

Review Article.

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Εγκυκλοπαιδικό Προσωπογραφικό Λεξικό Βυζαντινής Ιστορίας και Πολιτισμού (*Encyclopaedic Prosopographical Lexicon of Byzantine History and Civilisation*), ed. A. G. C. Savvides (Metron/Iolcos Publications: Athens, 1996), volume 1, Ααμρ (Aamr) – Αλφιος (Alphios). 288pp. ISBN 960-426-028-6.

A first reaction to a work of this scope must be to admire the boldness and ambition of the editor and contributors. It is not possible in the space available to give more than a brief and highly selective indication of the contents of this first fascicle. It is not always clear by what scheme subjects of the same name have been ordered (see, for example, the 32 entries for men named Athanasios). Fuller explanation in the introduction would have helped here. The editor has also taken seriously the word 'encyclopaedic' in the work's title, for a fair proportion of the subjects hailed from beyond, sometimes well beyond, the frontiers of Byzantine power (at any time), and the work's starting date of 300 allows the inclusion of a number of late Roman figures. Straying across well-defined boundaries, however, raises the problem that the *Lexicon's* coverage will be incomplete and idiosyncratic. It came as a surprise to this reviewer to find among the subjects Alexander Nevski and St Thomas Aquinas (under Ακινάτης): will Abelard appear under 'Peter'? Why, while the Lombard kings are included, are there no entries for the dukes of Lombard Benevento (Aio, Adelchis), who were crucial to the empire's fortunes in Italy in the late-eighth and early-ninth centuries?

Coverage of other immediate neighbours of Byzantium is rather more complete. We find here all the relevant Ostrogothic and Visigothic rulers, and the caliphs of Baghdad. For the latter there is also a group article, an extremely useful device in publications such as this, and very welcome here, since they allow relationships within dynasties and families to be outlined clearly, and themes such as the heritability of offices to be highlighted. Among the other group articles in this fascicle, we find the Akrites (Ακρίτες), the several families named Angelos (Αγγελοι, Αγγέλων δυναστεία), and a brief discussion of the Holy Roman Empire (Αγία Ρωμαϊκή Αυτοκρατορία). The latter, however, demonstrates one of the drawbacks of a work of this scope: really significant subjects inevitably receive only cursory, often too cursory, treatment. Another great western scholar, Alcuin, is given only 178 (Greek) words here; his forthcoming appearance in the *New Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming) runs to 5046. The two works are intended to serve very different purposes, of course. But the devotion of almost half of the *Lexicon's* entry to Alcuin's connection with Byzantium – by any reckoning, a very peripheral aspect of his career – looks lopsided, and contrasts with the more balanced, though still very sketchy, treatment of Aquinas. The bibliographies of these articles are equally idiosyncratic: where are the works of Donald Bullough or John Marenbon in that for Alcuin? The small space given to these important figures indicates to whom this work is chiefly aimed: the Hellenophone student or interested reader. Non-Greek readers who have the skill necessary to read the book are likely already to know, or have access to, much more detailed information on most of these subjects. Nonetheless, the *Lexicon* is to be welcomed as certainly going a long way to meeting its stated aim of being comprehensive of Byzantine personalities.