

Reviews



Commented Russian Translations and Studies of the Ninth-Century Byzantine Sources in the *Seria byzantina*

Tatiana Senina (nun Kassia) (ed.)

Жития византийских святых эпохи иконоборчества, т. 1, общ. ред. Т. А. Сениной (монахини Кассии) (*Seria Byzantina*), Санкт-Петербург: Издательский проект «Квадривиум», Алетея, 2015. xxviii + 804 p. ISBN 978-5-906792-42-6.

The Lives of Byzantine Saints of the Iconoclastic Epoch, vol. 1, (*Seria Byzantina*), St Petersburg: Editorial Project “Quadrivium,” Aletheia, 2015. xxviii + 804 p. (in Russian).

Tatiana Senina (nun Kassia)

Св. Кассия Константинопольская, *Гимны, каноны, эпиграммы, Кассия Константинопольская: жизнь и творчество* (*Seria Byzantina*), Санкт-Петербург: Издательский проект «Квадривиум», Алетея, 2015. 496 p. ISBN 978-5-716406-47-6.

St. Kassia of Constantinople, Hymns, Canons, Epigrams, Kassia of Constantinople: Life and Works (*Seria Byzantina*), St. Petersburg: Editorial Project “Quadrivium,” Aletheia, 2015. 496 p. (in Russian).

Since the nineteenth century, there is a tradition, in Russian Byzantine Studies, to show some predilection to the ninth century. Now it continues regardless of an interest to Cyril and Methodius and the Slavic matters, even though, for this period, some sources written in Greek are preserved better or uniquely in Slavonic. Tatiana Senina (nun Kassia) is now the head of a large project aiming at studying and translating, with a commentary, eventually of the totality of the hagiographical dossiers relevant to the ninth century Byzantium¹. This work

¹ As the “zero phase” of the present project one can consider Senina’s study of the dossier of Emperor Leo the Armenian accompanied with her commented translation of the three basic

has been started already on the turn of the centuries by Dmitry Afinogenov, who became now the main Senina's collaborator. The vol. 1 of *The Lives of the Byzantine Saints of the Iconoclastic Epoch* is, first of all, a result of cooperation between Senina and Afinogenov. Senina's book on St. Kassia is very close to this project, although there is no Byzantine *Life* of Kassia to be included into the collection of *The Lives of the Byzantine Saints* (Senina in her book on Kassia, p. 160, recalls Dmitry Afinogenov's hypothesis put forward in 2000 that such a *Life* existed and was used by chroniclers; if so, it is lost).

Below I feature the main sections of the vol. 1 of *The Lives*:

- Senina's introduction to the whole collection entitled "The Beautiful Hagiography, or For What Purpose There Could Be a Need, for a Modern Man, to Read the Lives of Saints?" («Прекрасная агиография, или Зачем современному человеку читать жития святых?», pp. xi–xxviii) – dealing with the theory of critical hagiography and especially the really existing historical relevance of the legendary hagiographical data and other "distortions" of the historical truth by the hagiographers. This introduction explains, among other items, why and how the hagiographical romances, such as the *Life of Theodore of Edessa*, are also to be studied as historical sources.
- Senina's monograph-long (130 pages!) historical introduction "The Iconophiles and the Iconoclasts of the Ninth Century" («Иконопочитатели и иконоборцы XI столетия», pp. 1–130). This is an unbiased account resulting, among other ones, from a number of articles by the same author dedicated to different unclear episodes of the epoch of second iconoclasm (published mostly in *Scrinium* from 2006 to 2015). To my opinion, this is today the most complete and the most balanced account of the whole story, from the restauration of iconoclasm in 815 to the beginning of the patriarchate of Ignatius in 847. Among especially interesting moments one could notice the portrait of Emperor Theophilus and the discussion of the roles of different and competing parties of iconophilic monks. This introductory section will be further developed in Senina's introductions

sources: Т. А. Сенина (монахиня Кассия), *Лев Преступник. Царствование императора Льва V Армянина в византийских хрониках IX века: Феофан Исповедник, Неизвестный хронист (Scriptor Incertus), Георгий Монах (Амартол)*. 2-е изд., испр. и доп. Византийская библиотека. Источники; Санкт-Петербург, 2014 [Т. А. Senina (nun Kassia), *Leo the Apostate. The Rule of Emperor Leo v the Armenian in the Byzantine 9th-Century Chronicles: Theophane the Confessor, Unknown Chronicler (Scriptus Incertus), George the Monk (Hamartolos)*. 2nd ed. corrected and augmented. Byzantine Library. Sources; St. Petersburg, 2014]; the first ed. has been published in 2012.

and commentaries to each of the translated sources. It is important to note that Senina always checks, where possible, her sources's data against the letters of Theodore the Studite, which are the most reliable source for the reported events. Senina is also sensitive to Studite's feelings in dogmatic and canonical matters, which are normally neglected or misinterpreted by historians but are vital for tracing the mutual relations between the various iconophilic circles. The majority of historians have no special training for understanding the nuances of the behaviour of different iconophilic groups, when all of them were balancing on the shaky ground of the *οἰκονομία* in the matter of contacts with the official Iconoclastic Church and its members: what behaviour is certainly a "falling away" and what is only suspicious, and, finally, what is the reasonable *οἰκονομία*? The ninth-century answers were different and resulted into disunity and a complicated structure of the iconophilic camp.

The *Lives* of the vol. I are the following:

- Theophane of the Great Field (Sigriane), *BHG* 1787z and 1792b (transl., introd., notes by T. Senina; pp. 131–226). *BHG* 1792b is Theodore the Studite's homily on the translation of his relics in 821.
- Theophylact of Nicomedia, *BHG* 2451 (tr. by Eleni S. Ivanyuk, intr., notes by T. Senina; pp. 227–242).
- Procopius the Decapolite, *BHG* 1583 (tr. by Eleni S. Ivanyuk, intr., notes by T. Senina; pp. 243–254).
- Nicetas of Medikeion, *BHG* 1341 (tr. by Dmitry Afinogenov previously publ. in 2001, intr. by T. Senina, notes by Afinogenov and Senina; pp. 255–311). The Greek text is available in an abridged recension in a unique manuscript; the full text available only in Slavonic. The parts missed in Greek were translated from Slavonic through a retroversion (from Slavonic into Greek and from Greek into Russian).
- Athanasius of Paulopetrion monastery, not in *BHG* (tr., intr., notes by T. Senina; pp. 312–316): a short synaxarium notice but accompanied with a survey of the relevant letters of Theodore the Studite.
- Euthymius of Sardes, *BHG* 2145, written by the future Patriarch Methodius (tr., intr. by D. Afinogenov, notes by Afinogenov and Senina; pp. 317–372).
- John of Kathara, *BHG* 2184n (tr., intr., notes by T. Senina; pp. 373–381): a synaxarium notice, relatively long, going back to the lost *Life*; introduction contains a survey of the relevant mentions by Theodore the Studite.
- Macarius of Pelekite, *BHG* 1003 (tr., intr., notes by T. Senina; pp. 382–424). Cf. p. 386, fn. 13, a discussion on the entry in *PmbZ*, where the reading

διαβόλου instead of διακόνου in the mention of the deacon ordination of the saint (a misprint in the *edition princeps* by J. van den Gheyn, 1897, already corrected according to the manuscript by Ch. Van de Vorst in 1913) is taken as genuine.

- John, Bishop of Polybotum (or Polybotus, now Bolvadin in Turkey), not in *BHG* (tr., intr., notes by T. Senina; pp. 425–428). A synaxarium notice based, most probably, on the lost *Life*. There is no doubts that the figure is historical but the synaxarium (and therefore, the lost hypothetical *Life*) is focused on the peculiar liturgical usage of his imperishable relics (at the liturgy on his memory day, his dead body has been put staying or sitting, according to the need, as if he concelebrates to the actual bishop of Polybotum).
- David, Symeon, and George of Mitylene, *BHG* 494 (tr., intr., notes by Yulia B. Mantova; pp. 429–507).
- Ioannikios the Great, *BHG* 936 and 935 (tr., intr. by D. Afinogenov, notes by Afinogenov and Senina; pp. 508–656). The two *Lives*, one by Peter and one by Sabas. In the commentaries, a special attention is paid, among others, to the anti-Studite bias.
- Theodore of Edessa, *BHG* 1744 (tr., intr. by D. Afinogenov, notes by Afinogenov and Senina; pp. 657–764). This long hagiographical romance – having little to do with the historical Theodore of Edessa, an ascetic writer, – is normally dated to the tenth century, when other similar hagiographical pieces appeared. Nevertheless, Afinogenov proposed an earlier date, the middle of the ninth century, and attributes it to Basil, most probably the bishop of Emesa, who is known (before becoming a bishop, in 836) as the author of the so-called *Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos*. These two texts overlap in a large area. This attribution became possible after having taken into account the Slavonic translation of the *Letter*, which preserves the original text better than the extant Greek recension, thus providing the date of composition and the name of the author. Recently (2014) Afinogenov published the Slavonic version according to one manuscript, in addition to the Moscow editions of 1642 and 1647. The critical edition of the Slavonic version known in the Russian manuscripts from the second part of the 15th cent. is still absent, despite a number of studies of its manuscript tradition.² There is also an Arabic version of the *Letter*, still unpublished. This new date for the *Life* of Theodore of Edessa seems to me convincingly demonstrated and,

2 Cf. М. В. Плеханова, “Многосложное послание/свиток’ как лаборатория идей” [Maria V. Plukhanova, “The Multi-composite Epistle/Scroll’ as a Laboratory of Ideas”], *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы*, 62 (2014), pp. 343–374.

therefore, important in many respects, including not only the history of the second iconoclastic period but also the history of the genre of long hagiographical romances.³

The book by Tatiana Senina on St. Kassia is destined to a larger audience than *The Lives*. Its purpose is to make available, to this audience, the totality of the data relevant to Kassia as a historical figure, hymnographer, secular poet (author of epigrams), musician, and a saint. The book contains Greek texts and commented translations of the whole Kassia's literary heritage. All the texts with dubious authorship are, nevertheless, included.

The hymnographic works are translated into both Church Slavonic and Russian (Senina uses, where possible, the Slavonic translations that are actually in liturgical usage but always corrects them where necessarily). The epigrams are translated into Russian only but twice: more literally and metrically. Senina's Church Slavonic translation of a Greek 1889 liturgical service to Kassia and another service to Kassia written by Senina herself in Church Slavonic are added.

For the scholarly audience, the most interesting is the part entitled "Saint Kassia, a Nun and a Poet" ("Святая Кассия, монахиня и поэтесса", pp. 15–165; some commentaries in the footnotes to Kassia's texts are also of scholarly interest). The author produced a consistent portrait of Kassia as a strong iconophile and confessor (*pace* A. Kazhdan and some other scholars), a disciple of Theodore the Studite, and, in the same time, a monastic type, not unknown in her time, open to secular scholarship and culture, which was not in the line of Theodore the Studite.

The Byzantine scholars who are lucky enough to read Russian have now a very useful library that will be completed with the next volumes of *The Lives*. For all others we can wish an appearance of these books in English translation.

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3 Cf. B. Lourié, "The Tenth Century: From *roman hagiographique* to *roman anthologique*. Toward the publication of the hagiographical dossier of St Gregentios: Albrecht Berger (ed.), *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*," *Scr*, 4 (2008), pp. 446–449.