

Ancient Christian Literature is a tremendous well of information, particularly for an observant reader. Especially, the hagiographic texts created in the Early Byzantine epoch deserve special attention. First of all, they show the process of Christianisation, the religious metamorphosis of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire in the twilight of Antiquity. Also, they are valuable in studies on the economy and society of the period. The validity of the formulated statement is supported by a number of means. The first and, as I believe, foremost advantage of hagiographic works is the fact that they depict everyday life in provinces, most often in small towns and, what is particularly valuable, in rural areas. What is evident, the aim of the authors of hagiographic works was not to present the social and economic condition of the period, yet they do so unintentionally and involuntarily when describing the background and setting of their hero, the saint man. Even for this reason alone, being aware of the handicapped way of conveying reliable information in Ancient Christian literature, hagiographic texts constitute a noteworthy group of sources.

As far as I know, there is no work or article (either in Polish or world historiography) which would concern the issue of money in Early Byzantine hagiographic texts. All the more, it is substantiated and noteworthy to undertake the issues in question. All the hagiographic texts created in the Early Byzantine epoch will be subject to research, including both those which have remained to these days in Greek and Latin as well as those which still remain today written in oriental languages. In the case of the latter group I shall be forced to use translations from those languages to modern tongues.

The outcome of the implementation of the planned research will comprise a dissertation devoted to the issue of money in Early Byzantine hagiographic texts. Obviously, one may deliberate over the sense of such determination of source basis, whether it narrows the perspective or tampers with the conceived findings. It seems to me, however, that such a selection of source basis does make sense: first of all, it clearly determines which sources will be subjects to detailed analysis (still not the only one), as it is impossible to analyse all of the Early Byzantine Christian literature in terms of information about money, monetary market or economy of the period. Secondly, hagiographic texts, in terms of their character and the way information is conveyed, constitute a whole closed set.

The treatise which is to be the effect of the research in planning, shall be divided into three chapters. The first one will be devoted to the analysis of terminology of monetary units occurring in the studied texts, the second to the role of money in everyday life with a critical analysis of numerous high sums of money appearing in this group of sources. Also, groups who professionally dealt with money shall be described alongside here: bankers, revenue clerks, the Imperial Court, clergy, merchants, craftsmen and the poor as frequent receivers of sums of money (alms). The third chapter of the treatise in planning will be devoted to the moral assessment of money by the authors of the hagiographic works, although they rarely theorise over the subject of money. The whole research in planning will be accompanied by a reflection over the extent to which the collected and analysed accounts concerning money enrich our knowledge of the society and economy of the period. The initial analysis of the researched material confirms that accounts concerning money and Early Byzantine economy are more abundant in hagiographic texts than in contemporary homilies, sermons or even letters, which were written by their authors in specific social issues as a rule (interventions at civic and military officers). Evidently, all the included reflections shall be confronted with other sources of the epoch, including the numismatic knowledge of monetary units in circulation at the time.