Marek Wilczyński, Geiseric and the ‘Fourth Punic War’

Łukasz Pigoński
Uniwersytet Łódzki, Wydział Filozoficzno-Historyczny, Katedra Historii Bizancjum, s.ceranea@uni.lodz.pl

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Athous Laurae Г 115. В издании славянский перевод опубликован параллельно по отношению ко греческому тексту. Тексты синхронизированы и находятся на противоположных страницах. Из-за расхождений между структурой греческих текстов и славянским переводом, представленным списком Изборника Святослава 1073, в издании автор следует структуре греческого списка Coislinianus graecus 120, который является наиболее близким к первоначальному оформлению текста.

В заключение хотелось бы отметить, что данное издание является результатом многолетнего труда П. Яневой, начавшей свою работу над греческими источниками сборника Симеона еще в 1984 г. За все эти годы П. Яневой необходимо было исследовать огромное количество разнородного материала и провести комплексный сопоставительный анализ греческого и славянского текстов. В издании собраны и представлены результаты этой трудоемкой работы.

Третий том издания сборника Симеона (по списку Святослава 1073 г.), несомненно, представляет большой научный интерес и является солидным научным трудом, вносящим значительный вклад как в болгарскую, так и в мировую медиевистику.

Сергей Новицкий (Лодзь)  

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The presented book was written by prof. Marek Wilczyński, a Polish historian of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages from the History Institute of the Pedagogical University of Cracow. He is well known in Polish academia for his research that concerns such topics as the history of the Migration Period and the Germanic Kingdoms, especially those of Vandals and Sueves, and the role of barbarians in the political and military structures of the Late Roman Empire. The presented book, an extended biography of Geiseric, the King of the Vandals, is the most recent in the long list of the author’s publications about these problems. The author however does not only present the newest research and ideas on the Vandal Kingdom, but also intends to popularize the history of the Late Antiquity among a broader, more general public.

The book starts with an extensive preface divided into several subsections (p. 7–28) where the author introduces the topic of the study with basic information about Geiseric, his time and the sources, as well as presenting his concept of the narrative. The book is divided into nine chapters presenting Geiseric’s life and the historical background in a chronological order. The first one, Trudne dzieciństwo. Pochodzenie Gaiseric i jego droga ku granicy Imperium Romanum [Difficult Childhood. The Origins of Geiseric and His Way to the Border of Imperium Romanum, p. 29–41], is concerned with rarely approached topic of Geiseric’s youth and his roots. It is followed by the second chapter, U boku brata [By His Brother’s Side, p. 43–76], which describes the events of the Vandal march through Gaul and their settlement in Spain, when Geiseric was a co-ruler alongside of Gunderic. The third chapter, Afrykański zbożowy sen złoty [The African Golden Cereal Dream,
p. 77–86], explains why the African lands were so tempting for barbarian tribes and describes earlier unsuccessful Gothic attempts to conquer them. The fourth chapter, *Where Two Quarrel, a Third Wins*. The Great Crossing to the African Soil and the March Eastwards Towards Carthage, p. 87–110], is concerned with the situation in Africa at the brink of the Vandal attack, the invasion itself, and the events surrounding the conflict until the conclusion of the first peace of 435. The next one, *Who did not doubt in whose friendship? The First Phase of the 'Fourth Punic War'* The capture of Carthage and the peace of 442, p. 111–124], covers the relationship between Vandals and Romans after the peace, the surprise capture of Carthage in 439, and the ensuing war. The sixth chapter, Diplomacy, bunty, zaręczyny i rozwody. Okres pokojowej kogezystencji 442–454 r. [Diplomacy, Riots, Betrothals and Divorces. The Time of Peaceful Coexistence 442–454, p. 125–143], describes how Geiseric peacefully managed to achieve his goal of becoming a recognized ruler through the means of diplomacy, and linking his house with the Imperial by having his son Huneric betrothed to the Valentinian’s daughter. The following chapter, Czego Hannibal nie dokonał – Gisericus intra portas! Zdobycie i złupienie Rzymu w 455 r. [What Hannibal Did not Manage – Gisericus Intra Portas! The Capture and Sack of Rome in 455, p. 145–155], tells about his most famous deed, the sack of Rome, which was Geiseric’s direct answer to the death of his previous political partners and an attempt at securing his assets attained earlier. In the eighth chapter, Drugiej Zamy nie było. Gejzeryk nie pozwala odebrać sobie zdobyczy. Nieuwidane rzymskie próby rewindykacji Afryki i zawarcie ostatecznego pokoju. [There Was No Second Zama. Geiseric Doesn’t Let His Spoils Be Taken Away. Unsuccessful Roman Attempts at the Recovery of Africa and the Conclusion of the Final Peace, p. 157–189], the author proceeds to explain how the King managed to defend himself against Roman attempts at the reconquest and established a lasting peace that enabled Vandals to rule over Africa for almost six decades. The ninth chapter, Pozamilitarne tło “czwartej wojny punickiej” [The Non-Military Background of the 'Fourth Punic War', p. 191–209], delves into topics that are much more obscure in the sources, namely the King’s piety and stewardship. The final chapter, Zwycięzca w „czwartej wojnie punickiej”. Gejzeryk Wielki – parę słów na zakończenie. [The Winner in the 'Fourth Punic War’. Geiseric the Great – a Couple of Concluding Words, p. 211–214], contains author’s assessment of the persona of Geiseric, and as a conclusion, he justifiably calls the hero of his book one of the greatest statesmen and leaders in the history of antiquity. The book also contains bibliography (p. 215–233) and an index (p. 234–241).

The work of Marek Wilczyński provides an expert analysis and an enjoyable lecture. The author utilizes a variety of sources, the most recent research in the field, and also voices his own opinions, adding to the discussion in the academia, so the scientific value of the narrative is not affected by lighter tones, meant to cater to more general audience. Considering the scarcity of sources regarding some aspects of Geiseric’s life, it is an impressive achievement that the author managed to deliver such a complete and thorough biography.

In conclusion, the book is an important entry in the Polish historiography of Late Antiquity, as it captures its best traditions, combining both scientific expertise and literary value.

*Łukasz Pigoński (Łódź)*

*Uniwersytet Łódzki, Wydział Filozoficzno-Historyczny, Katedra Historii Bizancjum*