

**Liutprand of Cremona. *Razplata. Istoriya na Odon. Pratenichestvo v Konstantinopol*, translated and edited by Liliana Simeonova. Iztok-Zapad Publishers, 2015. 330. ISBN 978-619-152-691-8**

Bulgarian scholars of medieval history have welcomed the translation, by Professor Liliana Simeonova, of three texts by Liutprand of Cremona (Liutprandus Cremonensis) as a significant and delightful event. Indicatively, in 2016 this translation was awarded the Union of Bulgarian Translators' Prize in recognition of its author's exceptional knowledge, competence and expertise. It should also be borne in mind that it is far from being one of a kind but in fact ranks alongside a number of other recent Bulgarian translations of medieval texts which were published in the course of the last decade.

In my opinion, the most impressive of those translations is Petya Stoyanova's rendition of Raoul Glaber's *Historiarum libri quinque ab anno incarnationis DCCCC usque ad annum MXLIV (Hronika na hilyadnata godina)*, which was published by Iztok-Zapad in 2012. Polis Publishers of Sofia also brought out a number of translations of medieval texts by the historian and Classical Studies scholar Krasimira Gagova: *Zhivotat na Sveti Lui (Histoire de Saint-Louis)* by Jean de Joinville (2008), *Delata na Tankred (Gesta Tancredi)* by Raoul de Caen (2010) and *Istoriya na langobardite (Historia Langobardorum)* by Pavel Diaconus (2011). In 2011 Polis also published Ivailo Burov's translation of *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople (Istoriya na imperator Anri)* by Henri de Valenciennes; the translation was edited by Gagova.

Going back to Simeonova's translation, I must point out that, over the years, a number of Bulgarian scholars have been attracted by Liutprand's personality and writings. Thus, the eminent medievalist Ivan Duichev (Dujčev) produced seminal texts on the subject, such as "Uno studio di Mons. G. G. Ciampini sul papa Formoso" (in Dujčev, I. *Medioevo Bizantino-Slavo*, I, Roma 1965, 175–181) and "Klassisches Altertum im mittelalterlichen Bulgarien" (in Dujčev, I. *Medioevo Bizantino-Slavo*, I, Roma 1965, 476–485). The tradition established by Duichev has been fruitfully continued by Simeonova's translation, which includes *Antapodosis, seu rerum per Europam gestarum, Libri VI; Historia Ottonis sive Liber de rebus gestis Ottonis imp. an. 960–964*; and *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana ad Nicephorum Phocam*. This publication also follows a tradition established by the Institute for Balkan Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). The tradition in question goes back to the 1960s and 1970s when the Institute published the multi-volume series of *Gratski izvori za balgarskata istoriya (Fontes Graeci historiae Bulgaricae)* and *Latinski izvori za balgarskata istoriya (Fontes Latini historiae Bulgaricae)*. Unfortunately, this positive trend was interrupted for about two decades, between the 1980s and the early twenty-first century, to be resumed only about ten years ago. This should explain why Simeonova's publication appears to be such a memorable event within the context of medieval studies in Bulgaria.

Simeonova is an eminent medievalist. Her publications, which are concerned with aspects of medieval history (9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), attest in an eloquent way to the scope of her academic and research interests. She is the author of impressive monographs, such as *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross. Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy, 860s – 880s* (1998), *Patuvane kam Konstantinopol. Targoviya i komunikatsii v Sredizemnomorskiya sviat (kraya na IX – 70-te godini na XI v.) (En Route to Constantinople. Trade and Communications in the Mediterranean World)* (2006) and *Skandinavskata ekspanziya i Zapadat (kraya na VIII – 60-te godini na XI v.). Piratstvo, targoviya, gradski zhivot, literaturni stereotipi (The Scandinavian Expansion and the West from the Late 8<sup>th</sup> Century to the 1060s. Pirate Raids, Trade, Town Life, Literary Stereotypes)* (2008). Simeonova's wide-reaching research interests range from diplomacy and politics, trade relations and communications in southernmost and northernmost Europe and the Middle East (8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries) to images of the Other in the Middle Ages. Central to her research is likewise her semiotic investigation of the hidden symbolism of court and public Byzantine ceremonial practices as well as the reinterpretation of Constantinople's legacy of sculptures dating back to Greek and Roman antiquity (4<sup>th</sup> – late 17<sup>th</sup> centuries).

Simeonova's erudition and expertise are clearly visible in her translation of Liutprand of Cremona's selected works: *Antapodosis, seu rerum per Europam gestarum, Libri VI, Historia Ottonis sive Liber de rebus gestis Ottonis imp. an. 960–964* and *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana ad Nicephorum*

*Phocam*. In her attempt to do justice to the Bishop of Cremona's vivid figurative language, the translator occasionally permits herself freer interpretation of the texts but this does not impair their overall meaning. On the contrary, by using contemporary Bulgarian interjections and phrases, Simeonova brings Liutprand closer to the present-day reader while preserving the distinctive features of his style and conveying his messages successfully. On the other hand, as the translator herself points out, the contemporary reader's sensibility has not been assaulted by a number of words and phrases that might appear offensive and coarse today. While this intervention follows naturally from the translator's right of choice, it also testifies to Simeonova's sense of moderation in rendering a medieval narrative. Also laudable is her effort in appending numerous notes and comments to the text. This will certainly make her translation more accessible to non-professional readers. Overall, her paratextual apparatus attests to her responsible attitude to her readers and sincere desire to popularize Europe's medieval legacy. The appended index of proper names and geographical concepts is yet another eloquent proof of Simeonova's high professional standards. To sum up, Simeonova's publication is sure to be found both fascinating and highly informative.

I cannot resist the temptation of offering a few comments of my own on Liutprand of Cremona's work and life. He became famous mostly for the three texts listed above. The first of those, *Antapodosis*, recounts events which took place in parts of the Apennine Peninsula between 887 and 950. The second one, *Historia Ottonis*, presents significant episodes from the reign of Otto I (936–973), while the third one, *Relatio*, is a vivid and emotional story about the author's diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 968. Liutprand does not stand out as a unique chronicler; nor is his work remarkable for its historical accuracy. In fact, the tenth century produced quite a few important historians whose works have come down to us: Widukind of Corvey (ca 925 – after 973), Thietmar of Meesburg (975–1018), Flodoard of Reims (893/4–966) and Richer of Reims (ca 940 – ca 998), along with some prominent Byzantine chroniclers, such as Leo the Deacon and Joseph Genesius. Nevertheless Liutprand of Cremona occupies an outstanding position within this pleiade of memorable writers by virtue of the style, language and polemical tone of his writing.

Looking at his life, we can say that he witnessed some fateful events in the second half of the eleventh century. Far from being favourably impressed with them, he was disillusioned and became sceptical and even cynical at times. Born to a noble family in northern Italy, close to the court in Pavia, Liutprand received a good education and cultivated the confidence and critical mind that can be observed in his writing. Chance brought young Liutprand to Byzantium, which further widened his cultural horizon. Subsequently, he entered the court of the German King Otto I and witnessed his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor. Liutprand took leading positions in diplomatic missions to the Byzantine imperial court in 949, 968 and probably 971. His works often imply and, at times, convey frankly anti-Byzantine attitudes aimed mostly at the political and religious elites of the Eastern Roman Empire. Moreover, some of Liutprand's writings reveal his fervent support for the Latin West in a contrastive juxtaposition with his representation of the Byzantine East. Reading Liutprand, we can figure out the profundity and magnitude of the collision between the two powers, which led to the Great Schism of 1054 and the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204.

Many researchers regard Liutprand as an amusing, but not sufficiently accurate chronicler. Indeed, when reading his texts, we tend to imagine this grumbling sceptic as a disgruntled and unlucky middle-ranking diplomat. Such reasoning, however, goes against actual biographical fact: he was definitely not one of the people who had to struggle to survive in that age; in fact, Liutprand was even ordained as Bishop of Cremona in 973. Therefore, rather than interpreting his sceptical and cynical attitudes as an instance of personal social protest, we should attribute them to his mature life stance, his vehement reaction against despotism and tyranny and, not least, to his intellectual confidence and sense of superiority. Besides, in spite of the scandalous, mundane, poignant and political bent of his writing, Liutprand is, and remains, a typical representative of the Middle Ages. All his works centre on the idea of God and the concept of divine predestination. In this sense, his sarcasm and cynicism portray and expose human imperfection in stark contrast with the divine.

In conclusion, it cannot be denied that the release of the first Bulgarian translation of Liutprand's writings is of paramount importance for the relatively small community of Bulgarian medievalists. However, I am confident that the publication will also have a wider appeal. It will certainly attract students of medieval European history as well as readers with a general interest in it. Since the Middle Ages Liutprand's texts have

enjoyed more readerly attention than the work of any other medieval Italian writer, and it is our good fortune that they are finally available in unabridged Bulgarian translation.

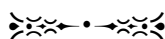
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**Penka Danova. *Dzhovani Kiaromani i negovoto patuvane ot Viena do Bursa prez 1659 g. / Giovanni Chiaromanni e il suo viaggio da Vienna a Bursa fatto l'anno 1659*. Paradigma Publishers, 2017. 258. ISBN: 978-954-326-329-5**

Penka Danova's book, titled *Dzhovani Kiaromani i negovoto patuvane ot Viena do Bursa prez 1659 g. (Giovanni Chiaromanni and His Journey from Vienna to Bursa, Made in the Year 1695)*, comprises twenty-five letters, written by Giovanni Chiaromanni (1633-1683), special envoy of the Grand Duke of Tuscany to the Habsburg Court, and addressed to a number of "friends and patrons." Intended for a variety of correspondents, the letters were produced during Chiaromanni's journey in the late spring of 1659 when he joined the suite of the Austrian Ambassador Augustin von Mayern on its way to meet the Ottoman Sultan. The aim of von Mayern's diplomatic mission was to inform Mehmed IV (1648–1687) of Leopold I's (1658–1705) accession as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and to discuss issues related to border conflicts between the two Empires in Transylvania. Having reached present-day Edirne, the Austrian delegation headed south towards Gallipoli, crossed the Dardanelles, disembarked on the Anatolian coast and marched to meet the Sultan, who was in Bursa at the time. Having accomplished its mission, the delegation left for Mudanya and then sailed to Constantinople. This unexpected detour from the usual itinerary of European travellers enriched Chiaromanni's correspondence with numerous impressions of the Dardanelles and the old Ottoman capital of Bursa.

The letters that the traveller sent from Vienna, Belgrade, Sofia, Plovdiv, Gallipoli, Bursa, Constantinople, Edirne, or Buda subsequently underwent a no less impressive journey than his own peregrinations as Dr Danova did her utmost to locate, edit, translate and publish them. The originals of Chiaromanni's letters are now most probably kept in the City Library of Arezzo, Italy, while copies can be found in the State Archives of Florence. In the 1870s the famous historian and philologist Marin Drinov (1838–1906) ordered copies of Chiaromanni's letters from the Florence Archives. These copies are still part of Drinov's personal archive at the St Cyril and St Methodius National Library in Sofia. Unlike a number of other letters concerned with European diplomatic missions to the Ottoman Empire, Chiaromanni's correspondence was not published and remained generally unknown until Dr Svilen Stanimirov (1954–2016) revived academic interest in it. He passed the letters on to Dr Danova for translation and commentary.

Possessing the skills of an experienced translator and historian, as well as the practical knowledge of how to handle such sources, Dr Danova submitted the letters for publication both in their original Italian and her own Bulgarian translation. The text is accompanied by an introduction which presents an overview of the complex political situation in Central Europe (Transylvania, in particular) and the Ottoman Empire, discusses the reasons behind the above-mentioned diplomatic mission in 1659, provides biographical notes (presented for the first time in a systematic manner) and a thematic and stylistic analysis along with information about some