

# Błażej Cecota

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## "Zwierzęta w kulturze literackiej Bizantyńczyków [Animals in Byzantine literary culture] – ἘΑναβλέψατε εἰς τα πετεινά..." : [recenzja]

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

**ANNA KOTŁOWSKA, *Zwierzęta w kulturze literackiej Bizantyńczyków [Animals in Byzantine literary culture]* – 'Αναβλέψατε εἰς τα πετεινά..., Wydawnictwo UAM, Poznań 2013, pp. 262.**

Anna Kotłowska's<sup>1</sup> book dedicated to the presence of animal motifs in Byzantine literature is the first monograph on this subject either in Polish or foreign byzantinological<sup>2</sup> literature. The author, aware that it is not possible at this stage of the research and extensiveness of source materials to write a work completely laying down animal motifs found in Byzantine literature, focuses on the most common and most characteristic motifs as she sees it. In her work we will find considerations relating to such animals as the doe, lion, bear, horse, fox, rooster, scorpion, swan and cicada. They occur, among others, in the context of their connection with such phenomena or functions as hunting or as gifts. The researcher with great erudition tracks and comments references to the animal in Byzantine

sources and in earlier Greek and Latin literature (but not only), as well as analysing the later eras, including our modern times.

The analyzed work is divided into five chapters. In the first, *Jak czytać literaturę bizantyńską? [How to read Byzantine literature?]* (p. 7–24) the author presents the state of research on animal presence in the culture of the Byzantines, and outlines the place of Byzantine on the map of cultural codes of Europe. In the second chapter *Zwierzę jako metafora [Animal as metaphor]* (p. 25–97) she discusses the situations of court life (hunting, diplomatic legation) associated with the presence of animals. Then she analyses the literary contexts of such creatures as the scorpion, cicada, bee and swallow. Particularly interesting to the historian-Byzantinist seem here to be passages on the role of hunting in the construction of the image of the ideal ruler, and also, though a little less exposed, topics associated with the use of exotic animals in Byzantine diplomacy. The third chapter, *Inwektywa ambivalencja komplement [Invective – ambivalence – compliment]* (p. 99–153) discusses examples of animal motifs in building narratives praising or reprobating attitudes or characters. In this chapter the researcher focuses on such animals as the lion, horse, pig or dog. In this chapter special attention must be paid to Nicephorus Basilakes's *Encomium canis* from the twelfth century, and a comparison of this work with Theodore Gaza's piece of writing from the fifteenth century (p. 116–125), as well as a detailed presentation of the meaning of the term *theriōdes* (*bestiality*) (p. 135–147). For historians, particularly useful will be comments related to the issue of domestic-foreign relations among the Byzantines, for example descriptions of the Cumans and Bulgarians (p. 140). Another part of the work: *Myszy w zeszycie czyli historia jednego autora [Mice in a notebook, i.e. the story of one author]* (p. 157–179), is dedicated to the works of Theodore Prodromos. Among the most important fragments of this chapter one should mention those in which the author reveals inspirations for *Cat and Mouse War* and considers authorship of the drama *Suffering Christ*. In the last chapter:

<sup>1</sup> Anna Kotłowska works in the Laboratory of the Byzantine History of Institute of History at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. She specializes in the history of Byzantine culture and literature. In 2009 she published her doctoral dissertation *The image of history in 'Chronici Canones' Eusebius of Cezarea*, for which she received an award from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland. She is the author of translations of St. Ambrose's speeches (*De obitu Valentiniani. Speech on the death of Valentinian*, Poznań 2007; *De obitu Theodosii. Speech on the death of Theodosius*, Poznań 2008) and *The Book of Eparch* (*To eparchikon biblion. The book of Eparch*, Poznań 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The book was preceded by a few articles devoted to "animal topics": *Świat uczuć – świat zwierząt w poemacie Niketasza Eugenianosa "Drosilla i Charikles"*, [in:] *Homo, qui sentit. Ból i przyjemność w średniowiecznej kulturze Wschodu i Zachodu*, ed. J. BANASZKIEWICZ, K. ILSKI, Poznań 2013, s. 49–60; *Wzniósłość cierpienia w mysim świecie? Teodora Prodroma Wojna kociomysia*, [in:] *Człowiek w świecie zwierząt – zwierzęta w świecie człowieka*, ed. K. ILSKI, Poznań 2012, s. 33–39; *On the two critical editions of Cat and Mouse War by Theodorom Prodromom*, Pom 6, 2007/2008, p. 94–99.

*Narnia nad Bosforem* [*Narnia at the Bosphorus*] (p. 181–225), Anna Kotłowska takes up the subject of the presence of legendary and mythical animals in Byzantine literature. The author presents here the demythologization process of the dragon / snake, and analyses the range use of passes relating to sirens by Byzantine artists.

The work is enriched with the list of the names of animals in Byzantine literature (p. 229–230), a several dozen-page list of sources and bibliography (p. 231–255), as well as a summary in English (p. 257–259).

The work was written with the use of a rich source base and multilingual scientific literature.

**ЛЕВ VI МУДРЫЙ. Тактика Льва. *Leonis imperatoris Tactica*, изд. подгот. В.В. КУЧМА, ed. Н.Д. БАРАБАНОВ, Алетейя, Санкт-Петербург 2012, pp. 368 [= Византийская библиотека. Источники].**

Among contemporary Byzantinists one will not find a researcher of the Byzantine military who would not know the name of Vladimir Vasilevič Kučma. This outstanding Russian scientist was famous for, among others, excellent critical translations of Byzantine military treatises into Russian, such as *Strategikon* of Maurice or writings of Byzantine commanders from the tenth century<sup>1</sup>. His work is a source of inspiration for future generations of researchers studying the Byzantine army<sup>2</sup>. We are happy to learn that

<sup>1</sup> The following translations by V.V. Kučma should be mentioned: *О стратегии. Византийский военный трактат VI века*, СПб 2007; *Стратегикон Маврикия*, СПб 2004; *Два византийских военных трактата конца X века*, СПб 2002; *Византийский военный трактат „De castrametatione”*. Вводная статья, перевод с греческого, комментарий, ВВ 61, 2002, р. 279–312; *Трактат „Об охоте”*. Введение, перевод с греческого, комментарий, АДСВ 33, 2002, р. 48–58.

<sup>2</sup> A selection of the most important author's publications: *Принципы осады и обороны городов в письменной полемологической традиции*, ВВ 69, 2010, р. 95–113; 70, 2011, р. 7–24; *Принципы организации боевых передвижений (маршией) по „Тактике Льва”*, АДСВ 39, 2009, р. 123–141; *К вопросу о научно-теоретическом уровне трактата „De velitatione bellica”*, Bsl

The author freely and with profound knowledge of her topic moves among the Byzantine (and not only) works, which were created over more than thousand years ago. Her arguments are clear and conclusions well-reasoned.

The described book will be of interest to both Polish and foreign experts, not only to historians dealing with the history and culture of Byzantium, but also to classical philologists, literary scholars, etc. It is worth noting that the work was written in pleasant, fluent Polish, consequently everyone will read it with great pleasure.

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publishing house Aletheia has published *Tactica* by Leo VI the Wise, translated by V.V. Kučma. This work is like a clamp fastening together the life and academic achievements of this Volgograd researcher. His academic career began with this work – it was the topic of his candidate dissertation, defended in 1966 under the supervision of Mikhail Yakovlevich Syuzumov, founder of the Ural Byzantological school<sup>3</sup>. V.V. Kučma died while preparing *Tactica* for print on 15 May 2011. He spent the last months of his life on comparing his work with an English translation by George T. Dennis, which was published

56, 1995, р. 389–396; „Стратегикос” Онасандра и „Стратегикон Маврикия”: опыт сравнительной характеристики, ВВ 43, 1982, р. 35–63; 45, 1984, р. 20–34; 46, 1985, р. 109–123; „Византийский Аноним VI в.”: основные проблемы источников и содержания, ВВ 41, 1980, р. 78–91; *Византийские военные трактаты VI–X вв. как исторические источники*, ВВ 40, 1979, р. 49–75; „Тактика Льва” как исторический источник, ВВ 33, 1972, р. 75–87; *ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΤΡΑΤΙΩΤΙΚΟΣ* (к вопросу о связи трех памятников византийского военного права), ВВ 32, 1971, р. 278–284.

<sup>3</sup> Dissertation title: *Военное дело в Византии по „Тактике Льва”*.