

Potamius of Lisbon, “De Martyrio Isaiae Prophetæ” Again¹

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Recently an effort has been made to temper the wholesale condemnation of the literary style of Potamius of Lisbon, who is the earliest author of Christian prose to survive from the Iberian peninsula². The passage in question, which comes from the opening sentence of his *De martyrio Isaiae prophetæ*, reads as follows: *quasi parum fuerit si immanitate lymphatica martyrem dei acuto ense transfoderet, aut ipsa lamina insontis viri per iugerum fidiculae saevientis per costas stridente ictu sulcaret*³. Potamius’ latest editor and commentator repeats the view expressed in his dissertation that here *fidiculae* should be taken with *iugerum* to produce a collocation to which he gives the highly improbable rendering “an extremely long line of iron teeth”⁴; it has however been argued elsewhere by the present writer that *iugerum*

1 Works are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*², Leipzig 1990.

2 Cf. the present writer, “Potamius of Lisbon, *De martyrio Isaiae prophetæ* 1: *Per iugerum fidiculae*”, *Euphrosyne* n.s. 28 (2000) 369-73, together with the approbatory comments on this article by A.A. Nascimento, *ibid.* 445 and *ibid.* n.s. 29 (2001) 426-7.

3 Text of A.C. VEGA, *Opuscula omnia Potamii Episcopi Olisiponensis*, Escorial (Script. Ecclesiast. Hispano-Lat. Vet. et Med. Aevi 2) 1934, 35.

4 M. CONTI, *The Life and Works of Potamius of Lisbon*, Steenbrugge (Instr. Patr. 32) 1998, 77, reproducing the translation in *id.*, *Potamii Olisiponensis opuscula omnia: Text*,