

Peter Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar zum 8. Buch der Iohannis des Gorippus nebst kritischer Edition und Übersetzung*. Groningen, Egbert Forsten, 2010. Pp. 503. ISBN 978-90-6980-157-5. €85.

This book does not deal with a work or a poet central to the study of Latin literature, but deserves attention as it is the product of meticulous and wide-ranging research and is presented in an innovative way which makes the scholarly findings more accessible. As the title indicates, this is a commentary on Book 8 of the epic *Iohannis* by the North African poet Corippus, henceforth to be called Gorippus, as Riedlberger persuasively argues is his correct name. The hero of the poem, Johannes Troglita, was the commander of the Roman army sent by Justinian to quell a mutiny of Berber tribes in Libya in the 6th century AD, a few years after the province had been reconquered by the Romans. The commentary not only gives information on the historical context, the language and style of the poem, but also provides a new critical edition of the eighth book with numerous textual emendations to the 1970 edition of Diggle and Goodyear. The liturgical aspects of the commentary mentioned in the title refer to the explication of the text dealing with the description of a field mass in the epic.

Riedlberger provides an extensive introduction (11-96) that deals with the manuscript tradition and the historical context, detailing aspects of our (limited) knowledge of the author, North Africa at the time, the Berbers, the Roman army and, in particular, Johannes and his officers. Next the *Iohannis* itself, its language and style are discussed, its intertextual relationship, chiefly with the *Aeneid*, but also with Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, is indicated. Riedlberger considers the genesis of the poem and its purpose. The introduction is followed by a summary of the first seven books of the epic and some remarks on the edition. Then comes the main body of the book: the text, translation and commentary (107-454). A brief afterword on further activities of both Johannes and Gorippus precedes the bibliography (457-84), and two indices.

The text of the *Iohannis* was transmitted in a single manuscript and was unknown until its publication by Mazzuchelli in 1820. Riedlberger notes (12) that the manuscript is in a sorry state. It was badly copied and has many errors and gaps. The idiosyncratic Latin adds to the difficulty of understanding the text. Where emendations have been made to the 1970 edition, Riedlberger provides the rationale for his changes in the commentary. This is the first time this book has been translated into German, and

the author makes clear that his aim was to convey the meaning of the original as exactly as possible and not to achieve literary elegance.

The innovative element of the presentation of this book is that there is no separation of text, translation and commentary. Sections of the text, with the translation and *apparatus criticus* immediately below, are printed in shaded blocks preceded and followed by the critical commentary. In this way the reader does not have to page back and forth between text and commentary. The overall design of the book is generous so that nothing seems cramped or crowded, but all is presented most attractively and clearly. Frequent use of illustrative material further enhances understanding of the text and context. For the latter there are maps and plans of the geography of the region and the layout of military sites. For the former photographs of specific words in the manuscript are reproduced in order to facilitate the understanding of why a particular word or passage is read in a specific way. There is even an illustration of swallows hunting insects when Gorippus makes use of an epic simile (lines 9-13) comparing the movement of Johannes's thoughts to the movement of swallows.

Riedlberger surmises that Gorippus wrote the *Iohannis* between 546 and 552, before his Panegyric to Justin II on his succession.

The text of Book 8 breaks off at line 656. The fact that Riedlberger has produced a 500-page volume dealing with this short Latin text gives some indication of the thoroughness of his treatment. The limited scope of this review does not allow justice to be done to the breadth and depth of the work. It should at least be evident that it will be an indispensable part of any future scholar's required reading for research on North Africa of the period or of the work of Gorippus.

Betine van Zyl Smit
University of Nottingham

Joseph Roisman & Ian Worthington (edd.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*. Chichester, Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell (*Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Ancient History*) 2010. Pp. xxvi + 668, 16 p. of plates. ISBN 9781405179362. \$199.95.*

* I was not qualified to offer a paper on the special theme of this volume of *Acta Classica*, but I associate myself with the contributors in expressing my admiration for Denis Saddington's scholarship, and would add that I was fortunate to have had his friendship over some four decades.

ACTA CLASSICA



Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

Published by
The Classical Association of
South Africa

For further information go to:
http://www.casa-kvsa.org.za/acta_classica.htm