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The *Life of St Andrew the Fool* by Lennart Rydén: *vingt ans après*

Paolo Cesaretti
University of Bergamo

About 20 years have passed since 1995,¹ when Lennart Rydén published his monumental two-volume edition of the *Life of St Andrew, the Fool for Christ's sake* (BHG 115z) in the series *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia*. The present paper wishes to offer a survey of the critical appreciation and evaluation of Rydén's edition, and also to determine whether his contextualization of the text within the specific spatial and chronological 'coordinates'² of the mid-tenth century has substantially contributed to the understanding of that period and its cultural climate as a whole. The question is more complex than it may seem. In fact, the author of our *Life* – the “author who calls himself Nikephoros”,³ priest of Hagia Sophia – made well-known but awkward efforts to present himself as a contemporary of the hero of his hagiographical text, whose story is set in Constantinople at the time of Emperor Leo I (457–474).⁴ By contrast, Cyril Mango had suggested to date the *Life* to the end of the seventh century, “approximately between

¹ A little less than 20 years had passed in November 2014, when I presented a first version of this paper in a session of the Seminar for Greek and Byzantine Studies at Uppsala University. Slightly more than 20 years have passed now in January 2016, when I submit my paper to the editors of SJBMGs. I wish to thank Ingela Nilsson for both opportunities as well as for her revision of my English text. My title is indebted to the novel *Vingt ans après* by Alexandre Dumas père (published in 1845).

² See Delehaye 1934: 7–17 (“les coordonnées hagiographiques”).

³ Magdalino 1999: 85.

⁴ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 12 (ll. 9–10), 18 (l. 110), 134 (ll. 1847–48). Relevant notes at pp. 304 and 324.

the years 680 and 695”.⁵ In addition to these scholarly concerns, I will also consider a couple of passages in *VAS* that have raised my interest as regards the proper understanding of the cultural climate in which the text was conceived. In my view, there is more to be discovered in them than appears at first sight.

In order to highlight the present appreciation of Rydén’s edition of the *Life of St Andrew (Vita Andreae Sali, hereafter VAS)* twenty years after its publication, I shall take as my point of departure two authoritative reference works, the *History of Byzantine Literature 850–1000* by Alexander Kazhdan,⁶ wide-ranging in scope but specific in chronological terms, and the *Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* edited by Stephanos Efthymiadis,⁷ wide-ranging in chronological and geographical terms but limited to the hagiographical production.

Alexander Kazhdan – perhaps the most influential Byzantinist of the late twentieth century, whose merits in the field of hagiography have been properly assessed by the same Efthymiadis⁸ – sets his analysis of *VAS* in a chapter devoted to “three Constantinopolitan *vitae* of the mid-tenth century”. Even though he admits that “precisely when the *vita* was written remains unclear”, Kazhdan underlines that “closer to the actual date are those scholars who place the *vita* in the tenth century”, like Rydén who “advanced the view that Nikephoros was writing around 950”.⁹ The very fact that the title of the chapter dealing with *VAS* concerns the mid-tenth century implies that Kazhdan had accepted Rydén’s views about the date of the production of the text. In the opening of his chapter, Kazhdan also rejected the arguments advanced by Mango for dating the text to end of the seventh century, especially as concerns certain elements considered by Mango as *realia*.¹⁰ As his text develops, Kazhdan

⁵ Mango 1982: 309.

⁶ Kazhdan 2006: 193–200.

⁷ Efthymiadis 2011a and 2014; see especially Efthymiadis 2011b: 126, with n. 97.

⁸ Efthymiadis 2006:157–59 and 2011a: 6.

⁹ Kazhdan 2006: 193–94.

¹⁰ See also below, n. 20. Mango’s general approach was judged as “positivistic” more than hagiographic by Rydén; see his “Introduzione” in Cesaretti 1990: 16, n. 11 [reprinted in Cesaretti 2014: 41, n. 12].

seems to be more and more interested in emphasizing the Constantinopolitan character of the *Life* and the image of the capital it offers. At the same time he underlines the similarities and the correspondences (stylistic, linguistic, structural) of *VAS* with the *Life of St Basil the Younger* (BHG 263–264), another text of “consistently Constantinopolitan” character from the mid-tenth century.¹¹ The fact that Kazhdan’s reference work accepts Rydén’s views about the date and place of production of the text – its *coordonnées hagiographiques* –, not to mention Rydén’s previous underlining of the similarities between *VAS* and the *Life of St Basil the Younger*,¹² removes Kazhdan’s appreciation of *VAS* from the horizon of the positivistic ‘debate’ and allows the text to become part of a wider ‘hagiographical discourse’.¹³

Stephanos Efthymiadis – a scholar who has never hidden his deep admiration for Rydén’s work¹⁴ – includes *VAS* in his chapter devoted to the “Hagiographic production from the so-called ‘Dark Age’ to the age of Symeon Metaphrastes”, that is, approximately from the eighth to the tenth century. *VAS* is here set within the frame of “Constantinopolitan hagiographical fiction”, with its fictional “holy heroes [...] inscribed in a historical context [...] not devoid of glaring anachronisms and various *non sequitur*”.¹⁵ Efthymiadis thereby moves in a different direction, with a specific penchant for fiction, arguments and texts already mentioned by Kazhdan in his survey of “Constantinopolitan *vitae* of the mid-tenth century”: the *Life of St Basil the Younger* and the *Life of St Niphon*, plus

¹¹ Kazhdan 2006: 186. See the detailed discussion in Sullivan, Talbot and McGrath 2014: 7–11, concluding that “the bulk of the content preserved in M [i.e. the Moscow manuscript] was most likely written in the 950s or 960s”.

¹² Rydén 1983, where in the final pp. 585–86 the hypothesis was advanced that they were the product of one and the same author; see also further below.

¹³ For “hagiographical discourse”, see Kazhdan 2006: 203, a term drawn from Van Uyt-fanghe 1993, in his turn indebted to the intellectual heritage of Michel de Certeau (1925–1986). In addition to the *Life of St Basil the Younger*, other similarities are found in e.g. the *Life of St Niphon* and the *Life of St Anastasia*. See Kazhdan 2006: 200–9.

¹⁴ Efthymiadis 2006: 159–60, with interesting comparisons between Rydén and Kazhdan and their approaches to hagiography.

¹⁵ Efthymiadis 2011b: 125–26.

the *Life of St Gregentios* and also some Lives of female saints¹⁶ – a dossier of texts masterfully examined by Rydén in various of his papers.¹⁷

Efthymiadis continues by referring to the fact that there have been “arguments” about the date of composition of *VAS*, from the seventh to tenth century, “the latter [argument] being the most convincing”.¹⁸ That “latter and most convincing argument” was the one that Rydén had been advancing since the 1970s¹⁹ and later developed in his 1995 edition, where he tentatively placed the production of the text during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (905–959). In the 1995 edition he also offered a summary of his response to Mango’s position of 1982, with great profit for the reader.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., 127–28.

¹⁷ See e.g. Rydén 1986.

¹⁸ Efthymiadis 2011b: 126. The same (mid-) tenth-century date is found also in other contributions to the volume: see e.g. Constantinou 2014: 343–44; Kaplan and Kountoura-Galaki 2014: 392.

¹⁹ To mention but a few: Rydén 1974, 1978, 1982a and 1983.

²⁰ See Rydén 1995: 41–56; suffice it here to summarize the main arguments. First, the different evaluation of a fragment in uncial letters of *VAS* preserved in *Codex Monacensis Graecus* 443, dated on palaeographical grounds to c. 950–1000. Rydén understands it as an autograph by Nikephoros or from his circle (Rydén 1978; Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 49–50, 72–81) written in majuscule in order to support the fiction that *VAS* was an ‘ancient’ text (as Kazhdan 2006: 200 put it, a forgery “to demonstrate that his hero was in fact a saint of yore”). By contrast, Mango understands it simply as the oldest manuscript evidence of the text. Second, *VAS* mentions certain *realia* (titles, coins) which appear to fit the period between the middle of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century, but against their “positivistic” interpretation by Mango (see nn. 10 and 13 above and nn. 30 and 39 below) Rydén suggests that they should be understood in light of the “historical fiction” pursued by the author (Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 43–44). Third, the dating of the Andreas Salos Apocalypse (see below, n. 46) to the end of the seventh century, as suggested by Mango, would cause “serious difficulties with regards to its place within the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition as a whole” (Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 45). After having underlined the “resonances” between *VAS* and the *Life of the Emperor Basil* on the one hand, the *Life of St Basil the Younger* (both texts belong to mid 10th century) on the other, along with many other aspects dismissed by Mango, Rydén concluded that “while it is hard to see how *VA* could have been written in the 7th century, there is nothing to prevent us from dating it to the 10th” (Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 56). [here and below Rydén’s *VA* = our *VAS*]. The relationships between *VAS* and the *Lives* of the two Basils underlined by Rydén have been especially appreciated by

This is, then, the situation we can look back at now, at the beginning of 2016. But what if we look at the reviews which appeared directly after the publication of Rydén's 1995 edition of the *Life of St Andrew*? Did they pave the way for the appreciation of the edition and the success of the "hagiographical coordinates" it suggested and which are nowadays widely accepted? As a matter of fact, anyone expecting a chorus of acclamation will find something rather different. First of all, the number of reviews is smaller than one might think. Second, they are certainly positive in general, but there is something cautious and even ambiguous in some of them. And in any case – let alone the specific case of Rydén – it often happens that reviews display the attitudes of the reviewer rather than the qualities of the reviewed book.

However, the qualities of Rydén's *Life of St Andrew* did not escape the eyes of its first academic reviewer, who (at least to my knowledge) was the Russian scholar Sergey Ivanov.²¹ At the time, the publication of Ivanov's wide-ranging book about *iurodstvo* (that is, *holy foolery* in its commendable English translation²²) was recent. Ivanov had accepted Rydén's views about the tenth-century date for *VAS*, especially on the basis of Rydén's work published in the 1970s and 1980s.²³ With the exception of some minor remarks, Ivanov appears rather enthusiastic in his review. He declares that he "fully agrees" with Rydén's reconstruction²⁴ about the fact that "the text as it stands belongs to the mid-tenth century".²⁵ On the basis of the edition, he is tempted by "intriguing cultural problems" about "the tentative audience" of *VAS* and other hagiographical texts of the age. Far from seeing them as an "insight into popular

scholars susceptible to the hagiographic discourse such as Kazhdan, Efthymiadis and Magdalino.

²¹ Ivanov 1996.

²² Ivanov 2006: v.

²³ Ivanov 2006: 139–73. See esp. p. 157 (with the perceptive remark that the fiction of Andrew as a fifth-century saint could prevent him from knowing the prohibition of holy foolery at the Trullo council) with n. 29 (reference to Rydén 1968, 1978, 1982b, 1983).

²⁴ Ivanov 1996: 405.

²⁵ Ivanov 1996: 406.

mentality” at the end of the seventh century, as Mango had assumed,²⁶ Ivanov pointed out as a “reference group” the “clergymen irritated by the secularization of Byzantine life”, in contrast to “Metaphrastic tendencies” of the period.²⁷

The review by Panayotis Yannopoulos, which appeared in 1998, is different from Ivanov’s not only in length but also in scope. This is a short text, more of a notice than a full *compte rendu*, and yet the reviewer adds the personal remark that notwithstanding his analysis, Rydén does not really solve the chronological “*écart*” between year 650 and year 1000.²⁸ By contrast, Vincent Déroche offers a review proper (also published in 1998) and an extremely favourable one. This French scholar, familiar with Rydén’s studies and works,²⁹ faces the question of the date of composition of the text with an elegant methodological touch. He judges Rydén’s suggested date for *VAS* in the light of a “perspective proprement hagiographique là où C. Mango lui appliquait implicitement les critères de l’historiographie”, which is an implicit criticism of Mango’s position.³⁰ Overall, Déroche’s review is explicit in placing the *Life* within the ‘hagiographical discourse’ of the tenth century.

My survey must now turn to the periodical with the longest history and reputation in the field of Byzantine Studies, namely *Byzantinische Zeitschrift (BZ)*. *BZ* published a review of Rydén’s *Life of St Andrew* written by Claudia Ludwig as late as 2002, seven years after the publication of Rydén’s book – an unusually long time span.³¹ When dealing

²⁶ Mango 1982: 310.

²⁷ Ivanov 1996: 406. See also Ivanov 2006: 168 for the contrast between Andrew as a “second edition” of the Holy fool and Epiphanius as the hero of a more “ordinary” holiness.

²⁸ Yannopoulos 1998: 265. The dates suggested by Yannopoulos are drawn from Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 41, “it is easy to demonstrate that *VA* cannot have been composed before c. 650 and after c. 1000”.

²⁹ Déroche’s remarkable *Études sur Léontios de Neapolis* had been published in *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* in 1995; Rydén had not only accepted the dense text in the series he had founded and directed, but he had also prefaced it (Déroche 1995: 5).

³⁰ Déroche 1998: 333.

³¹ Let me note here, in passing, that it could be questioned whether a review, after such a long time, can still be seen as a review proper. I might be influenced by the Italian meaning of “recensione”, which according to one of the most authoritative dictionar-

with this review, one additional fact should be noted: in 1998, Rydén had reviewed for the same periodical a book by the same Claudia Ludwig, her *Sonderformen byzantinischer Hagiographie und ihr literarisches Vorbild. Untersuchungen zu den Viten des Äsop, des Philaretos, des Symeon Salos und des Andreas Salos*. Published 1997, this book offered an ambitious attempt to sketch similarities between the *Vita Aesopi* and three Byzantine hagiographical texts: the *Life of St Symeon Salos*, the *Life of St Andrew*, and the *Life of St Philaretos the Merciful*. In accordance with the classical *litotes*, one could say that Lennart Rydén was “not unfamiliar” with this corpus of hagiographical texts.³²

Notwithstanding Rydén’s rather negative 1998 review of Ludwig’s 1997 book,³³ Ludwig must be credited for the fact that her review of Rydén 1995 is written *sine ulla ira ac studio*. There are, of course, critical remarks about the edition, especially as far its *apparatus variorum* is concerned; in Ludwig’s view, Rydén’s interpretation of the text as a literary historian seems to have sometimes affected his editorial choices.³⁴

ies is an “Esame critico, in forma di articolo più o meno esteso, *di un’opera di recente pubblicazione*” (= “Critical examination, in the form of a more or less extended article, *of a recently published work*” [in both cases Italics are mine]). Is a book published in 1995 still ‘recent’ in 2002? On the other hand, it is fair to keep in mind that other traditions – for instance the French *compte rendu* and the English *review* – seem to have different connotations.

³² During almost forty years of research he had published the groundbreaking critical editions of the first two *Lives* and extensively commented on them. In addition to *VAS*, he had produced two editions of the *Life of St Symeon Salos*: Rydén 1963 had been improved with his *Bemerkungen* (Rydén 1970: 9–10) and the final result was included in his ultimate edition in Festugière 1974: 55–104 (see III–IV). As for the third *Life*, he had already offered some samples of his work (Rydén 1982b and 1985, Rydén, Rosenqvist and Ryda 1995, where the project for the edition was announced). His edition of the *Life of St Philaretos* eventually appeared in the same year as Ludwig’s review (Rydén 2002†).

³³ In addition to the technical aspects, a certain bitterness can be perceived in the final remark: “Ludwig should be more generous towards predecessors” (Rydén 1998). In any case, Rydén’s review appreciates the qualities of Ludwig 1997 in terms of the work’s literary sensitivity.

³⁴ A special interest for ‘minor readings’ in the text is expressed also by Kazhdan 2006: 195 and n. 16. Questions concerning the manuscript tradition, *variae lectiones* and minor readings were developed at length by Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 72–185.

Rydén's work is appreciated by Ludwig especially insofar as it sets the basis for "eine gründliche Analyse dieses hochinteressanten Textes",³⁵ which should be understood in light of Ludwig's hypothesis about *VAS* as a remake of preceding layers of text.³⁶ Accordingly, Rydén's two volumes of almost 800 pages are here seen more as a starting point than as a point of arrival. Since Ludwig is more interested in narrative techniques than in history, she seems to abstain from discussing in detail the question of the date of the production of the text.³⁷

In short, one could hardly have foreseen the following success and wide acceptance of Rydén's interpretation of *VAS* on the basis of the reviews discussed above. The most likely development would perhaps have been a sort of balance between Rydén's interpretation and that of Mango's, where more personal tastes would have turned scholars in the direction of one period or the other.

In my opinion an important external and in some sense 'promotional' factor for the wider acceptance of Rydén's dating of the text to the mid-tenth century (in addition, of course, to the inner qualities of his work), was not a review but an article of wide-ranging implications which appeared in 1999, four years after the publication of Rydén's two volumes. One of the many achievements of this article is that it fully understood the scope of Rydén's contribution to the *Life of St Andrew* throughout the decades and that it placed his recent edition within a historical and cultural debate. The article in question appeared in a remarkable interdisciplinary book on the cult of saints, dedicated to the contribution of Peter Brown, and its author Paul Magdalino chose for his title the significant clause "the holy man as a literary text". In this way Magdalino, in accordance with Rydén's suggestions,³⁸ withdraws from the hero of the text any 'positivistic' implications, presenting him as a

³⁵ Ludwig 2002: 164.

³⁶ For criticism of this view, see Rydén 1998 (on Ludwig 1997). Magdalino 1999: 86 with n. 13 seems more open to consider "successive layers of composition".

³⁷ Rydén's option for mid-tenth century is, however, mentioned; see Ludwig 2002: 164.

³⁸ See for instance Rydén's suggestion of Andrew as "portavoce dell'autore" in the introduction to Cesaretti 1990: 25 [= Cesaretti 2014: 49]. See also Ivanov 2006: 156–57.

purely literary creation.³⁹ When Magdalino remarks that Rydén “looks to have the stronger case” in his ‘argument’ with Mango about the ‘real’ date of production of the text,⁴⁰ this is within the specific ‘hagiographical discourse’ of the text – the tenth-century discourse, as Rydén had been pointing out since the 1970s.⁴¹

The main achievement of this important contribution by Magdalino lies in its capacity to ‘reknit’ a range of suggestions that were already present in earlier articles by Rydén, and draw further parallels between the *Life of St Basil the Younger* and *VAS*. Magdalino develops Rydén’s intuition of the two *Lives* as twin texts devoted to, in one and the same period, two fictional figures interpreting the needs and expectations of their time – perhaps even the product of one and the same person, “Nicephorus being a pseudonym invented for the purpose of the historical fiction” of *VAS*, as Rydén had suggested.⁴² But Magdalino also adds the suggestion that the two *Lives* could have been placed under the aegis of a single patron, that is the famous Basil the Nothos or *parakoimomenos*, the illegitimate son of Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (870-948) from a ‘Scythian’ slave-girl.⁴³ It is thus the two *Lives*’ achievement in catching and representing their *Zeitgeist* in historical and cultural terms that counts, which creates a correlation between the *coordonnées hagiographiques* of the text and its literary discourse.

Magdalino commented on Rydén’s *Life of St Andrew* also in 2003, when he edited the volume *Byzantium in the Year 1000*. In that case, too, a careful consideration of *VAS* in Rydén’s edition was combined with

³⁹ This is true of each and every literary saint, but especially of Andrew, fictitious as his figure is in many respects. As far as Basil the Younger is concerned, it is fair to quote Sullivan, Talbot and Mc Grath 2014: 15 “the possibility remains that Basil may have been a real person”, and therefore not only, as in Magdalino’s wording, a “literary text”.

⁴⁰ Magdalino 1999: 86.

⁴¹ See also Høgel 2003: 217.

⁴² Rydén 1983: 585–586.

⁴³ Magdalino 1999: 108–111; Magdalino 2003b: 256. For a recent description of Basil *parakoimomenos* as sponsor of arts, see Bevilacqua 2013: 193–234 (“Basilio ‘parakoimomenos’ e la passione per le arti”).

a study of the *Life of St Basil the Younger* and other texts of that age.⁴⁴ Once again, the *Zeitgeist* of the tenth century was evoked and especially the apocalyptic expectations permeating the two texts were investigated. Not only Magdalino, but also other scholars have been successful in connecting the “Andreas Salos-Apocalypse”,⁴⁵ as Rydén had defined it,⁴⁶ with the Byzantine atmosphere expecting the end of the world for year 992 (and the immediately following years) on the basis of calculations assimilating each and every *aiōn* of 1000 years with one of the seven days of Creation.⁴⁷ *VAS* mirrors these views, combining the expectations with resonances of Pseudo-Methodios, as other texts of that age did. Rydén had properly underlined all this and combined it with the apocalyptic expectations of the *Life of St Basil the Younger*,⁴⁸ which was then resumed by Magdalino.

To sum up, when speaking of the cultural atmosphere of Byzantium in the tenth century, the *Life of St Andrews* is nowadays accepted as a necessary element in specific terms, proper to its ‘hagiographical discourse’, expressing the way in which the Byzantines perceived human history and the end of the world around year 1000.⁴⁹ The seventh-century date has been left behind.

In close cooperation with Rydén, I published in 1990 my Italian annotated translations of *VAS* and the *Life of St Symeon*, its forerunner. My translation of the *Life of St Andrew* – the first translation into a modern language⁵⁰ – was based on a preliminary, yet largely advanced version

⁴⁴ Magdalino 2003b.

⁴⁵ Brandes 1997 and 2000; Bonfil 2003.

⁴⁶ Rydén 1974. Also Efthymiadis 2011b: 126, n. 98 points out that the syntagm is Rydén’s invention.

⁴⁷ It was thought that the world had been created in year 5508 before Christ, therefore the beginning of the seventh *aiōn* corresponding to the seventh day of Creation, should have come in year 492, that is 6000 years after the ‘supposed’ Creation. This had not happened and half an *aiōn* was added: the result was year 992. Further apocalyptic calculations were elaborated until year 1025, more or less. See Magdalino 2003b.

⁴⁸ See Rydén 1968, 1974.

⁴⁹ On differences in attitudes, see Kazhdan 2006: 199.

⁵⁰ As pointed out by Rydén, “Introduzione”, in Cesaretti 1990: 32 [= Cesaretti 2014: 54].

of the critical text by Rydén, which we discussed line by line in Uppsala, especially in 1988–1989.⁵¹ The book met with a certain appreciation and a reprint was deemed necessary, so in 2014 I published a revised and much enlarged version of it for the series *Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici*.⁵² While re-reading and commenting, my attention was drawn to some passages that still do not seem to have been fully considered and explored as regards the composition date of the text and its meaning in the light of the cultural climate and the horizon of expectation of its audience. I shall present here two *Lesefrüchte* that may hopefully offer some further contribution to the correct understanding of the *coordonnées hagiographiques* of *VAS*, but also help to understand the *Life* and its author’s literary purposes in its ‘proper’ cultural and social context.

As already mentioned above, the author who ‘signs’ the text with the name of Nikephoros, priest of Hagia Sophia, presents himself as a contemporary, even a friend, of Andrew the Fool; the story of his hero – or at least most part of it⁵³ – is set during the reign of Emperor Leo I (457–474). Moreover, he has his hero predicting that Epiphanius, Andrew’s pupil and confidant, will become patriarch – and an Epiphanius was actually Constantinopolitan patriarch during the years 520–535.⁵⁴ Nikephoros tries to offer a frame of historical consistency to the text, but his goal is not fully achieved; take, for example, the well-known passage where Nikephoros refers to Symeon Salos as a saint “of old”,⁵⁵ while the man playing the Holy Fool in Emesa was a real historical figure who had lived at the time of Justinian, around 550, therefore at least 50 years after the fictional date of Andrew.

Be that as it may, within this fictional framework it so happens that the holy fool Andrew meets his favorite pupil Epiphanius and gives evidence of his ‘second, interior’ sight by letting him know that he – An-

⁵¹ See Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 7.

⁵² Cesaretti 2014.

⁵³ The fact that Nikephoros informs us that Andrew has fought secretly for 66 years (Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 300, ll. 4390–91) does not help. See Rydén, Introduzione, in Cesaretti 1990: 10–20 [= Cesaretti 2014: 44]; Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 358 and n. 6; Cesaretti 2014: 338, n. 884.

⁵⁴ Rydén 1978: 145–47.

⁵⁵ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 28, ll. 223–24

drew – had ‘seen’ the devil in form of an Arab merchant dressed in a black garment, who had reproached Epiphanius because he – Epiphanius – had practiced virtue by fighting against carnal temptations.⁵⁶ Andrew’s vision corresponds to a ‘real’ episode in the text, as is confirmed by Epiphanius himself after a narrative interlude:⁵⁷ the devil had appeared to him as a man of age with a fierce look; he was clad in black with shoes ‘clay colored’. Behind the appearance, Andrew explains, he is a Satan commanding a hundred demons. In general, the black color and the exotic origin are characteristic of the demons, who are characteristically and typically presented as Ethiopians.⁵⁸ But there is nothing characteristic and typical in the scene of an Arab merchant walking in the street of Constantinople around the area of the Forum Bovis⁵⁹ and freely addressing a young passer-by. Much less so if the text defines him as *Agarēnos*⁶⁰ and *Ismaēlites*,⁶¹ which implies not a geographical idea (as it could have been for the neutral term “Arabia”⁶²) but a difference in terms of faith. It especially implies Islamic creed,⁶³ as is indicated also by intra-textual cross-references with the Andreas Salos-Apocalypse:

Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 262, l. 3834: the first apocalyptic emperor “will turn his face towards the East and humble the sons of Hagar” [...] “because of their blasphemy”;

Ibid., ll. 3853–53, “in this city no Ishmaelite will be found” (which means that they actually were found there, as the episode of the merchant implies).

It goes without saying that the blasphemy that the text is referring to, being the Islamic faith, could not have been formulated in the fictional time of Leo I, and the same is true for the equivalence *Agarēnos/Ismaēlites*

⁵⁶ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 66, ll. 798–815; 70–74, ll. 874–921.

⁵⁷ “Epiphanius and the philosophers”; Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 68–70, ll. 816–57.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Cracco Ruggini 1979: 126–35; Boulhol 1994: 286–87.

⁵⁹ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 72, l. 876.

⁶⁰ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 66, 70, 72, ll. 799, 875, 889.

⁶¹ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 66, l. 803.

⁶² Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 268, 270, ll. 3914 and 3940 respectively.

⁶³ The importance of the *oeuvre* of John of Damaskos for this purpose has been properly underlined by Jeffreys 1986: 317.

for the merchant. Moreover, if we have to follow the ‘hagiographical discourse’ of the text and its consistency, can we reasonably place a passage like this “in the latter 7th century”, as suggested by Mango?⁶⁴

Leaving aside any general or specific consideration of the image of Arabs in Byzantine literature,⁶⁵ the question concerns the consistency of the episode of the Islamic merchant in the Forum Bovis with a historical scenario. And this is absolutely implausible not only during the age of Leo I, but also at the end of the seventh century, a period of sharp conflict between Constantinople and the caliph. Things changed slightly in the first quarter of the eighth century when a mosque was built,⁶⁶ but the first period for which we have a set of reliable data about the presence of a colony of Arab merchants in Constantinople is the late ninth or beginning of the tenth century.⁶⁷ In this sense, the ‘hagiographical discourse’ of *VAS* and the interpretation of this episode can be set against a ‘horizon of expectation’ (not an “insight into popular mentality”) widespread at the time. In one case, the passage of the Arab merchant in *VAS* has been interpreted as evidence for historical truth, but this is perhaps going too far.⁶⁸ The fact remains that the episode offers an additional evidence (*e contrario*) for the date suggested by Rydén. The mention of the Forum Bovis as a possible seat for the unexpected meeting with the Arab merchant also deserves some further investigation.⁶⁹

A second passage of *VAS* that has not been taken into account as regards date, but which seems to deserve some additional consideration, is an episode where once again the main characters Epiphanius and An-

⁶⁴ Mango 1982: 310. May I remark here *per incidens* that neither Mango 1982 nor Rydén 1995 – although both of them examine the attitude of *VAS* towards the Arabs (Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 44-45) – take into account this passage from that specific perspective.

⁶⁵ For the general, see Jeffreys 1986; see Rydén 1984 on the case of the Arab Samonas.

⁶⁶ As we know from Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ *De Administrando Imperio* 21; see Moravcsik and Jenkins 1967: 92, ll. 112–14; Jenkins 1962: 78; more recently Constable 2003: 147–51; Di Branco 2013: 119–20.

⁶⁷ As is accepted by the majority of scholars on the basis of the *Book of the Eparch*, chapter 5; Koder 1991: 94–96, evoked in Constable 2003: 147–151 and discussed at length in Reinert 1998: 130–135.

⁶⁸ Reinert 1998: 131.

⁶⁹ See Cesaretti 2014: 199 and n. 201.

drew appear.⁷⁰ The holy fool has had a vision predicting that Epiphanius will become patriarch: Epiphanius appears in the great church of Hagia Sophia, where liturgical robes descend for him from above and two ‘luminars’ (*phōstēres*⁷¹) adorn Epiphanius’ body with precious vestments and then bless him with the sign of the Cross. Even though Rydén interprets these *phōstēres* as angels,⁷² I would not neglect the more traditional connotation of *phōstēr* with human beings, as all other occurrences of the word in the same text indicate.⁷³ It should be added that Andrew’s forerunner in “holy foolery”, Symeon of Emesa, is defined as *phōstēr* by Leontios of Neapolis from the very beginning.⁷⁴ Furthermore, in the *Life of St Symeon*, which *VAS* evokes several times in a sort of pattern of resonance, it is the hegoumenos of the monastery of St Gerasimos near Jericho, the blessed Nikon, who gives Symeon and his friend John the monastic robes⁷⁵ and then blesses their bodies.⁷⁶ He is not explicitly defined as *phōstēr*, but from his first appearance he is described as *katalampōn*.⁷⁷

One could easily maintain the usual paradigm of *phōstēr* also in our interpretation of the passage of *VAS* discussed above and read the vision as referring not to angels, but to persons whose proper place and blessing gesture Nikephoros describes.⁷⁸ The most plausible identification would accordingly be with *patriarchs*, the forerunners of Epiphanius in his important future role as well as, in hierarchical terms, the most apt persons to oversee the ceremony of Epiphanius’ taking the episcopal habit and then blessing him, exactly the same way in which hegoumenos Nikon had overseen the ceremony of the monastic habit for Symeon and John

⁷⁰ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 118–120, ll. 1608–1624.

⁷¹ Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 120, l. 1613.

⁷² Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 67, 300 s.v. *phōstēr*.

⁷³ Rydén 1995, vol. 1: 300: six times Andrew, twice Epiphanius, etc.

⁷⁴ Rydén 1963: 122, l. 15.

⁷⁵ Rydén 1963: 131, l. 5 – 132, l. 16.

⁷⁶ Rydén 1963: 137, ll. 8–9; also 155, ll. 8–12.

⁷⁷ Rydén 1963: 126, l. 22.

⁷⁸ In the text one more *phōstēr* (Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 248, l. 3656) is St Akakios, who appears to Epiphanius in a vision; he is “lightning” (l. 3668) and works a miracle for Andrew’s disciple.

and then had blessed them.⁷⁹ Such personalities as Gregory of Nazianzos or John Chrysostomos, forerunners of Epiphanius on the patriarchal seat of Constantinople, could perfectly suit the purpose.

In my view, this interpretation of *phōstēr* is supported also by the fact that the scene is set in Hagia Sophia, where the southern as well as northern *tympana* were decorated with mosaics representing bishops and patriarchs: Ignatius the Younger, John Chrysostomos, Ignatius Theophoros and Athanasios of Alexandria are still visible, though the original arrangement was much wider.⁸⁰ This decoration was completed by the end of the ninth century,⁸¹ so it could have influenced a text composed in the tenth century, but certainly not one composed in the seventh century, when the cathedral was still primarily if not exclusively aniconic.⁸² This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that the author of *VAS*, as Rydén remarked,⁸³ was skilled in visual imagery and even aware of visual traditions.⁸⁴ The post-ninth century aspect of the church (with interior mosaic decoration), I argue, might have influenced the writing process of Nikephoros, whoever he was. Once again, the ‘hagiographical discourse’ developed its qualities within a specific historical frame.

The fact remains that Rydén’s edition of the *Life of St Andrew* continues to put forward interpretational challenges to scholars and thus incites

⁷⁹ Textual parallels speak for themselves, see *Life of Symeon* in Rydén 1963: 137, 8-9 [Nikon] σφραγίσας αὐτῶν τὰ μέτωπα καὶ τὰ στήθη καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ἀπέλυσεν αὐτοὺς ἐν εἰρήνῃ; 155, 9-10 [Nikon] ὕδωρ ... ἔβαλεν ὑποκάτω τοῦ ὀμφαλοῦ αὐτοῦ σφραγίσας τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ; *VAS* in Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 120, ll. 1617-1620 ὁ μὲν εἰς [φωστήρ *intell.*] τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ σταυροῦ ἐπὶ τὸ σὸν μέτωπον ποιήσας ἀσπασάμενος ἀνεχώρησεν, ὁ δὲ ἕτερος καὶ αὐτὸς πάντα σου τὰ μέλη σφραγίσας καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀσπασάμενος ὤχετο. The insistence on the blessing of the whole body implies protection against carnal temptations.

⁸⁰ See Mango 1962: 48–58; Mango and Hawkins 1972: 6. Gregory the Theologian was in their number.

⁸¹ See Mango and Hawkins 1972: 41.

⁸² See e.g. Mango 1962: 93–94.

⁸³ “Eccellente resa visiva”: see Rydén, “Introduzione”, in Cesaretti 1990: 19 [= Cesaretti 2014: 43–44]

⁸⁴ See e.g. his image of John the Theologian, which is influenced by traditional iconography (Rydén 1995, vol. 2: 22, ll. 142–43 and 307 with n. 4).

future research. Does this mean that it has simply set the basis for “eine gründliche Analyse”? I would rather suggest that we listen to the voice of a great writer of the twentieth century, Italo Calvino, for whom “A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say”.⁸⁵ If this is true not only of poems, novels and the like, but also of works of research and scholarship, we can now certainly say, twenty years after its publication, that Rydén’s *Life of St Andrew* has become and is a classic.

⁸⁵ Calvino 1995 : 7 [quoted after repr. 12, 2006]: “Un classico è un libro che non ha mai finito di dire quel che ha da dire”.

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