

A commentary of X. LEQUEUX's review of the book "The Martyrdom of Athanasius of Klyisma, a Saint from the Egyptian Desert", CHRISTIDES, V. - HØGEL, CH. - MONFERRER SALA, J. P. (eds) in *Analecta Bollandiana* 132 (2014), pp. 441- 442.

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Three authors, V. Christides, Ch. Hogel and J.P. Monferrer Sala, undertook the edition and English translation of the unique relevant Greek text and its Arabic translation written in early Islamic times, based on three Arabic manuscripts.

The recently published review of the Martyrdom of Athanasius of Clysma, a Saint from the Egyptian Desert, ed. and transl. by V. Christides, Ch. Høgel and J.P. Monferrer Sala, Athens, 2012, by X. Lequeux in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 132(2014), pp. 441- 442, correctly mentions that while a rich linguistic commentary of the Arabic is included, it is absent in the Greek text. No doubt this is caused by the authors's concentration on the more complicated Arabic text which exhibits various morphological and phonetic phenomena, whereas the Greek text is written in a simple and easy linguistic style.

One would expect to find a more profound analysis of the contents of the book and some provocative questions which could be raised are absent. The aim of the authors is twofold: a) to trace the origin of the martyrdom in connection with the spread of early Christianity in southern Egypt which was the spearhead for its expansion to Nubia and beyond. b) To stress the importance of the port of Klyisma on the silk route from the

4th century to Justinian's rule (527- 565) as reported in the Martyrdom of St. Athanasius.

Concerning the first point, the authors' view is that the narration of St. Athanasius of Klysma was first composed orally in the early period of Christianity based on an actual existence of a saint. The fact that a great part of the martyrdom was copied from the martyrdom of Sergius and Bacchus is not unique since it's a practice not unusual in hagiography. But, the reviewer's view that since the martyrdom of Sergius and Bacchus was written in the year 430, Athanasius' martyrdom must have been written later, cannot be sustained because the oral composition must have been written after this year and Christides's view is that the original version of the Martyrdom of Athanasius was composed orally in the 4th century and written down after the year AD 430 and thus it can be understood that included additional elements drawn from the martyrdom of Sergius and Bacchus.

Moreover, if we accept the reviewer's view that there was not any saint called Athanasios, martyred in Klysma in the 4th century, the question which is raised is how the Emperor Justinian built a church in his name in the 6th century. How did he honored an non - existant saint who was still celebrated in his time in Klysma? How did people of Klysma celebrated a fabricated saint created by an unknown author based on Sergius and Bacchus narration? In addition, the reviewer's view that Athanasius of Klysma did not exist because his name was not included in the Coptic calendar cannot be sustained. After all, other saints existed without being included in the Coptic calendar.

The second point of the authors passed completely unnoticed by the reviewer, i.e. that in Christides's article it is emphasized the importance of Klysma for the silk route in spite of its location "à l' extrémité du golfe de Suez." In spite of the terrible northern winds that prevailed in the area, many ship owners

preferred to go and unload their products there because in this way they voided the long island route. Moreover, the itinerary described by the authors (p. 124), along with an original map, provides valuable geographical information for the communication in Egypt before the Trajan's canal was built.