



Περίληψη :

The "Periegesis" was written by Andrew Libadenos after 1355. In his work, the writer thanks the Virgin Mary for the help she offered him at difficult moments of his life. It also includes a wealth of historical information about his times and the state of the Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond.

Χρονολόγηση

after 1355

Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

Trebizond, Pontos

1. General

The work of Andrew Libadenos titled "Periegesis" is a biographical account of the writer's adventures, aiming at highlighting the miraculous intervention of the Virgin at difficult moments of his life. However, the "Periegesis" is a rhetorical work also preserving historical information about the writer's times and particularly the state of the Grand Komnenoi, where Libadenos spent most of his life.

2. The Writer

Andrew Libadenos was born in Constantinople between 1308 and 1316, and died after 1361. Information about his life and activities is mainly derived from his works and particularly the "Periegesis". He studied at an ecclesiastical school of Constantinople, although his studies must have been interrupted due to his participation in a diplomatic mission to Egypt. The difficult situation of the Byzantine state as well as his friendship with Basil Great Komnenos strongly motivated him to visit Trebizond, where he was honoured with both secular and ecclesiastical positions. After Basil's death, he vainly tried to escape to Constantinople. In the capital of the state of the Grand Komnenoi he lived through the civil conflicts of the mid-14th century, while he also took part in the revolt of 1355 against Alexios III. The exact date Libadenos died remains unknown, but it seems possible that until 1361 he had been in Trebizond as Alexios' friend. Although not evidenced, Libadenos might have been a clergyman.

The most important work of Andrew Libadenos is the "Periegesis". He also wrote verses dedicated to the Virgin (included in the books Gesion, Evangelismos and Metastasis), a Profession of Faith and an Encomium to St Phokas, letters as well as other works of minor importance. Libadenos is also considered the writer of the famous "Almanac of Trebizond" of 1336.

3. Autograph and Editions

Almost all the works of Andrew Libadenos, including the "Periegesis", have been preserved in an autographic codex at the Bavarian State Library, Munich. The "Periegesis" has been written by a studious copyist, while in some cases there are corrected words or explanations of inapprehensible words written over the original ones. The margin often includes titles of the text written by the copyist, while the beginning and the end of the text are somehow decorated. There are also some elaborate initials and a cross with the monogram IC XC NI KA adorning the title.

The first edition was issued by Matthew Pararikas (Παρανίκας) in 1874.¹ The weaknesses of this edition were further deteriorated by the Ottoman censorship, which deleted parts of bitter criticism about the possession of the Holy Land by the Muslims.

A second detailed edition along with annotations was published by Odysseas Lampsidis in 1975.² This is where the following presentation is based.



4. Title

Libadenos gave his work the original title *Περιηγητική Ιστορία Αναβάσεως Ανδρέου* (Tourist History of Andrew's Anabasis). At the end of the text he writes again: End of the Tourist History of Andrew's Anabasis. Pararikas gave the title "Periegesis", which prevailed in subsequent research for practical reasons. "Anabasis" must have been the crucial word in Libadenos' title, which was also closer to his aims; it reminds of Xenophon's *Anabasis* and the hardships and adventures during the March of the Ten Thousand. Just like the Ten Thousand, Libadenos often becomes homesick and expresses his longing for Constantinople.

However, the brief title "Periegesis" given by Pararikas has prevailed and is widely used.

5. Aim

Libadenos makes frequent and clear mentions of the reason why he wrote the text. He wanted to thank Jesus and the Virgin for the goods he had enjoyed and the help he had been given at difficult moments of his life, on land and in water, during wars and civil conflicts, during illnesses he suffered and other exigent circumstances of his life.

6. Chronology

According to the information concerning the political situation of the state of Trebizond, the work was probably written in the first decade of the reign of Alexios III, when the state of the Grand Komnenoi was in great agitation due to successive conflicts and revolts.

This chronology also agrees with the information included in the text about the circumstances prevailing in the Byzantine state, which was afflicted by civil war. The information suggests the period 1347-1355. However, because the last part of the "Periegesis" describes the rebellion of the *megas doux* Scholarios and his son against Alexios, an event dated to October 1355, the text must have been written after 1355.

7. Character

Given that the writer calls the "Periegesis" a speech, the work is therefore considered an oration. The rhetorical character becomes obvious from the sources, parallel quotations and excerpts from other texts, figures of speech, expressions and the elaborate rhetorical style.

More specifically, some parts of the "Periegesis" are direct references to ancient writers, such as Homer, Pindar, Euripides and Dionysios Periegetes, as well as to Christian works like the Old and the New Testament, the Homilies of John Chrysostom as well as hagiographical and hymnographical texts. Furthermore, the work includes proverbs from the ancient proverbial tradition, while the encomiastic description of Trebizond is amazingly similar to the respective works by John Eugenikos and Bessarion.

The most common figures of speech used in Libadenos' text are the metaphor, the alliteration, the accumulation and the accumulative description. Besides, there are repeated sayings of ancient writers, proverbial phrases and proverbs, while there are also words not included in the dictionaries of the ancient Greek and the Byzantine languages so far.

Finally, according to a popular Byzantine habit, Libadenos includes in his text a large number of rhetorical descriptions of places, cities, events as well as frames of mind.

8. Geographical Information

The "Periegesis" is one of the few Byzantine works providing geographical information, although it is quite unlikely that the writer intended to write a geographical work. The geographical references are part of the rhetorical descriptions and, as a result, the



accuracy of the information is often challenged, while originality becomes less important because of the excessive rhetorical style.

Geographical information is included in the following excerpts:

The voyage from Constantinople to Alexandria and Cairo.

The journey from Egypt to Jerusalem as well as description of the places of interest in Jerusalem and the area of the Jordan River.

The return voyage from Egypt to Constantinople.

Tenedos Island.

The city of Byzantium (Constantinople).

The city of Amisos.

The city of Πλατάνων.

The harbour of Δαφνών.

The city of Trebizond.

The city of Kerasous.

The city of Κεγχρεώνος (Κεγχρινών).

The descriptions of the cities are very brief and lack specific geographical information. There is obvious comparison in case of cities whose descriptions or news from other texts have survived, such as Constantinople and Trebizond. However, the "Periegesis" contains valuable information about the means of transport used (mainly in voyages), the harbours, the duration of the voyages, the dangers and the difficulties during the voyage, etc.

9. Private and Public Life

Although the "Periegesis" must have been written for clearly personal reasons, given that Libadenos mentions the cases in which he was helped by the Virgin and thanks her, the writer includes a limited amount of information about the public and private life of the Byzantines as well as about the state of the Grand Komnenoi.

Miraculous cures, the pilgrimage to churches and monasteries, the desire for travelling to the Holy Land, the journey and the way stations as well as information about miracles and lives of saints portray the religious life of that period as well as some aspects of religion.

The description of illnesses and their treatment is part of the everyday life and also provides a picture of the pathology and medicine in the medieval world.

There is interesting information about schools and education, educational centres (e.g. the centre for astronomical studies in Trebizond) as well as the standard of education of the people who held a senior office.

Information about public life is also included in the account of the preparations for a Byzantine diplomatic delegation sent to Egypt and the hospitality the members were offered there, while of general ethnological interest are the excerpts referring to some semi-



barbarian inhabitants of northern Africa and their culture.

Finally, some parts of the text provide accurate information about the misfortune of the Byzantine state along with references to facts and figures of the state of the Grand Komnenoi.

10. The State of the Grand Komnenoi

The "Periegesis" is an important source of information about the state of the Grand Komnenoi, given that Andrew Libadenos lived in Trebizond and actively participated in the civil wars of that period. The work is a broken narrative of historical events, as the writer intended to recount the dangers he faced and escaped rather than to give a full picture of his times. However, the "Periegesis" may be considered a historical source about the period between 1336 and 1355. In particular, there is little and unimportant information about the years from 1336 to 1349, while as regards the period between 1349 and 1355, the text greatly contributes to reviving the history of the state of the Grand Komnenoi. Besides, at certain points the text completes or confirms the Chronicle of Michael Panaretos.

More specifically, the historical events reported in the "Periegesis" may be summarised as follows:

Libadenos travelled to Trebizond mainly because the city was considered a centre for astronomical studies. At the same time, he was motivated by his friendship with Basil Grand Komnenos (1332-1340) fostered in Constantinople when Basil used to live there. In addition, the text includes explicit references to other senior officials of the state of the Grand Komnenoi: Michael Grand Komnenos (1341, 1344-1349), Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390), the metropolitan of Kerasous, Kyrillos (1354-1355), and the metropolitans of Trebizond, Gregory (1333-1339), Barnabas (1311-1333) and Akakios (1339-1351).

As an auricular and eye witness, Libadenos also recounts the events of the civil war that broke out after the death of Basil Grand Komnenos. During the war, the writer suffered a lot due to the open support he offered to Eirene of Trebizond, the second wife of Basil Grand Komnenos.

The "Periegesis" includes an extensive reference to the siege the Turks laid to Trebizond in 1341, when the city was largely destroyed and depopulated. It should be noted that the reference is quite excessive as compared with references to other incidents. However, because the writer was often found in a difficult position during that war and was saved thanks to a miraculous intervention, he wanted to give a detailed account of his adventures.

The disorder that broke out when Anna Anachoutlou, the daughter of Alexios II Grand Komnenos, ascended the throne had unpleasant consequences for Libadenos due to the general discomfort caused by the siege laid by Anna's troops as well as the loss of his last assets. When Anna prevailed, the writer managed to be granted the precious travel permit and left for Constantinople. During the return trip, while he was in the Cimmerian Bosphorus waiting for a ship to take him to Constantinople, he was arrested and led to Trebizond against his will.

But Trebizond was in the midst of a new civil war, as the dethronement of Anna Anachoutlou and the ascension of John Grand Komnenos (September 9, 1342) to the throne were followed by the murders of several courtiers and members of the royal family. Libadenos also refers to the arrests of the megas doux Scholarios (probably a close friend of his) and other potentates by Michael Grand Komnenos in November 1345.

During the reign of Michael Grand Komnenos, Andrew Libadenos must have won the royal favour once again and was restored to the office of prototaboullarios, previously awarded to him by Basil Grand Komnenos. But this situation did not last for long, for about one year before the arrival of Alexios III in Trebizond Libadenos fell again into disfavour, probably due to his friendly relations with the Scholarios family. His personal tragedy is just a simple example of the serious political crisis afflicting the state of Trebizond. The arrival of Alexios in the city and the end of the civil conflict are warmly greeted by the writer for the additional reason that Niketas Scholarios, Libadenos' close friend, was among the architects of Alexios' ascension to the throne.



Libadenos was highly respectable in the court of Alexios and held various offices. However, he also participated actively in the rebellion of the Scholarios family against Alexios in Kerasous, which eventually led to negotiations in October 1355. The participation of Libadenos in the rebellion on the side of the Scholarios family justifies the detailed account of the events.

The "Periegesis" also includes information about minor issues of the state of Trebizond. In particular, the account of Libadenos' arrest by Trebizond ships in Perateia, Crimea, suggests that Perateia probably recognised the power of Trebizond, although it was not a part of the state of the Grand Komnenoi in that period.

Libadenos provides the significant information that during Alexios' campaign to Kerasous and Κεγγρεώνα against the rebels (1354-1355), the emperor was joined by mercenaries, riders and infantrymen. The mercenaries are described by Libadenos as barbarians; there were a large number of them and they possibly came from the state of Iberon and Abasgoi (Abkhazians). As part of Alexios' army, the Italian soldiers also offered substantial help at that difficult moment to the state of the Grand Komnenoi. They were probably Venetians, who signed a commercial agreement with Alexios in 1364 or even Genoese, who had already settled in Trebizond and were becoming increasingly influential in state matters

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