

Cécile Lanéry-Ouvrard (ed.): *Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1500*. Vol. 9: *L'hagiographie latine à Rome et en Italie du Sud entre 550 et 750*. Turnhout: Brepols 2024 (Corpus Christianorum. Hagiographies 9). 962 pp., 44 tables, 8 maps. € 385.00. ISBN: 978-2- 503-60028-4.

Since 1994, Brepols has published nine volumes of an ambitious scholarly enterprise called *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*. The conceit of this project is as follows: to commission dozens of leading scholars to compose lengthy articles that will together form a history of Latin and vernacular hagiography written in Europe (including Scandinavia) between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries. The organization of the books in this series is admittedly unorthodox. Instead of arranging the contributions in volumes with geographical or chronological coherence, the series editors have published them as they were finished. As a result, the first eight volumes of *Hagiographies* present over a hundred essays on the production of medieval saints' lives that are disparate in terms of time, space, and linguistic traditions. The ninth and most recent volume (under review) takes a different approach. It is the first volume of the series devoted to a single geographical location (Italy from Rome southwards, including Sicily and Sardinia) and a specific time (between 550 and 750 CE). So voluminous was the production of Latin saints' lives in this region during this period that it was necessary to treat them in a single, massive book.

Cécile Lanéry-Ouvrard's introduction provides an outline of the volume,¹ which comprises two parts and studies thirty-seven hagiographical dossiers in total. The first and longest part examines hagiographical production in the city of Rome and its hinterlands (except for works by Pope Gregory the Great; see below) between the Pragmatic Sanction (554), which made Italy a province of the Eastern Roman Empire after the Gothic wars, and the fall of the Exarchate of Ravenna to the Lombards (751), including a lengthy section on saints' lives translated from Greek into Latin during this same period. The second part of the book treats the Mezzogiorno in three sections devoted to the southern Italian peninsula, Sicily, and Sardinia, respectively.

1 For the table of contents, readers are referred to the end of this review (pp. 24–25).

Lanéry-Ouvrard's study builds on her previous contribution to *Hagiographies*, a book-length treatment of *passiones* produced in Italy between 300 and 550 CE, which appeared in Volume 5 (2010). It also complements a recent article on the hagiography of Pope Gregory the Great by Sofia Boesch Gajano, which appeared in Volume 8 (2020). A forthcoming article on the production of saints' lives in northern Italy between the sixth and eighth centuries by Giorgia Vocino will complete the treatment of "Dark Age Italy" in the series.

Part 1 ("Rome et ses environs") comprises two sections. The first ("Les passions latines") offers an in-depth analysis of thirteen *passiones* produced in and around the city of Rome between 550 and 750 CE about early Christian martyrs of imperial persecution, including Pancratius (BHL 6421); Bibiana (BHL 1322); Calocerus, Parthenius, Victoria, and Anatolia (BHL 1534 + 8591 + 418); Rufinus and Secundus (BHL 7359); Gordianus and Epimachus (BHL 3612); Pope Stephanus I (BHL 7845); the Quattro Coronati, namely, Claudius, Nicostratus, Symphorianus, Castorius and Simplicius (BHL 1836); Marcellinus and Petrus (BHL 5230); Alexander, Eventius, Theodulus, Hermes and Quirinus (BHL 266); the so-called "Greek martyrs" (BHL 3970); Simplicius, Faustinus and Beatrix (BHL 7790); Lucia and Geminianus (BHL 4985); and the two brothers Felix and Felix (BHL 2880 + 2885). In addition, this section also discusses two more dossiers, those of Luceia and Auceia (BHL 4980) and Genesius the Mime (BHL 3320), which may have been products of an earlier age, yet were not included in Lanéry-Ouvrard's previous article on late antique Roman *passiones*.

The seeming abundance of this corpus masks the fact that it represents a substantial decrease in hagiographical production compared to fifth- and early sixth-century Rome, when no fewer than twenty-eight saintly dossiers were composed. Taken as a group, the saints' lives produced by Roman authors between 550 and 750 CE were less ambitious than their predecessors: they make fewer references to patristic sources, alluded more frequently to monastic authors, and shied away from classical allusions almost completely. Further removed from the age of the martyrs, their representation of Roman judicial processes was not authentic, and their critique of paganism lacked nuance. Moreover, their authors studiously avoided mention of contemporary theological struggles, like the Three Chapters controversy in the sixth century and the issues surrounding Monothelism in the seventh century. They also showed little interest in disciplinary concern that preoccupied

earlier hagiographers, like the participation of Christians in the army. They took as their subjects both local heroes as well as saints from abroad, particularly those of eastern Mediterranean origin. The appeal of these stories among northern European pilgrims to Rome may account for their dissemination north of the Alps and their survival in ninth and tenth century manuscripts of Carolingian origin, like Torino, BNU, F.III.16, a legendary copied at Bobbio in the tenth century from a seventh-century Roman exemplar. A full-color reproduction of a folio from this manuscript serves as a handsome frontispiece to the volume.

A complimentary corpus of Latin hagiography produced in Rome in this period comprised translations from Greek saints' lives, which Lanéry-Ouvrard treats in the second section of Part 1 ("Les traductions du grec"). The nine dossiers in this group include *passiones* of Tryphon and Respicus (BHL 8338); Christina (BHL 1748/49); Theodorus (BHL 8077); Hadrianus (BHL 3744); Anastasius 'Persa' (BHL 408, 410, and 412); Bonifatius (BHL 1413); and Eustachius (BHL 2760/2761) as well as a dozen miracles attributed to the martyrs Cyrus and Iohannes (see BHL 2080) and collections of Greek *verba seniorum* translated by Popes Pelagius and John (BHL 6527, 6529–6531, and 6538). The translation of eastern saints' lives for Latin audiences was not new to this period, but in the aftermath of the Gothic wars, strong ties between Italy and Constantinople created an environment that facilitated linguistic and literary exchange. So too did the arrival of eastern refugees, who fled the advances of the Persians and the Arabs on Byzantium's far frontiers and established new churches and saints' cults in Rome. The translations of Greek hagiography produced at this time are difficult to date precisely because they lack prologues and divulge few temporal clues that allow us to localize them in time. Rendered into Latin by anonymous monks or priests, these translations are quite literal in their rendering with little to no literary pretension. They were most likely made to nourish the piety of a popular readership drawn by their rich and colorful narratives.

Part 2 ("Le Mezzogiorno") comprises three sections. The first of them ("Les passions d'Italie méridionale") treats ten hagiographical dossiers created on the southern Italian peninsula before 750 CE. These include *passiones* of the so-called "Twelve Brothers" (*Duodecim fratres*; BHL 2298); Bishop Felix of Thibiuca (BHL 2894–2895); Bishop Ianuarius of Benevento (BHL 4115–4117 and 4132); Marcellus and Apuleius (BHL 5252); Bishop Eleutherius and his mother Antia (BHL 2541); Iuliana (BHL 4522–4523); Potitus (BHL

6908); Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentia (BHL 8712); Erasmus (BHL 2582); and Bishop Felix of Nola (BHL 2869). For the most part, these texts were the fruits of hagiographers active in Campania, Basilicata, and Apulia before the year 650 CE. These authors were probably local priests or monks associated with the shrines of the saints they celebrated. Their will to commemorate their heroes in writing frequently stretched the limits of their modest abilities. As Lanéry-Ouvrard notes, “[n]os hagiographes d’Italie méridionale ne manquaient pourtant ni de devotion, ni de bonne volonté, mais leur bagage culturel était de toute évidence fort réduit” (p. 557).

Despite some stylistic shortcomings, this corpus of southern Italian *passiones* has a distinctive character that differentiates it from the hagiography produced further north in and around Rome in this period. The Mezzogiorno was a crossroad of literary and cultural influences, which inflected the contents of these accounts. Travel across the Mediterranean and throughout the southern Italian peninsula is a motif in this corpus. For example, many of these texts featured the stories of African martyrs, some of whom were transformed into saints of local origin. Likewise, the subjects of these *passiones* were sometimes given fantastic origin stories in eastern places before taking up residence in the west. These legends had an enduring popularity in southern Italy. Some were translated into Greek, while others were rewritten at later dates to adapt them to new cultural expectations or to improve upon their style. A few of them spread north of the Alps, like the *passiones* of Iuliana (BHL 4522–4523); Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentia (BHL 8712), and Erasmus (BHL 2582), which were copied in Carolingian passionaries alongside martyr accounts of Roman origin.

As the final two sections of Part 2 illustrate, the tissue of evidence for hagiographic production in Sicily and Sardinia between the sixth and eighth centuries was much thinner than that of mainland Italy. While Sicilian authors celebrated several early Christian martyrs, only the *passio* of Lucia of Syracuse (BHL 4992) can be dated securely to the period under discussion. Others, like the *vita* of Zosimus of Syracuse (BHL 9026) and the *passio* of Bishops Libertinus, Agrigentinus, and Peregrinus (BHL 4909), were most likely products of the seventh through ninth centuries. Lacking the literary adornments of contemporary hagiography from the Mezzogiorno, the *passio* of Lucia resembles martyr accounts composed in late antique Rome, so much so that Lanéry-Ouvrard calls it “une sorte d’adaptation provinciale” of the Roman model (p. 785). Its author was likely a priest, given his attention to describing

the details of ecclesiastical rites. A seventh-century Greek translation of Lucia's *passio* (BHG 995) simplified the extravagant Latin of its sixth-century source text. Likewise, Sardinia suffers from a paucity of source material. Fortunately, after long neglect by the Bollandists, the industry of Antonio Piras and his colleagues have put the *passiones* of the Sardinian martyrs on firm footing for the first time. As their research has shown, two martyr accounts from Sardinia date from the period under discussion: the *passiones* of Saturninus of Cagliari (BHL 7491) and that of Luxorius (BHL 5092).

At the heart of this volume are thirty-seven case studies of Latin hagiographical dossiers produced in southern Italy at the end of antiquity, most of which remain unedited. In each case, Lanéry-Ouvrard has applied her vast erudition and critical judgement to these little-known sources to untangle their knotted textual histories, to pin down their elusive dates, and to identify their relationship to other works from the period. Her book is nothing less than a towering monument to painstaking critical scholarship. It not only uncovers a rich field of research in later Latin literature but also prepares the groundwork for its cultivation. Several reference tools are included to facilitate the book's use, namely, an extensive table listing the *passiones* in alphabetical order and providing convenient information about them (their dates, BHL numbers, relevant editions and studies, etc.), as well as eight helpful maps and an exhaustive bibliography. Thanks to Lanéry-Ouvrard's achievement, scholars of late antique and early medieval hagiography have a valuable new resource at their disposal.

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Table of Contents

Table générale des matières	5
Introduction	15
A. Le context historique	17
Rome à l'orée du Moyen Âge. – L'Italie méridionale entre Lombards et Byzantins. – La Sicilie : une « île heureuse » en voie d'hellénisation. – La Sardaigne byzantine.	
B. Remarques préliminaires	39
I. Rome et ses environs	43
A. Les Passions latines	44
Introduction. Délimitation du corpus et dossiers incertains. – L'étiollement relatif de la production hagiographique romaine. – Une littérature conservatrice sur la forme et consensuelle sur le fond. – Promenades dans Rome à l'époque des pèlerinages. – Les tendances assimilatrices de l'hagiographie romaine. – Le succès des Passions romaines dans les légendiers médiévaux.	
Notices détaillées. 1. La Passion de Lucie et Aucée. – 2. La Passion du mime Genès. – 3. La Passion de Pancrace. – 4. La Passion de Bibiane. – 5. La Passion de Calocère, Parthène, Victoire et Anatolie. – 6. La Passion de Rufine et Seconde. – 7. La Passion de Gordien. – 8. La Passion du pape Étienne Ier. – 9. L'interpolation romaine de la Passion des « Quatre Couronnés ». – 10. La Passion de Marcellin et Pierre. – 11. La Passion d'Alexandre, Évence et Théodule. – 12. La Passion des Martyrs grecs. – 13. La Passion de Simplicie, Faustin et Béatrice. – 14. La Passion de Lucie et Géminien. – 15. La Passion des frères Félix et Félix.	
B. Les traductions du grec	360
Introduction. La traduction hagiographique à Rome : une activité ancienne et florissante. – La difficile délimitation du corpus des traductions romaines. – Profil littéraire et linguistique des traductions romaines.	

Notices détaillées. 16. La Passion de Tryphon. – 17. Les Apophtegmes des Pères. – 18. La Passion de Christine. – 19. La Passion de Théodore le Conscrit. – 20. La Passion d’Hadrien. – 21. La Passion d’Anastase le Perse et son Miracle romain. – 22. La Passion de Boniface. – 23. Les Miracles de Cyr et Jean traduits par le conseiller Boniface. – 24. La Passion d’Eustache est-elle une traduction romaine ?

II. Le Mezzogiorno	551
A. L’Italie méridionale	552
Introduction. Panorama géographique et chronologique. – Le profil littéraire des Passions méridionales. – Diffusion et influence.	
Notices détaillées. 25. La Passion des douze frères venus d’Afrique. – 26. Les rédactions méridionales de la Passion de Félix de Thibiuca. – 27. La Passion de Janvier et ses compagnons. – 28. La Passion de Marcel et Apulée. – 29. La Passion d’Éleuthère et Antia. – 30. La Passion de Julienne. – 31. La Passion de Potitus. – 32. La Passion de Guy, Modeste et Crescence. – 33. La Passion d’Érasme. – 34. La Passion de l’évêque Félix de Nole.	
B. La Sicile	783
Introduction. Les derniers feux de l’hagiographie « siculo-romaine ». – Textes latins de datation incertaine.	
Notice détaillée. 35. La Passion de Lucie.	
C. La Sardaigne	814
Introduction. Travaux récents sur l’hagiographie sarde. – Des datations incertaines.	
Notices détaillées. 36. La Passion de Saturnin de Cagliari. – 37. La Passion de Luxorius.	
Table récapitulative des dossiers examinés	853
Figures	869
Bibliographie	883
Table des cartes et des figures	959