that clearly means progress.

3. Just a simple introductory methodological question: what are we looking for? Are we trying to extend our knowledge to the present status of research and to adopt it as it is, or, maybe, to try every time to understand the (sometimes existing) *inner meaning* of the whole text of a source, according to the rules of the mid-tenth century for instance, and their relevant contemporary political, administrative and ideological currents? In this last case (which seems to me to be the right one) we should extend our research from the *De Them.* to the *DAI* and to the *De Cer.*, in comparative accordance with the handling of the *Taktika of dignities* of the ninth and tenth century (i.e. the *Taktikon Uspensky*, the *Kletorologion of Philotheos*, the *Taktikon Benesevič* and the *Taktikon Oikonomidès (Listes de préséance)*³. And we steadily must avoid lengthy repetitions (e.g. enumeration of known manuscripts, something that has been elaborated by A. Pertusi carefully enough), and also those of much earlier sources, like the *Synekdemos of Hierocles* or *George of Cyprus*, to which we have nothing original or significant to add. It goes without saying, that the following remarks to the book in question deal, besides the English translation, with the political and administrative context and only rarely will extend to the properly "antiquarian" details, which are more than numerous, most diligently annotated and *grosso modo* known so far.

3. Cf. (Not in the same sense) HALDON, *Introduction*, 40.

4. A parallel examination of the three “10th century-Constantinian treatises” must arise from Haldon’s right assertion (p. 1) that the last chapter of Book II in the *De them.* is short but also that “the last chapter 12 (of Book II, pp. 98-100, i.e. theme of Cherson) remains incomplete (HALDON, *ibidem*). Should it be not justified if we assert in this context that also in the *DAI* its last chapter (that is again the theme of Cherson) is somewhat more complete than anyone else in the same treatise (*DAI* 53, ll. 1-211, pp. 258-286)? Besides, and this is even more amazing, in the *De them.* the theme of Cherson is cited next to the last “occidental” theme, that is that of Longobardia. The importance of Cherson is to be noticed not only because it constituted a place of exile for prominent persons (e.g. Pope Martin I, emperor Justinian II and others)⁴, but also because it is most confidentially pinpointed that, in case of a Chersonite rebellion, there would be, amongst other measures, a general alarm including also confiscation of Chersonite property (ships and cargo) and relevant imprisonment of all Chersonites in the themes of Paphlagonia and that of the Bucellarians⁵. It remains for the *De Them.* to stretch the mythological background of Cherson in brief and nothing else. Now, by comparing both versions about Cherson (*DAI* and *De Them.*), which one of them should be considered as the older one? Certainly that of the *DAI*, which depicts the current political needs of the Byzantine empire and, then, that is afterwards, comes the *De them.*, in order to justify it by citing the mythical / historical past of Cherson which implicitly requires its administrative dependence from the Empire.

5. Almost the same, for instance, has to be noticed on the parallel passages of the *DAI* 29, ll. 82-112, pp. 126-128 and the *De them.* II, 11, ll. 23-40 p. 98 regarding Basil I and the conquest of South Italy. How to explain to a non native speaker that

4. The fact that Cherson was very important is testified by its excavations, the largest Byzantine excavations ever done; cf. for instance *Vizantiiskaja Tavrika (Collective work, Sbornik naouchnykh trudov, Kiev 1991)*. By the way: while citing (very correctly) the work of K. BELKE and P. SOUSTAL, on the *DAI (Die Byzantiner und ihre Nachbarn. Die de Administrando Imperio gennante Lehrschrift des Kaisers Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos für seinen Sohn Romanos, Fassbänder – Wien 1995)*, somewhat unexpectedly Haldon avoids to cite the equally interesting treatise of G. G. LITAVRIN – A. P. NOVOSEL’CEV, *Konstantin Bagrianorodnyi. Ob upravlenii imperii, text, perevod, kommentarii*, Moskva 1989. Both authors are experts of the ninth, tenth and the eleventh centuries. But, if I am not mistaken, there is not a russian-written study included in the extensive bibliography. In other words: Russian byzantinological science (except Ju. A. KULAKOVSKY, p. 234) does not exist for the author, even today.

5. *DAI*, 53, ll. 512-529, p. 286.

in Greek (at least) an abridged passage presupposes and summarizes a former more lengthy (and thus more detailed) understanding of a given situation? Here also we have an earlier narrative (*DAI*) and a somewhat more recent (*De them.*)⁶. That is also testified by the fact that in the *De them.* and at the very end of the theme of Longobardia, Constantine VII speaks of an obviously established and undisputed Byzantine rule in Longobardia not entering into any details⁷, while in the *DAI* he follows a much more detailed narrative method, implicitly avoiding to confess why Byzantine rule could not be firmly established in Benevento in the times of Longobardia's Byzantine conquest. Such almost imperceptible differentiations in confrontations of acquainted passages of texts are rather frequent in Byzantine written tradition and can sometimes be very useful; however idle talk (that is consecutive repetition of common places, known since a long time ago) and consecutive abstract notions on various subjects in a more or less "specialized" topic just like the *De them.*⁸ must be avoided in any case, especially when we have to explain something to more or less non-expert readers. Most of the content of pp. 27 ff. has very little to do with the meaning and the interpretation of the text under examination. Being *sachlich und konkret* in the German way, should be a much more helpful method mainly during the first steps of a research, in my view. A similar, albeit very brief, attempt exists, indeed, in the upper part of p. 35.

6. Should all that be considered as a simple coincidence or a fortuitous event? In my view again, this single question deserves a further comparative study with many examples, but not by repeating in length (for God's sake) all previous views etc; we should try, or just attempt to interpret the whole very complicate context of these treatises by a new way⁹. However and by all means we do not need to

6. Cf. for instance *Introduction*, n. 49, citing the editor Pertusi.

7. *De Them.* II, 11, ll. 42-45, Haldon's translation: *The king of the Franks Louis, took him (the sultan) and returned homeward. The emperor took all of Longobardia, just as today it is held and ruled by the Roman emperors.*

8. There are many topics especially between pp. 27-68 with a very loose (if not any) relation with the *De them.* (e.g. in p. 32, n. 15, p. 33, n. 33, among numerous others). There are most valuable studies but they have nothing to do with the *De them.*; on the contrary, such an *excursus* can also mislead the readers, who wish rather to clarify passages and notions.

9. The map of p. 71 e.g. (the *strategiae*), inspired by H. GELZER's, *Die Genesis der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, Leipzig 1899 (*mit einer Karte*) is genuine, original and accurate and it should be added to a new edition of HALDON's *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History* [cited below, n. 27].

try to interpret these texts through and according to our contemporary scientific needs, but to make a sincere and serious attempt to penetrate to the political and ideological context of the mid-10th century texts by a full understanding of their sometimes “hidden” meaning. That is the main point, in my view. Otherwise, we have plenty of valuable editions, but I do not think that we mark decisive steps forward on the whole.

7. Thus, I do not believe at all (as in p. 24 is admitted) that the emperor’s aim was, as he asserts, to explain ... *whence the themes received their names and what these designations signify, and the fact that some of them are ancient whereas others have acquired a new appellation* and, thus, the emperor used administrative geography¹⁰ as a tool (a broadly shared opinion); on the contrary, I believe that he hides his real purely political intentions. Further, I strongly believe, as I have pointed out elsewhere¹¹, that Constantine VII was rather inclined to “veil” his political options by referring mostly to “ancient” contexts because the political purposes of his dynasty since the reign of his grandfather Basil I were totally different (if not openly opposite) from the traditional till then “Justinianic” oecumenical conception. I cannot say more than that in this place, but my humble (but rather difficult to be fully understood) study is always available, although *graecum est et saepe false legitur*.

8. In my view, most of the lengthy introduction, well known as the author asserts, is of purely encyclopedic nature and rather loosely connected with the main topic (cf. pp. 28-29). A great quantity of such abstract terms as *administrative geography, geographical imagination, real innovation in the reframing and reappropriation of older genres* and several similar other notions of the same kind, must always be connected with genuine passages of texts, otherwise, they seem to be totally superficial. And, last but not least, just as John Haldon, I also believe, that documents such as the *De them. should be understood as a work of far more than simply historical-antiquarian exercises*, that is in a totally different meaning: they are treatises on political matters.

10. Cf. HALDON, *Introduction*, 39.

11. T. LOUNGHIS, *Κωνσταντίνου Ζ' Πορφυρογεννήτου De administrando imperio (Πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον υἱὸν Ρωμανόν). Μια μέθοδος ἀνάγνωσης*, Athens ²2018. A somewhat “difficult” book which, however, seems to have been almost positively apprehended by P. Magdalino and A. Kaldellis.

9. The footnotes are (for the most part) too stuffed and not very clear every time, occasioning difficulties in some cases, if one has objections on the matter itself; in p. 114, n. 133 and p. 118, n. 146 for instance, the author provides too much various information, without a strict method of distinguishing the interrelated evolutions of the Opsikion and the Optimati, which must have been developed as follows: At the commanding officer of the Opsikion (patricius and *comes* Theodorus of Coloneia since 665-681, most probably) and his successors followed a general, rather in 874¹². Immediate subordinate officers of the *Comes Obsequii* were not *tourmarchai*¹³, as in all other themes, but *domestici*¹⁴, and one of those *domestici* must have been the *domesticus of the Optimati*, “promoted” to governor of a newly founded and *wretched* theme¹⁵, while at least two consecutive *domestici* led the newly founded theme of the *Bucellarii*¹⁶. The *tourmarchai* in the Opsikion do not appear until the (late, as it seems,) ninth century, that is almost simultaneously with the generals (*strategoï*) and while the *Optimati* seem to be still attached to the Opsikion until 773 (?)¹⁷; it still remains unknown if, in turn, this change should be connected with the later and rather extended reforms which emperor Leo VI (that is before his son Constantine VII) imposed to several other “oriental” themes, described in some details in the *DAI*¹⁸. These are difficult deductions (totally different from the author’s views) that cannot help an unaware reader, while they still entail dissensions amongst byzantinists.

10. Regarding the theme of the Bucellarians, it must be pointed out that the *turma* of Saniana (a fortress in the text, 71, l. 12) belonged, of course to this theme, as did also their other (Bucellarian) *turma* Kommata¹⁹. Speaking in a general context,

12. Cf. V. VLYSSIDOU – E. ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΑ-ΓΑΛΑΚΙ – S. ΛΑΜΠΑΚΙΣ – T. ΛΟΥΝΓΗΣ – A. ΣΑΥΒΙΔΗΣ, *Η Μικρά Ασία των θεμάτων*, Athens 1998, 177, 392 and 396.

13. Cf. *Η Μικρά Ασία των θεμάτων* [as in previous n.], 402 (rather second half of the ninth century). That rather clearly.

14. Cf. T. LOUNGHIS, The Decline of the Opsikian domesticates and the Rise of the Domesticate of the Scholai, *Symmeikta* 10 (1996), 27-36.

15. Towards 750, Cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 447, 20 (ed. De Boor).

16. ZACOS – VEGLERY, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, no 1656 and 2601 (*mandator and domesticus*).

17. Cf. T. LOUNGHIS, *A Deo conservandum imperiale Obsequium*. Some notes concerning Byzantine field troops during the Dark Ages, *BSI* 52 (1991), 54-61.

18. *DAI*, 50, ll. 90-168, pp. 236-240. Cf. also R. JENKINS (ed.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De administrando imperio. A Commentary*, London 1962 (repr. Washington DC 2012), 187 ff.

19. *DAI* 50, ll. 92-100, p. 236.

the earliest mention of a *turmarches* belongs to the *Chronography* of Theophanes (a *turmarches* of the Armeniacs) for the year 626²⁰ (all these well-known things). The semi-antiquarian narrative of the *De Them.* apparently gives only poor attention to the real Byzantine administrative evolution. There are rather more to be said about the theme of Paphlagonia (PERTUSI, 72 = HALDON, 126-128), where Constantine's contempt (if not open hatred) is hidden behind the usual sort of antiquarianism (origin of peoples etc), which are carefully polished with equally well-informed bibliography. However, this open imperial contempt or hatred is to be connected with his obvious predilection for the Cappadocian nobility²¹, namely their leaders (the Phocades)²², who were in a steady competition with the Paphlagonian nobles. It is worth saying, that the villages of origin of the Paphlagonian nobles mentioned by other sources²³, are not mentioned at all in this full of a rather boring and "antiquarianizing" imperial treatise on Paphlagonia, which is, otherwise, duly annotated by John Haldon (known topics).

11. Speaking further of the Aegean theme, the translator (p. 161, n. 326) disserts on the military command of the Aegean sea, mentioned in two (amongst four) Lives of Theophanes (ed. DE BOOR, 28 and 30 respectively). The Aegean theme has been, most probably established after more than a whole century from the naval encounter of 727, when the rebels *katotikoi* have been destroyed by a storm (?) or beaten by Leo's III naval forces and because a *drungarios* of the Aegean is mentioned only in 843 by the so-called *Taktikon Uspensky*²⁴. Here we have another study by a well-known specialist of the given period, important in my view, which, albeit written in Modern Greek, could also be cited²⁵.

20. Theophanes, *Chronographia* 325,3-4. Somewhat unexpectedly the term *turmarch* does not exist in the *De them.*, while in the *DAI* is to be met three times, in chapters 46, 47 and 50.

21. Cf. V. VLYSSIDOU, *Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες και εξουσία (9ος-10ος αι.)*. Thessalonica, 2001, passim.

22. Cf. for instance Theophanes Continuatus (CSHB), VI. 14, pp. 445-446, 45, p. 462.

23. T. C. LOUNGHIS, *Les villages d'origine de l'aristocratie Paphlagonienne (Amnia, Dokeia, Evissa (Avysianon) fortress of Pemolissa, Niketia, Castamon and others. (Vspomogatel'nye istoričeskie distsipliny, Sanktpeterburg 2007, 155-159)*. On the steady *Auseinandersetzung* between Paphlagonian and Cappadocian nobles, cf. VLYSSIDOU, *Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες*, passim.

24. N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 53,18.

25. Cf. P. ΥΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Η οργάνωση του Αιγαίου κατά τη μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδο, Τμήμα Αιγαίου, Πρακτικά (Παρουσός 32)*, Athens 1990, 200-224.

12. PERTUSI, 84, l. 4 and 85, l. 40 (Thrace): In both passages, that is at the beginning and at the end, thunders the imperial decision²⁶ under the expression *ἐγὼ τίθημι*, an expression not familiar in the text so far. The first imperial option has to do with the “proclamation”, that the city of Byzantium / Constantinople dominates the whole world (*τοῦ τε κόσμου παντὸς ὑπερέχουσα*). Thus, Thrace has indeed (and not only *deserves*) a dominant place in Europe (under the term *Europe* we must understand the European provinces of the Byzantine Empire under the reign of Constantine VII). The second *ἐγὼ τίθημι* concerns the predominance of the New Rome over all the European imperial provinces ($\xi\delta' = 64$) by the emperors will, going back to Justinianic times, something not astonishing, given that the emperor insists placing or, identifying “the whole world” (*καὶ τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς*) with his 64 imperial European provinces, a rather imaginary number referring (it may be) to the Diocletianic, Constantinian or even the Justinianic era²⁷. It seems however, that with this open and almost arrogant proclamation, the fourth legal offshoot of the Macedonian dynasty does not totally ignore the Western European Christian world. Quite on the contrary, as it seems, he slightly reminds that the *sagene* (*σαγήνη*), pointed out by the not mentioned here N. Koutrakou²⁸ was something like a major ideological tool for the extension of the Roman authority (*ἀρχή*) over many other nations.

13. One more remark in PERTUSI, 85, l. 25: ... *καὶ οὐδέπω τις στρατηγὸς ἦν ἐν αὐτῷ* ... (Thrace) = HALDON, 166, n. 342-344: The rather occult meaning of this ambivalent (in the Byzantine style always) mention runs as follows: under the conditions of the tenth century, a general commander of a great military unit in the immediate vicinity of the capital could be almost nothing less but an open threat to the throne; that is why Constantine VII goes as back in the early Byzantine times, in order to justify posterior reforms having to do with the appointment of a general where the defence of the imperial capital depended mostly until then on the Opsikian troops “guarded by God” [the adjective *θεοφύλακτος* is often used for

26. Which may insinuate that there could not be any other interpretation than my imperial authority's.

27. Cf. J. HALDON, *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History*, Macmillan 2005, 34, with detailed list of provinces.

28. Cf. on this topic N. KOUTRAKOU, “Sagene” – “Network”. A Byzantine Perception of the International World Order, in *The Eastern Roman Empire and the Birth of the Idea of State in Europe*, LXXX, London 2005, 175-196.

both, Constantinople and its Guard (*θεοφύλακτον βασιλικὸν Ὀψίκιον*), since the defence of city-walls requires rather infantry than cavalry units.

14. That the theme of Macedonia seems to the imperial author to be an area “of lesser importance” is rather obvious. Next to it come the themes of Strymon and Thessalonica notwithstanding the latter’s size and fame (*Ἡ γὰρ Θεσσαλονίκη μητροπόλις ἐστὶ τῆς Μακεδονίας* =Thessalonica, 89, ll. 5-6). **Clearly (or almost!), the emperor has no particular interest in the ancient authors** (albeit citing them most diligently), while his main concern seems to be the –since the ancient times – importance of many areas as provinces of **his empire** (that is in the time of his reign).

15. A similar impression reigns regarding Greece, where the emperor, through very cunning identifications, denies even the national surname *Ἕλληνες* as genuine (Hellas, 89, l. 1ff). It is interesting that the emperor displays a sort of esteem for the Roman civil administration in Greece, where he states that Corinth was Greece’s capital under the Roman occupation. It is also worth saying, that everything Constantine VII tells about the theme of Peloponnesus seems true, including the famous *γαρασδοειδῆς ὄψις ἐσθλαβομένη* (91, l. 40, almost impossible to be accurately translated, according to K. HOPF, in ERSCH-GRUBER, *Allgemeine Enzyklopädie*, Leipzig, 1870, IV, 89-119. HALDON, 191, translates: *shifty* (that is *addicted to indirect courses or deceit*²⁹).

16. Regarding the rather contemptuous or disdainful imperial attitude towards the theme of Kephallenia (HALDON, 191-192), a possible explanation could be that Constantine VII tries to “undervalue” its importance, since the theme of Longobardia has been founded (from between 880 and 900), while previously, at least since 809³⁰ (cf. *DAI* 50, l. 85, p. 236) Kephallenia was something like an “advanced” bulwark of Byzantine naval power bound to South Italy and also Venice.

17. From PERTUSI, 94, l. 21 = HALDON 198 ff.: By reaching the Balkan coast of the Adriatic (Dyrrachion) the emperor starts to treat some subtle political matters, not visible at a first glance, something like a “political” justification of the Byzantine

29. *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (fourth edition)*. Also *The Reader’s Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1962, II, 818: *Not straightforward, evasive, deceitful*.

30. Cf. *Annales regni Francorum* 810, p. 94, ed. R. RAU, *Ausgewählte Quellen zur Deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters*, V, Darmstadt 1974: *Paulus Cefalaniae praefectus cum orientali classe ... etc.*

political attitude under the Macedonian dynasty towards Western political affairs. Very truthfully, he ascribes the early divisions of the Roman empire to Diocletian and Constantine and his successors; in other words, Constantine VII tries to justify, and by quite eloquent allusions, I dare say, how (or why) the political context in his times is so different from what was to be expected.

18. Now, back to our old days and right to the point: Sicily is an enormous and conspicuous island for very precise reasons: first, because, although it obeyed to the Western authorities (anonymous in the text), now, that is after the Papal “secession” (that is in the fifties of the 8th century) which also led to the definite end of Byzantine rule over Rome (that is almost in the same time) *it is held under the authority of Constantinople, since the emperor of Constantinople rules the seas as far as the pillars of Hercules ...* (Haldon’s translation p. 201). The Byzantine rule over the whole Mediterranean in these times has nothing to do with exaggerations and the like; it depends exclusively on the steady appearance of the Byzantine fleet in the Tyrrhenian waters; HALDON (p. 201, n. 524) does not pay any attention to the matter, obviously because such mentions are not at all frequent in the Greek Byzantine texts; however such sources do exist and I shall cite only three of them, in order to pinpoint the importance of the fact and also in order to do some justice to the Purple-born political mentor:

A first appearance of the Byzantine naval forces in the Tyrrhenian Sea during the tenth century can be dated in 915, when it is noted that the imperial ships blockaded the estuary of the Garigliano river in order to hamper eventual Arab naval attacks on the Christian military units³¹. The second undisputed naval campaign, very important in my view, was bound to Southern France, that is to the Saracen pirate-shelter of Fraxinetum (La Garde-Freinet in the neighbourhood of Frejus and St. Tropez)³²; Liudprand of Cremona in his *Antapodosis* (V, 16, ed. CHIESA) renders the outcome of this expedition with his usual sincerity: *Rex itaque Hugo congregato exercitu, classibus per Tirrenum mare at Fraxinetum directis, terrestri ipse eo itinere pergit. Quo dum Greci pervenirent, igne proiecto Sarracenorum naves mox omnes exurunt*³³. Last, but not least, there is a mention for the year 1066 (that

31. One of the most sober and scientific tales about the campaign which led to Garigliano in 915 belongs to V. VLYSSIDOU, in the collective volume V. VLYSSIDOU - S. LAMPAKIS - M. LEONTSINI - T. LOUNGHIS, *Βυζαντινά στρατεύματα στη Δύση, (5ος-11ος αι.)*, Athens 2008, 357-360.

32. Flodoardi, *Annales* 931 (MGH. *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, III, 379).

33. Cf. also T. C. LOUNGHIS, *Byzantium in Eastern Mediterranean. Safeguarding East*

is as late as a little before the fall of Bari and the entire Byzantine administration in Italy) in a letter of emperor Constantine X Doukas to the (anti) Pope Honorius II (1062-1071), which presents a special interest and runs as follows: *In Malfitano enim mari eodem momento occurrent vobis centum naves, unaquaeque suffulta centum remis, in quibus erit inestimabilis alimonia hominibus et equis; insupra tanta habundabunt pecunia in auro, argento et palliis quantam vix posset comparare Italia cum suis nummulariis; ut experiatur Italia quia tales sumus in facto, quales in verbo*³⁴. I hope that, under such omens, Constantine VII in the fifties of the tenth century was fully justified (especially after the successful expedition to Southern France in the thirties) to assert that the emperor of Constantinople dominates the whole Mediterranean down to the Columns of Hercules. There is no need to mention *indirect mentions* of Byzantine naval campaigns in the Tyrrhenian, such as that requested by pope Stephen V to Constantine's grandfather Basil I; the pope asks *χελάνδια ἔξωπλισμένα* under a competent commander in order to protect the *παραθάλασσαν ἡμῶν* (from the consecutive Arab naval raids), and the sea very close to the seat of Rome mentioned in the papal letter was, certainly, the Tyrrhenian and not the Adriatic sea³⁵. That means clearly that the successive Popes had a rather clear view of the Byzantine naval possibilities and activities in the Tyrrhenian even after the fall of Syracuse in 878. Thus, I think that *demonstravi quod erat demonstrandum*.

19. PERTUSI, 97, l. 18 ff = HALDON, 203, 206-208 (Longobardia): Here and, while both narratives of the *De them.* (ll. 18-44) and that of the *DAI* 29, ll. 87-112 are rather equals in length, the *De Them.* summarizes the whole story by the conclusion: *ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατέσχε τὴν πᾶσαν Λογγιβαρδίαν, καθὼς καὶ σήμερον παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλέων δεσπόζεται* (ll. 42-44) = HALDON, 208, somewhat deliberately omitting the story of the “misunderstanding” between Basil I and Lewis II included in the *DAI* 29, ll. 115-119, p. 128, something from which the steady (since Basil's

Roman Identity (407-1204), Nicosia 2010, 154, where is said that the former admiral of the fleet Romanus Lecapenus was seriously concerned about the fleet, especially during the thirties.

34. Benzo Albensis, ad Heinricum IV, ch. III, 1 = MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* XI, 622.

35. Cf. for instance the well-known letter of Pope Stephen V to Basil I [V. GRUMEL, *La lettre du pape Etienne V à l'empereur Basile Ier*, *REB* 11 (1953), 147 and B. BLYSIDOU, *Nochmals zum Brief des Papstes Stephan V. an den Kaiser Basileios I.*, *Byz.* 78 (2008), 12, n. 17; ΕΑΔΕΜ in *Βυζαντινά στρατεύματα στη Δύση*, 326, n. 397].

reign) occupation of Longobardia should not be deduced or considered as a definite fact, as in the *De them.*. There are very slight differentiations in the meaning of both passages, which demand utmost sensibility from the reader of the Purple-born emperor's works. Thus, the *De them.* considers the Byzantine occupation of Longobardia as a fact, while the *DAI* confines the Byzantine victory in detail, that is the occupation of Bari and the country (Jenkins's translation, p. 129), something clearly less confident and less secure than the version of the *De them.*, which briefly certifies the steady and uninterrupted possession of the whole Longobardia by the Byzantine emperor. Such sometimes imperceptible differentiations in the style of similar narratives may sometimes mislead, if the text is not repeatedly read. Whoever thinks differently, can do as he likes.

20. The undeniable fact (as far as I can claim) that Constantine VII finishes his both works by Cherson (and we have to do here with the same method, the narrative of the *De them.* being much shorter, that is posterior to that of the *DAI* 53, pp. 259-494) leads to some additional remarks to Haldon's note 552 in p. 209; Cherson's political and strategic importance is pointed out in other chapters of the *DAI*, that is in the short ch. 6 (the most important in my view), and also in ch. 9 and ch. 42. It is a rather complicated story, which I am not intending to expose here; whoever wishes or desires to deny (but with proofs; not by flatly rejecting it³⁶), is certainly free to proceed accordingly. Thus, Constantine VII returns to Cherson in the *De them.* (after having exposed its political diplomatic and military importance in the three aforementioned chapters (6, 9, 42) and having also edified the historical background of the long-term political obedience of Cherson to the Eastern Roman Empire (that is why he cites so often Diocletian in the *DAI*, ch. 53). Having done

36. Cf. for instance V. PRIGENT, La politique sicilienne de Romain Lécapène, in *Guerre et société au Moyen Âge, Byzance-Occident (VIII-XIII) siècle*, ed. D. BARTHÉLEMY et J.-C. CHEYNET, Paris 2010, p. 68: *Je ne m'arrêterai guère aux positions du premier* (il s'agit ici du pauvre Lounghis). *Elles reposent sur une analyse de la situation en Sicile sous-tendue par une connaissance insuffisante des sources relatives à l'histoire locale .. etc* (Il s'agit encore de Lounghis). To this abstract but devastating verdict upon the chronology of the *De them.* (regarding the theme of Sicily!) I should humbly reply: *a) on ne condamne que par de preuves b) rira mieux qui rira le dernier*. For the time being, I am trying to investigate some very complicated matters based on another interpretation of very difficult texts combined with others. Otherwise, the Byzantine texts would remain half-interpreted as they are in our days to the best of my knowledge. However, refuting must be made always by proofs, and not by "declarations in an imperial style".

that, he returns some twenty years later in the *De them.* in order to establish its even more ancient origins, as he does with almost all the other themes. In my view, Cherson meant to the political ideology of the Macedonian dynasty much more than a common “forward outpost” (HALDON, 209, n. 551) because it was to be defended by all means and protected with utmost care while the Empire should be always ready to face any attempt of the Chersonites to rise against the imperial rule. Moreover, I have attempted, by some very subtle approaches, comparisons between passages of sources and deductions³⁷ to clarify the matter.

Now, some notes and remarks to the translation itself:

1. PERTUSI 59, ll. 1-2 = HALDON 78: in my view, the exact translation must run as follows: *The name of themata does not correspond, as it seems, to the majority's conception* (and nearer to the author's spirit and purpose), instead of Haldon's: *did not originate as...etc.*

2. PERTUSI, 59, ll. 8-9 = HALDON, *ibidem*: The exact translation (à la lettre) should run as follows: *When the emperors with their armies went into the field... etc.*

3. *Ibidem*: καὶ τοῖς ἀνταίρουσι ... ζυγὸν ἐπέτιθεσαν. The exact translation must run as follows: ... *and imposed the yoke of servitude τοῖς ἀνταίρουσιν = upon any rebel (or insurrection)*; and further: *πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη* means here the whole empire in its broadest extension and not the whole inhabited world in its entity.

4. The exact meaning (and thus, the translation) of PERTUSI, 61, ll. 10-11 = HALDON 85 (*Τὸ τοίνυν Ἀνατολικὸν θέμα, ὡς νῦν ὀνομάζεται, ἐκ πέντε ἐθνῶν τὴν ὅλην κατοικίαν ἔσχηκεν*) is: *the thema of Anatolikon, as it is called today, it is so because it is inhabited by five nations* (the imperial author underlines the subjection of five nations which make the theme of Anatolikon so important for the Empire; Constantine VII rules indeed many nations); thus, it is an illustrious theme and here we do not have to do with an indifferent (and flat) information about five nations.

5. PERTUSI, 61, l. 13 = HALDON, 85-86: *Τὰ δὲ πρόσσικα τῶν Ἰσαύρων τὰ πρὸς τὸν Ταῦρον ...* are to be translated: *the approaches of the Isaurians towards the Taurus* and not *the region of the Isaurians next to the Taurus* (a slight but real

37. Cf. LOUNGHIS [as above, n. 11], ch. 14, especially, pp. 96-97 for the deductions on the importance of Cherson, and also going back to some former chapters, regarding mostly the (so much desired and praised) need of *peace with the Pechenegs*. These deductions being totally original, I am sorry to admit that I did not find anything similar in the current bibliography in order to support my views. The genuine texts needed were good enough to me in order to elaborate.

difference). Lycaonia belonged entirely to the theme of Anatolikon.

6. PERTUSI, 61, l. 28 = HALDON, 87: τὸ τάγμα τὸ στρατιωτικὸν in the given context means *a major military unit* since it was (immediately afterwards) divided in smaller units, and not, vaguely, *the military*.

7. PERTUSI, 62, l. 55 = HALDON, 91: ἠναγκάσθησαν ... τέμνειν εἰς μικρὰ τὴν μίαν ἀρχήν. Instead of *were constrained to divide up the unitary empire*, it would be better (to my sense) to translate: ... *to divide the supreme military command in smaller units*.

8. PERTUSI, 64, l. 40 = HALDON, 102: Rhodentos and Podentos are female in Greek (including also the text of the *De Them.*).

9. PERTUSI, 65, l. 63 = HALDON, 105: It remains doubtful if the term ἡγεμῶν can be translated as *governor*. In that case, it would be more appropriate to adopt a “subtle double term” such as *semi-independent governor* (ruler of eight “cities” - rather “castles”?) etc.

10. PERTUSI, 66, ll. 68-69 = HALDON, 106-107: I would rather suggest: *so, that (=ὡς καὶ) a proverb on their account has been invented as such: ... etc.*

11. PERTUSI, 66, l. 71: ζώνης δὲ τυχόντες = HALDON 107: *when they obtain insignia* (that is the *cingulum*)³⁸, which meant administrative (and thus also social) promotion in the Later Roman Empire.

12. PERTUSI, 67, ll. 14-17 = HALDON, 111: πηγὴ must be translated in English as *fountain* and not *well*, notwithstanding the little importance of such a remark in the given general context.

13. PERTUSI, 67, l. 25 = HALDON, 111: ἐργοπόνους (*hard-working*), ἐργώδεις (*laborious, toilsome*) and not differently nor otherwise.

14. PERTUSI, 69, l. 32 = HALDON, 118: προσεἰληπται (from προσλαμβάνω) has here the connotation of *is admitted* (or *committed*) *from a superior authority*, that is from the high command of the army, while the expression ... *takes part* seems to me a much looser form.

15. PERTUSI, 70, l. 3 = HALDON, 119: I do not object to the use of *wretched* for οἰκτρότατον, but I would prefer the well-known adjective *very* (or *most*) *miserable*, having to do here (to my understanding) rather with the external appearance of the *Optimati*, deprived of the usual imposing military style.

38. Definition of ζώνη - *cingulum* by Ju. A. KULAKOVSKY, *Istorija Vizantii* v. I, Kiev 1913 (= Variorum Reprints, London 1973), 31: *opredelennoe otlichie v vide voennago pojasa iz krasnoi kozhi cingulum, s zolotoi priazhkoj*.

16. PERTUSI, *ibidem* = HALDON, *ibidem*: If the modern author translates *οἰκτροτάτον* by *wretched*, he will have to deal with the next sentence ... *καὶ μήτε τούρμαις μήτε δρούγγοις τετιμημένον* ... which should be translated as *for it is not honoured* (something like a non-sense) *by tourmai nor by droungoi*. In my humble study cited above, n. 14 (*The Decline of the Domesticates* ... etc). I have suggested the term *τετιμημένον* (has been *cut* or *mutilated*) instead of *τετιμημένον*, and my suggestion has been accepted (at least orally) as a much more reasonable and convenient correction, if not a definite solution (by N. Oikonomides). Having clearly to deal with such an abundant bibliography, the translator Haldon most gallantly omits the point and passes to the *tagmata*.

17. PERTUSI, 70, l. 14 = HALDON, 120: Generally speaking, the *Optimati* deal normally with the service (*δουλεία*) of the mounted soldiers and not of the common infantry (foot) soldiers. Chronology of changes in their status cannot be very easily detected and, they are very often acquainted or even identified, with those of the Opsikians. As it is well known, the term *στρατιώτης* (otherwise *ἱππότης*), especially in the mid-tenth century (that is the era of Constantine VII) is a sort of a western *knight*³⁹.

18. PERTUSI, 73, l. 3 = HALDON, 129 (Chaldia): *τὰ δὲ ἄνω καὶ μεσόγαια*: *The inland and midland*. I would prefer as more accurate *the mountain area* (= *τὰ ἄνω*, that is the elevated ground and, indeed, there is such a ground just after the coast of Paphlagonia), since the former sentence speaks clearly about the coastal area.

19. PERTUSI, 73, l. 2 = HALDON, 130-131 (Mesopotamia): *ἀνόνημος* = *anonymous* indeed, but *ἀκατονόμαστος* (as in the text) = *unnamable*, that is something ominous, just like in the medieval Greek superstitious language, and not at all like Haldon (*without a former proper name*), which repeats the meaning of *anonymous*.

20. PERTUSI, 73, l. 1 (Coloneia): *Κολώνεια κάστρον ἐστὶν ὄχυρώτατον καὶ κρημνῶδες*. In my view, Haldon should in his comment also cite Anna Comnena's parallel passage XII, 7, 3 ed. REINSCH - KAMBYLIS: *Κολώνειαν ... (πολίχμιον δὲ τοῦτο ἐρμηνότατον καὶ ἀνάλωτον)* which, albeit considerably posterior to the *De Them.*, underlines its uninterrupted military importance throughout the centuries.

21. PERTUSI, 74, l. 1-76, l. 50 = HALDON 134 and 136: (Sebasteia and Lykandos): That something in common existed between both themes is testified also by a seal

39. To this kind of mounted *στρατιῶται* are mostly addressed the Novels of the mid-tenth century emperors (cf. N. SVORONOS - P. GOUNARIDIS, *Les Nouvelles des empereurs macédoniens concernant la terre et les stratiotes*, Athènes 1994).

of a judge (κριτής) of Lykandos and Sebasteia (Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals* II, Bern 1984, 803). Cf. also KOUNTOURA-GALAKE, in VLYSSIDOU and alii (as in n. 12), 333, n. 20⁴⁰.

22. PERTUSI, 76, l. 33 πρόοικος = HALDON 138-139, n. 241 (Lykandos): *governor*. In the given context, the term πρόοικος seems to indicate something like *the first citizen*; the term πρόοικος has been (genuinely, in my view) also used as an accurate translation of the term *majordomus* by Theophanes, a title next to the (indifferent in this context) real (Merovingian) sovereign of the Franks up to 741⁴¹. That has, of course, nothing to do with this passage of the *De Them.*

23. PERTUSI, 77, l. 12 = HALDON, 142-143 (Seleukeia): ὁ δὲ κύριος Ῥωμανός, ὁ καλός τε καὶ ἀγαθὸς βασιλεύς ... It seems clear (and for good reasons) to me, that the *De Them.* has been written after the death of Romanos I; καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς are used not exclusively but mostly for dead people (that is one more proof).

24. PERTUSI, 78, ll. 13-14 (Kibyrraiotai)⁴²: αὕτη (sc. ἡ Ῥόδος) π[ε]λαγία ἐξήπλωται, πρὸς βορρᾶν τε καὶ νότον ἐναποβλέπουσα ... HALDON, 147: *this open sea (!) extends out both to the north and to the south*. As a native Greek again but also an old worker in Greek syntax, I dare say that I interpret the text as such: **αὕτη refers to Rhodes the island and not ... to the sea**, the word πελαγία being an adjective⁴³ and not at all a substantive. Thus, the right and accurate translation must run as follows: the island of Rhodes extends in the middle of the open sea = (that is the exact meaning of πελαγία), to the north and to the south. In other words: the subject in the given sentence is the island and not the sea! This is serious, absolutely true and it also corresponds not only to our contemporary geographical knowledge but also to the medieval art of thinking and writing. Whoever thinks differently on this matter, I am sorry to say, is wrong. I am sorry to be compelled to insist on such easy meanings.

25. PERTUSI, 81, ll. 10-14 (Samos) = HALDON, 159: I consider, that the dative case ἐκείνω refers to the general of the Thracians, and not to the place; thus,

40. The abbreviation ZV (Zacos – Veglery) appearing e.g. in the very lengthy n. 255 of pp. 142-143 is not included in the list of the Abbreviations, pp. VIII-X.

41. It has, of course, nothing to do with the (right) mention of Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 402 and 403 (ed. DE BOOR), of Pippin (the Short, confusing him with his father Charles Martel), who was *majordomus* = πρόοικος indeed. It is cited only κατ' ἀναλογίαν.

42. Cf. on this matter P. YANNOPOULOS, *Cibyrra et Cibyrréotes*, Byz. 61 (1991), 520-529.

43. The substantive is πέλαγος (the high sea, the open sea), from which derives the adjective πελάγιος, πελαγία, πελάγιον.

the translation should slightly change, omitting the local attributive *there*. And, regarding the note 323, *ibidem* (end): I would add: yes, of course, the early field armies in Anatolia were largely mounted troops, except ... the Opsikians⁴⁴ from their first appearance down to as late as the third quarter of the ninth century; this is also corroborated by the relevant seals of the Opsikion. Only then (that is under Basil I *grosso modo*) they must have acquired *strategoï and turmarchs* as commanders and, thus, they turned definitely to mounted units loosing, in a certain way, their formerly appearance (and also their previous tasks).

26. PERTUSI, 83, l. 22 (Aegean): ... *προσωκείωνται δὲ τῷ στρατηγῷ τοῦ Αἰγαίου πελάγους* = HALDON, 162: *Associated with the general of the Aegean sea are the so called Cyclades ... etc.* Much more accurate, in my view, should be following translation (and also interpretation): *To the jurisdiction* (i.e. to the high command) *of the general of the Aegean are also included the so-called Cyclades ... etc.*

27. PERTUSI, 84, l. 4 (Thrace) *ἀρχὴν δὲ τῆς Εὐρώπης ἐγὼ τίθημι* = HALDON, 165, ll. 1-2: that European territory, geographically speaking, which starts from Constantinople and extends westwards, does not need an imperial confirmation (*I am putting*, seems to me more “imperial” than *I am placing*). The imperial *ἐγὼ* could be neither an egotistic nor a humble assertion, but an authoritarian imperial (that is a purely political) declaration of Byzantine supremacy over the whole world, whatever this world might be, either the whole inhabited european areas (as we are talking about Europe now), or simply the sixty four provinces mentioned by Hierocles (not less extensive than Europe itself) in the sixth century. Thus, Constantine VII does not hesitate to claim that he has the needed authority to safeguard an old tradition, skillfully “mitigating” it with posterior territorial losses (a few lines below), such as those under Constantine IV (in 680/681). The ideological outcome from all this imperial *savant mélange* is useful not only to cultivated readers but also to the politically informed people, more or less acquainted with the ideology of the Macedonian dynasty.

28. PERTUSI, 90, ll. 8-9 (Peloponnese): ... *ἡ Πελοπόννησος εἰς αὐτοὺς ἀφεώρα* = HALDON, 188: *and the Peloponnese looked to them.* I would suggest instead: (the whole) *Peloponnesus regarded to them* (that is to the Pelopidae). The text seems to refer to a sort of dependence, as it should have happened in Homer’s times, if not even earlier.

44. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 397,16-18 (ed. DE BOOR)= Zonaras XV,1 = III, 253 (ed. BUTTNER-WOBST, CSHB). Cfr. my article cited above, n. 17.

29. PERTUSI, 92, ll. 4-5 (Nikopolis): (Ἀντώνιος) ... ἀπέστη δὲ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς = HALDON, 193: (Antony) abandoned the Roman realm. The real and also literal meaning of the sentence is Antony rebelled from the Roman empire (or revolted). Ἀποστασία means clearly *secession, revolt*.

30. PERTUSI, 94, l. 21 (Dyrrachion): Ἔως ὧδε ὁ μερισμὸς τῆς βασιλείας ἐγένετο τοῦ κρατοῦντος βασιλέως τὸ Βυζάντιον = HALDON, 198: *Up to this time the division of the empire belonged to the emperor of Byzantion*. The meaning of the whole sentence is almost totally different and runs like this: As far as here (that is in Dyrrachion, because the word ὧδε is a local adverb, especially in this passage) the (territorial) division of the empire has been made in favor of the emperor reigning at Byzantion, while ... etc, and the reader can afterwards follow Haldon's translation.

The main offer of the book, always in my view, is, of course, the “initial one”, in order to make Byzantine texts more familiar to the English-speaking people, (notwithstanding that, in some aspects the translation is not accurate) with too many references, most of them of encyclopedic nature. In matters of pure research however, I wish good luck to such an attitude towards the rational thinking. Such a large bibliography cannot serve to the understanding of the so-called “minor” points, not very rare and most useful in such texts. Very lengthy narratives⁴⁵ and hundreds of citations cannot overshadow some (as it might be) deficiencies, when the reader evaluates the “rate” of conclusions at the end of the book. Besides, I could never accept that in such an imperial sophisticated treatise, and thus in *ein Werk von gelehrten Litteratur*, such important statements “may simply be random”⁴⁶. If we cannot understand them (sometimes the translation seems amateurish) in their exact contemporary context which embraces almost the whole political and also literary activity and production of the time, that is another thing which must be openly confessed, whatever misfortune may occur in future to these most-visited in our times Byzantine studies. As early as in the Preface, Author asks forgiveness for repeating (for the sake of context and clarity!!) a good deal of known information with which the readers of his book may well be familiar; in my humble view that

45. I think that all these extensive allusions to prior to the 10th century kinds of geographical works used by Constantine VII do not help the modern author, translator or simple reader to clarify the *political and ideological* problem of the *De them*. as an imperial treatise, which contains political information, even if we consider it as a geographic and (alas!) an encyclopedic treatise.

46. Cf. *Introduction*, p. 19. ff.

is to be *par excellence* avoided. Very well known names, names names and titles of antique, but also of modern authors and works (sometimes even without the needed relevant citations⁴⁷) and lengthy passages rather overshadow the most desired clarity; that also must be understood, whatever the cost might be. Science today has no need to depend on personal relations, not speaking of professional dependence. “Vertical dependence from above” was the situation in Byzantium one thousand years before and there is great time for the science to eradicate “Byzantine” habits and behaviour which rather overshadow the historical real context.

Generally speaking, the book can be moderately useful for English-speaking people in order to make them acquainted with the “antiquarian” byzantine literature, something, in turn, that could help them to better realize the european cultural heritage in various regions of our continent. But I could not and in any case accept that such specimens could be of any help to Byzantinists, even to those being in their early stage of studying and learning. Such attempts should be much more sober, more clear, more precise, not allowing endless “mental roamings”, misunderstandings, nor literally “suffocating” by footnotes the reader who hasn’t sometimes the temper needed for an investigation of the whole (not very useful at any time) matter.

I have tried to put forward some concrete remarks *ad hoc* (neither by citations of a multitude of former works nor by contemptuous generalisations) but (besides some concrete remarks) by some “advanced” considerations on the matter that could be useful as these considerations may agree with the *inner logic* of the Byzantine political written expression, which, if understood otherwise, may lead to non-sense. The not very numerous (always in my view) studies that I have added, have directly to do with Porphyrogenitus, his works and also with the content of Haldon’s work, which, otherwise, is abundant by (almost pure) Encyclopedism. My remarks in their majority were addressed and directed to very concrete and precise topics. I also have tried to help the whole matter by clarifying some isolated subtle passages by a genuine interpretation (and also suggesting sometimes a slightly different but more precise and correct translation) and, moreover, I could eventually return (if needed) to the given subject with further remarks on the themes of Thrace, Sicily, Longobardia and Cherson. On the whole, we have here to do with a work “of surface”

47. Cf. for instance p. 129, n. 202 (theme of Chaldia), where the translator informs (the Byzantinists!) on the content of Xenophon’s *Anabasis of Cyrus*. There are also rather numerous other notes of this kind.

and one may feel something like a need for “hurrying” as, generally speaking and not dealing with details, a primarily understandable translation has been offered to the English-speaking people, while the professional Byzantinist should seek mostly towards something more than pure Encyclopedism taken from rather well-known handbooks. But if we may agree that the *De them.* is something more than an “encyclopedic” work of History and if we also agree that its original and edited text needs a genuine interpretation compared with other (contemporary, most of all just like the *DAI*, but also with several other contemporaneous) texts, then, the book under review could clearly be more thorough in the translation, less extensive in notes, more penetrating in content and, thus, significantly better.

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