

**ABŪ ĞA'FAR MUHAMMAD IBN ĞARĪR AT-TABARĪ, *Historia proroków i królów. Z dziejów Bizancjum (do połowy VII wieku) [History of the Prophets and Kings. Byzantine History (to the middle 7th c.)]. Z języka arabskiego przetłumaczył, wstępem i komentarzami zaopatrzył FILIP ANDRZEJ JAKUBOWSKI, Instytut Historii UAM, Poznań 2011, pp. 207 [= Źródła, 2].***

The publication of the Institute of History of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań is the first translation into Polish of a larger fragment of at-Tabarī's work. The translation as well as the compilation of the text was done by Filip Andrzej Jakubowski, a young expert in Arabic from Poznań, and a student of professors Zdzisława Pentek and Paweł Siwiec. Translation was based on the first two volumes of at-Tabarī's *Tarikh al-Tarikh wa al-Umam Mutuk* compiled by Nawaf al-Jarrah and published in Beirut in 2003. The analyzed work is a result of collaboration within the community of the historians and orientalists of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań<sup>1</sup>.

Translated text is preceded by a historical – literary introduction which deals with such questions as the problem of time in the Arab historiography, the diversity of genres in the Muslim historiography – starting with the annals through biography and ending with the stories *ab munde condite*. It also contains information relating to the person of Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari, concerning both his life and work, but not limited to only historical works. The introduction also includes a section discussing the same work i.e. written in the tens of thousands of pages the *History of Prophets and Kings*.

It is noteworthy that the translation was collated with the original text, which nowadays is unfortunately not the norm. For example, there are several dozen of tomes of at-Tabarī's work translated into English which cannot be directly compared to the Arabic text<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the author decided to use the principles of the transcription of the Arabic alphabet in the compilation of Tadeusz Lewicki without simplifications.

The translated text was enriched with numerous comments, concerning the historical and mythical characters and geographical names most often appearing in the text. The publication includes the indexes of geographic names and ethnic minorities appearing in the at-Tabarī's text.

Appreciating the importance of F.A. Jakubowski's publication, I would like to draw attention to some minor inconsistencies, inaccuracies and understatements which appeared in the comments related to the translation of Tabarī's text.

In the comments concerning geographical names the author bound himself only to remarks relating to the present ownership of territory of a given location. It definitely lacks, in multiple places, a brief historical outline concerning the importance of a given urban centre during the analysed period. On the other hand when information about the historical context appears in the commentary there is no mention of its sources – no references to the secondary literature (e.g. p. 103, an. 255). It is also worth noting that not all names were explained (e.g. in the case of Al-Waqusa – p. 70). The lack of comments concerning certain Arab tribes listed in the *History* is also noticeable (e.g. Gudam, Balqayn, Bali – p. 122). Moreover, when they do appear, they are quite often very poor – such as those concerning Lakhmids (p. 57). If the author opted for such a restriction due to the reasons beyond his control he ought to have given at least one item that would have included the main literature. In some fragments in which the relations are particularly vague and multi-threaded and at the same time coming from different sources, one would attach to them a comment taking into account the latest studies, including archaeological ones. For example – the description of the battle of the river Yarmouk from 636 (p. 67). When in one of the records related to this important event we encounter advice of a Muslim scholar associated with the proper Christian conduct, the com-

<sup>1</sup> 'ALI 'IZZ AD-DIN IBN AL-ATHIR, *Kompletna księga historii. Z czynów sultana Saladyna*, trans. M.F. HORBOWSKI, J. MAĆKOWIAK, D. MAŁGOWSKI, ed. Z. PENTEK, Poznań 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. F. ROSENTHAL, vol. I, New York 1989.

mentary to that passage lacks a single word on its historical and didactical context (p. 80–81). In comments to the descriptions of the conquest of Damascus there is no information about the other accounts of this event, which is quite important if we take into consideration its socio-religious significance (the discussion whether Damascus surrendered or was captured by the Muslims – p. 107–115). On the other hand the description of the Muslims after the conquest of Jerusalem would be more comprehensible if one added a comment on the history of the controversy surrounding the direction of prayer, or the context of the legend concerning the presence of the Jewish advisor at the side of the Caliph Umar (p. 147). Lack of references to secondary literature in *strictly* historical commentaries seems to be even more difficult to understand as they are not missing from the footnotes which concern the characters associated with Arabic literature, such as, for example, Ibn Ishaq Isa at-Tabb (p. 187, an. 371). Most interesting from our point of view are issues related to the description of the Byzantines. Here, too, there are some ambiguities. Heraclius's brother – Theodore, who led the fight against the Arabs in Syria, is mentioned in

the text several times. However, the author firstly calls him Theodoric (p. 63), then he states that in the *History* the emperor's brother appears as Ibn Saqallar Mihrab (without giving the source of his knowledge – p. 118, an. 272). Moreover, at the end he calls him *the unknown patriarch* (p. 129, an. 291). The text also lacks explanations of some of the phrases used by at-Tabari which clearly have features of idiomatic expressions (p. 86). In the main translation text (e.g. on p. 28) one can discover the following punctuation mark: (...). It is difficult to determine whether it is a signalled ellipsis in the original text, or the omission made by the author of the translation. The purpose of this stylistic treatment has been elucidated neither in the introduction, nor in the footnote.

The above mentioned minor comments do not diminish the significance of this publication which will certainly contribute to the increase of interest in the problems of Byzantine-Arab relations among Polish scholars. I sincerely hope that the author will continue his research on Tabari and that we can expect translations of the later passages of Tabari's work.

*Blázej Cecota (Łódź)*

**MARTIN HURBANIČ, *Posledná vojna antiky. Avarský útok na Konštantínopol roku 626 v historických súvislostiach* [The Last War of Antiquity. The Avar Siege of Constantinople, 626, in Historical Sources], Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, Prešov 2009, pp. 377.**

The book by Martin Hurbanič<sup>1</sup>, a Slovak Byzantinologist, is the first academic study which in a comprehensive manner describes the siege of Constantinople by the Avars in 626, an event of critical importance for the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–641).

The work is divided into 11 chapters. The first one (*Od Triumfom k pádu*, p. 15–33) is preceded by an introduction, in which the author outlines the problem of the Avar siege in the historical memory of the Byzantines, and looks into the foreign policy of the Emperor Maurice,

<sup>1</sup> The author is a member of the Slovak Balkans Committee and Slovak Association of Byzantinologists, editor of scientific journals: "História", "Byzantinoslovaca", "Slavica Slovaca" and "Acta Historica Posoniensia". More important publications: *Byzancia a avarský kaganát v rokoch 623–624*,

HČSAV 55, 2007, p. 229–248; *Byzancia Slovania a avarský kaganát v období vlády cisára Foku (602–610)*, HČSAV 58, 2010, p. 3–14; *Byzantský "Commonwealth": hierarchické spoločenstvo alebo idea spolupatričnosti*, [in:] *Studia balcanica bohemoslovaca*, I, Zborník zo VI. medzinárodné balkanistické