

The Poet Dracontius and his Satisfactio: Latin Poetry as an Instrument of Political Propaganda in the Vandal Kingdom^{*}

Ivan NIKOLSKY^{**}

Abstract: *This article deals with the problem of representing the political ideology of the Vandal kingdom in North Africa (429-534) in the Latin literature of the second half of the 5th century, in particular, in the creative work of the Carthaginian poet Blossius Aemilius Dracontius. The panegyric that he wrote, known under the title Satisfactio, is a major source of studies on the political propaganda of that period, its content, origins and aims. The main conclusion is that, in shaping his own political doctrine Dracontius, while relying on the “Roman model” in building the image of an ideal ruler (Vandal king) after the fashion of the Late Antique tradition, did not copy it blindly; rather, he added to it some new elements not quite characteristic of it such as, in particular, references to Biblical personages—Old Testament kings, thus having become himself inscribed in that tradition as an independent unit and influenced its subsequent development. The article also offers a few remarks concerning the discussion about the time of appearance of this text, as well as another panegyric by Dracontius, which has not survived and which was dedicated to an “unknown ruler,” dominus ignotus, and their possible addressees.*

Keywords: *Dracontius, Vandals, Gunthamund, Thrasamund, Genseric, Huneric, Victor of Vita, Carthage, St. Ambrose of Milan*

^{*} This article is based on the conference paper, prepared for the XXVIII Readings in Memory of V. T. Pashuto (20-22 April, 2016, Moscow). I am indebted to my father Michael Nikolsky for his assistance in translating the article into English.

^{**} Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences (ivan.nikolsky@mail.ru).