

André Scrima, *L'accompagnamento spirituale. Il movimento del Roveto ardente e la rinascita esicasta in Romania* [The Spiritual Companionship. The Movement of the Burning Bush and the Hesychast Renewal in Romania], ed. and trans. Adalberto Mainardi, Spiritualità Orientale, Magnano, Edizioni Qiqajon 2018, 216 p., ISBN: 978-88-8227-514-3

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Both the Author (Andrei/André Scrima, 1925-2000) and the translator (Adalberto Mainardi, born in 1966) of this volume became in the last quarter of the century more and more known in the Italian cultural and religious landscape. Adalberto Mainardi, a scholar and a monk of the Bose Community, offered in the last years through authorship, translation and editing a series of books on contemporary Orthodox and ecumenical spirituality especially from the Slavic or Romanian milieus, making well-known Orthodox writings¹ and authors² available for interested readers in Italy. Altogether, the *Spiritualità Orientale* series of the Qiqajon Edition belonging to the Bose Monastic Community counts today no less than 112 titles. Among these, Mainardi twice proposed a Romanian author: André Scrima – an intellectual and monk, ecumenically renowned.

The present volume – *L'accompagnamento spirituale. Il movimento del Roveto ardente e la rinascita esicasta in Romania* – is a complete translation of the Romanian original edition – *Timpul rugului aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană* [Time of the Burning Bush. The Spiritual Master in the Eastern Tradition]³ – of which the first edition was published by the Humanitas Publishing House in 1996 while the Author was still alive. A

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¹ Titles such as: Adalberto Mainardi, ed., *Racconti di un pellegrino russo* [The Pilgrim's Tale], Spiritualità Orientale, (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2005); the *Opera Omnia* of Saint Silouan of Athos: Silvano dell'Athos, *Nostalgia di Dio* [Longing for God], ed. Adalberto Mainardi, Spiritualità Orientale (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2012); or the study on Saint Silouan: Adalberto Mainardi, *Silvano dell'Athos, testimone della Speranza* [Silouan of Athos, Witness of the Hope], Spiritualità Orientale (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2018); Adalberto Mainardi, *La paternità spirituale nel monachesimo russo* [Spiritual Fatherhood according to the Russian Monachism], Spiritualità Orientale (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2009) etc.

² Names such as: Antoine Arjakovsky, John Behr, Iosif L. Bosch, Andrej Desnickij, Porphyrios Giorgi, Marco Hamam, Vassilios Karaghiannis, Metodije Marković, Athanasios Papathanasiou, Symeon Paschalidis, Andrei Pleșu, Norman Russell etc.

³ André Scrima, *Timpul rugului aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*, introd. Andrei Pleșu, ed. Anca Manolescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, ¹1996 and ²2012).

second edition revised by Anca Manolescu came in 2012.⁴ Back in 2000, Adalberto Mainardi had already partially translated the Romanian first edition which was published under the title *Il padre spirituale* [*The Spiritual Father*]⁵, and which could easily be considered a first attempt to make Father André Scrima known in the Italian landscape of the Eastern Orthodox Spirituality Literature. As the Translator mentions in the *Introduction*, Father Scrima lived to see one of his books partially translated into Italian, appreciated it and even wrote a letter to thank Adalberto Mainardi for his effort (p. 5). André Scrima died just months after his name entered into the Italian religious literature. Since then, his figure has become known in the Italian religious landscape through Conferences⁶, studies⁷, interviews⁸ and academic theses or dissertations⁹. Hence, in 2018 a complete Italian edition was required and necessary.

The Italian edition published by Adalberto Mainardi changes the title a bit but maintains the two notions present in it: the Spiritual Father/Master/Companion and the Burning Bush Movement. For the first Italian edition of 2000 which contains just parts of the original volume, the Editor chose to

⁴ A review of the this edition has been already published. See: Nicolae Răzvan Stan, review of *Timpul rugului aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*, by André Scrima, *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 2013): 114–16.

⁵ André Scrima, *Il Padre Spirituale* (Magnano: Qiqajon, 2000).

⁶ See: *Andrei Scrima & il linguaggio teologico contemporaneo, 29-30 ottobre 2008, Roma* [*Andrei Scrima & the Contemporary Theological Language, 23rd-30 October 2008, Rome*] organized by Daniela Dumbravă at the Romanian Academy and the Pontifical Oriental Institute from Rome. Later, in 2019, a volume was published containing the lectures presented at the 2008 Conference. See: Daniela Dumbravă and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, eds., *André Scrima. Expérience spirituelle et langage théologique. Actes du colloque de Rome, 29-30 octobre 2008*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 306 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2019). Five of the texts in this volume are written in Italian. A review of this volume is to be published by Ionuț Bibliuță in this very issue of *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 13, no. 3 (December 2020): 540–44.

⁷ See: Anca Manolescu, “La pace cristiana come dialogo: padre Andrei Scrima” [*The Christian Peace as Dialogue: Father Andrei Scrima*], in *Beati i pacifici. Atti del XXII Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa, Bose 2-6 settembre 2014*, eds. Luigi D’Ayala Valva, Lorenzo Cremanschi and Adalberto Mainardi (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2015), 287–96. See also: Daniela Dumbravă, “Rivelazioni e Religioni secondo Andrei Scrima” [*Revelations and Religions according to Andrei Scrima*], in *La storia delle religioni e la sfida dei pluralismi*, eds. Sergio Botta, Mariana Ferrara and Alessandro Saggioro, Quaderno di Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni 18 (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2017), 568–80.

⁸ See: “La personalità espiritual de padre Andrei Scrima. Entrevista de Tudor Petcu a Teodor Baconschi [The Personality of Father Andrei Scrima. Interview of Tudor Petcu to Teodor Baconschi]”, http://www.ortodossiatorino.net/pdfexport.php?cat_id=30&id=5800, accessed December 20, 2020.

⁹ See: Mihai Marina, “La liturgia e la teologia liturgica nel pensiero teologico di Padre Andrei Scrima” [*The Liturgy and the Liturgical Theology according to Father Andrei Scrima*], (MA diss., Pontifical Oriental Institute, 2014).

translate the Romanian expression *Maestrul Spiritual* as *Il Padre Spirituale*, or *The Spiritual Father*, which is a specifically Christian and Orthodox expression. Almost 18 years later, the same Mainardi chose for the present volume a more inclusive solution from an ecumenical and even inter-religious point of view: *Spiritual Companionship*. Maybe the strict translation of *Maestrul Spiritual* as *Il Maestro Spirituale – The Spiritual Master* could have been an even more inclusive option considering the Latin origin of both Italian and Romanian languages and André Scrima's inter-religious openness, especially towards Oriental religions. Anyway, the Italian reader is invited through the title to discover who and how a Spiritual Companion should be and how the process of Spiritual Accompaniment is realized.

The figure of *Ioann il Forestiero – John the Foreigner* (mentioned already in the *Introduction* p. 7) appears from the very first pages as an authentic figure of a Spiritual Father and Master. The Italian edition presents in an inspired way at the beginning of the *Letter of Father John the Foreigner* a beautiful spiritual description of the Russian immigrant monk (p. 29). This description appears in the Romanian version only as a footnote, risking being ignored by the reader. The letter is translated very well, which is a true challenge since it is almost a poetic text. It appears to the Italian reader as a prayer, a spiritual testament pronounced from beyond this world. Some words – used as *false friends* – manage to express even more authentically the meaning intended by Father John than in the Romanian version itself. For example, the word *starec* (p. 30, underlined in Italian edition) appears in the Romanian version as *stareț*. The two words are just partially synonyms because *stareț* in Romanian means *Abbot/Prior of a monastery*, meanwhile in some western languages, Italian included, *starec* borrowed its Slavic understanding, that of *Spiritual Father and Master*. In the letter, Father John, a Russian native, intended to use the word according to its Slavic understanding, since he was never a Superior of any monastery.

The first chapter of the volume *Incontri nella cerchia di un pellegrino forestiero [Encounters around a Foreign Pilgrim]*¹⁰ presents an exegesis of this letter performed by Father Scrima, a true *Hermeneutic Reading of the Letter*. Even if the language used by Scrima is not a poetic one anymore, the translation of this chapter remained a challenge. The Author discusses a number of theological issues, presenting them in a philokalic dimension and using vocabulary absolutely normal for a language shaped by the Orthodox spirituality but not so easy to translate in western languages. When the Translator is put again in front of a choice of translation, he uses *Padre spirituale* –

¹⁰ English translation of the chapter titles according to the English review of the 2012 Romanian edition: Stan, Review, 114.

Spiritual Father to express and explain the word *starec* and notion of *Spiritual Guidance*. But when the Author quotes Buddhist notions, the Translator finally uses *Maestro Spirituale* (p. 45). Maybe the word *Maestro* – *Master* could sound a bit non-Christian, but this was Father André Scrima, an Orthodox monk, able to link the philokalic spirituality with Buddhist and Sufist notions. The same situation is to be found in the title of the third chapter entitled in the Romanian original as *Maestru și discipol în Răsăritul creștin* [*Master and Disciple Christian East*] and translated by Mainardi as *La tradizione del Padre Spirituale nella Chiesa d'Oriente* [*The Tradition of the Spiritual Father in the Oriental/Eastern Church*]. It is impossible not to observe once more that the Translator avoids a translation that the common Latin heritage of the Italian and Romanian languages would have allowed: *Maestro e discepolo nella Chiesa d'Oriente*. Could have this sounded too non-Christian for the Translator, since the Author quotes *Dharma* spirituality when developing the idea of the *Spiritual Master*? It is interesting as well to see in this chapter that Mainardi chose also to *internationalize* very local figures of the Romanian Orthodox spirituality such as *Vasile* from *Poiana Mărului* whose name is Italianized as *Basilio di Poiana Mărului* (p. 45).

The present Italian translation is enriched with a dense *Prefazione all'edizione italiana* (p. 5-11) by Adalberto Mainardi himself. A short but interesting description of the life and personality of André Scrima is to be found there along with a brief presentation of the Burning Bush movement. The Italian reader is shortly introduced to important figures of Romanian Orthodox Spirituality such as Benedict Ghiuș (p. 5), Dumitru Stăniloae (p. 6), Sandu Tudor (p. 8) well-known local saints Antim Ivireanul (p. 8) and Paisij Velicicocskij (p. 8, Romanians consider this figure as very local). Editors and researchers of Scrima's bibliography are also briefly mentioned: Anca Vasiliu, Bodgan Tătaru-Cazaban and “most of all Andrei Pleșu and Anca Manolescu” (p. 9). All this information is necessary for an unacquainted reader in order to build for him or herself an initial image of André Scrima, his life and bibliography. This image gained is deepened in the second part of the volume, dedicated to the question of the *Burning Bush* movement. This part has the value of a true scientific study for the Italian public, since there is very little information elsewhere available on this impressive movement from the recent history of the Romanian Orthodox Church. As far as we know, there are no complex studies on this issue in Italian¹¹. Translated

¹¹ An Onlus Association organized in February 2018 *Day of Study* on the *Daniil Sandu Tudor and the Burning Bush Hesychast Movement* at the Pontifical Antonian University in Rome. Adalberto Mainardi delivered a lecture in Italian entitled: “Preghiera del cuore e ricerca di Dio nell'esperienza del Roveto Ardente” [*The Prayer of the Heart and the Searching of God*]

accurately and not interpreted, the title of the chapter is *Il Tempo del Roveto Ardente: il Gruppo dell'Antim*. In this chapter "Father Scrima describes events in detail as one who was a member of the Burning Bush and took part actively in its actions"¹².

The Italian edition has a more developed Index (p. 215) including the titles of the sub-chapters as well which offers the possibility of finding more easily a specific part, but also the possibility of having an image about the themes to be found in the volume even before reading it completely.

In 2008, when advertising the Conference held in Rome on *André Scrima and the Theological Language*, Daniela Dumbravă announced that one of this Conference's objectives was to promote the translation in Italian of Father Scrima's writings. A decade later, Adalberto Mainardi has entirely translated and edited one of André Scrima main writings. The studies and events of the last two decades, many of which are mentioned here, show that the interest in the personality and thinking of Andrei Scrima has grown significantly in the Italian area. Translations of his other writings are greatly missed and necessary. Hopefully the series *Spiritualità Orientale* of the Qiqajon Editions will soon be enriched with other titles belonging to André Scrima.

in the Burning Bush Movement Experience]. Until now, the lectures delivered have not been published, even though some of them are available in an audio format on Internet.

¹² Stan, Review, 115.