SITA STECKEL, NIELS GAUL AND MICHAEL GRÜNBART (EDS), *NETWORKS OF LEARNING. PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOLARS IN BYZANTINE EAST AND LATIN WEST, C. 1000-1200*, (BYZANTINISTISCHE STUDIEN UND TEXTE, 6), MÜNSTER–HAMBURG–BERLIN–LONDON: LIT, 2014, XXXVI + 352 PP., ISBN 9783643904577

LOURDES BONHOME PULIDO
UNIVERSITY OF CÓRDOBA

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The volume edited by Sita Steckel, Niels Gaul and Michael Grünbart includes twelve studies divided in three groups introducing recent research on the relationship between Byzantine and Western Latin education from the eleventh to the twelfth centuries.

In the Prologue ('Towards a Connected History of Learning in Byzantium and the Latin West', pp. IX–XXXV), Steckel not only introduces specific information on the essays included in the volume but also presents their historical and cultural context. She offers a brief overview of the nature of learning from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries and its historical impact, explaining some relevant changes in Medieval learning structures from the eleventh century onward. Apparently, those changes were produced by the influence of the Latin model of learning over Byzantium, an impact that affected the Byzantine society in several fields. On the one hand, it helped the Byzantines in developing a new conception of education, borrowing subjects from the Latin learning system; on the other hand, it helped to solve the difficulties arising while trying to emulate that system. If we should summarize those difficulties, it would be necessary to make reference to the relative ignorance that Byzantines manifested on certain topics, their dependency on translations of reference works, the need of their adaptation to new educational concepts and, therefore, to the outcomes of the system.

The chapters covered under 'Social Ties and Concepts of Interaction' combine analyses on topics related to learning: certain tools involved in the educational process, the role played by teachers and the influence of social relationships—a context of relations that facilitated bonds of friendship, promoting the social projection of the students.

In his 'Teachers and Textbooks in Byzantium, Ninth to Eleventh Centuries' (pp. 3–16), Athanasios Markopoulos introduces a brief outline of the Byzantine conception of learning, alluding to the difficulties when trying to achieve a

precise definition of the concept, due to the eclectic nature of the Byzantine society, strongly influenced both by the past and by its connections with neighbouring territories. In the second section of his essay, Markopoulos focuses on the Byzantine schools and, more precisely, on the role of teachers as agents of the transmission of knowledge. The author explains how relevant Byzantine teachers were for the adaptation of a curriculum based on the study of the liberal arts (*trivium* and *quadrivium*). In this context, abundant learning materials elaborated by Byzantine teachers emerged from their religious conceptions and from the adaptation of the liberal arts into Byzantium. Yet, although from the described scenario we would have expected a handling of the traditional curriculum (*trivium* and *quadrivium*) in a balanced condition, Markopoulus points to the persistence of both programs as not being particularly modified—as it came about after the twelfth-century Renaissance in the Latin West due to the transfer of knowledge process. Notwithstanding, it is true that teaching practices combined some already consolidated techniques, for instance, schedography and the production of didactic materials.

Michael Grünbart's chapter on 'Padeia Connects: The Interaction between Teachers and Pupils in Twelfth Century Byzantium' (pp. 17–32), is a study on the different purposes of education, taking into account the disparity between social classes in Byzantium. The first function of education concerns training, a process available to a limited number of citizens, which allowed those who could afford a teacher to have access to different levels of governmental institutions. The second function refers to education as *paideia*, and it was also limited to the select group of citizens who could afford it. Although it seems that the relationship between students and teachers was much closer in the sense alluded to by the first function, as far as the second function is concerned teachers transmitted their knowledge to their pupils whilst taking care of their well-being; in the case of poets or writers, for instance, the teacher used to become their patron.

Petra Aigner's 'Poetry and Networking in High Medieval France (*c.* 1100): Baudri de Bourgueil and His Scholarly Contacts' (pp. 33–56) focuses on the relevance that French Medieval poetry played as a 'renaissance' in the Middle Ages. Aigner explores a series of lesser-known authors, some of them clergymen who were to become poetry masters. The writings of these clergymen were surprisingly connected with the pagan world and its authors. Those clergymen constituted a group of poets trained in the cathedral or monastery libraries, that they helped to create or to preserve. Aiming to highlight the importance of their works, Aigner gives an account of the bibliography on several of those authors. In particular, she focuses on the extant bibliography on Baudri of Bourgueil (born 1046), and links him with coetaneous authors like Marbod of Rennes or Godofredus of Reims.

In her 'Ceremonies and Performances of Byzantine Friendship: Gift-Giving Between High-Level Rhetoric and Everyday Criticism' (pp. 57–66), Foteini Kolovou analyses friendship in Byzantium (–*philía*) and its relationship with the Christian notion of love (*agápe*). Kolovou collects an epistolary corpus which allows her to approach the study of friendship from a new perspective in the context of Byzantine studies. In her research, the author focuses on two disciplinary fields: critical and literary studies, as well as their historical and anthropological contexts, highlighting a conception of friendship in connection with some related peculiarities as humour, irony or gratitude.

The first group of essays concludes with Florian Hartmann's 'Eloquence and Friendship. Letter-Writing Manuals and the Importance of Being Somebody's Friend' (pp. 67–88). Hartmann analyses the relevance of friendship from an instrumental point of view—for instance, its importance in order to reach a good social position that could grant access to education, opening new social possibilities and a closer connection with the establishment. Hartmann studies specific learning handbooks on the art of letter writing, more precisely, those appearing in Italy from the twelfth-century Renaissance onward. In this sense, he also examines the existence of this kind of handbook from Antiquity to the tenth century, in order to draw attention to some changes occurred during the Middle Ages. The main adaptations were related to the training process available in Italy during this period and to its general neglect in monasteries. Therefore, it will be in the Late Middle Age that education will be available to a higher number of citizens—in Italy there will appear didactic handbooks on letter writing written by monks and influenced by monastic life and religious issues. The epistolary production was more relevant in administration; hence, Hartmann stresses the differences between both kinds of missives concerning their contents, style and grammar.

The second group of articles ('Authority and Identity') opens with Barbara Costrini's 'Catechetical Teaching in Eleventh-Century Constantinople: the Case of Paul of Evergetis and Vaticanus Graecus 752' (pp. 89–106). Costrini highlights the importance of achieving more documentary information concerning the educational structure and learning in the eleventh century, since the shortage of edited sources reduces our knowledge of the topic. In spite of this general lack of information, as Costrini writes: 'recent research on the status of teachers and disciples has emphasized the continuity of Christian tradition with late antique philosophical practice' (p. 89). The role of the *abbas*—both in monasteries and in nomad communities of the desert—involved producing a series of documents that are extremely precious for an indirect study on the status of learning. A prime example is the well-known *Apophthegmata.* Costrini then takes two examples related to learning from an ecclesiastical point of view: a work of catechesis by the founder of the monastery of Theotokos Evergetis, and the

manuscript Vaticanus Graecus 752 (dated 1059). Both sources allow her to show the relevance of learning in Byzantium from this perspective.

The chapter by Dirk Krausmüller—'Establishing Authority in Eleventh-Century Constantinople: Inspiration and Learning in the Writings of the Monks Niketas Stethatos' (pp. 107–124)—focuses on the monk Stethatos (community of Stoudios). The study has a twofold aim: on the one hand, it describes the role of Stethatos within the religious context of eleventh-century Constantinople; on the other hand, it displays the influence exerted by Stethatos in the religious sphere when he became a recognised authority. Focusing on this monk, Krausmüller has introduced an almost unknown character of Byzantium liturgical history. His study reveals the relevance of Stethatos due to the strong opposition that he exerted to the religious establishment of his age. Indeed, he promoted a new role for monks to play in the liturgical life and in canonical law. Stethatos wrote five treatises *adversus* Armenians where he defended a single and a universal Church. As Krausmüller declares, Niketas 'was without doubt influenced by his mentor Symeon the New Theologian' (p. 112), by the *chartophylaxes* as well as the *oikoumenikos didaskalos* of his time. For this reason Niketas's thought can be considered authentic and unusual.

The essay by Matthias Heiduk—'Revealing Wisdom's Underwear. The Prestige of Hermetic Knowledge and Occult Sciences Among Scholars Before 1200' (pp. 125–146)—starts with Marsilio Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (1463). The aim of his paper is to examine the influence of Hermetic learning throughout the Middle Ages. As Heiduk confirms, 'during the Middle Ages references to Hermetic teachings substantiated a myth of the Trismegistos as originator and teacher of ancient secret knowledge' (p. 126). Heiduk selects three instances where the influence of Trismegistos in learning is clear. The first corresponds to the Christian version of Trismegistos based on the invented travel of John Mandeville to Constantinople, where he became aware of a tale on the discovery of a tomb in Hagia Sophia of a philosopher named Hermes or Hermogenes. Heiduk holds that the discovery of this tomb is evidence of the relevance of Trismegistos before and after the birth of Christ. He bases his hypothesis on the inscription discovered in the tomb written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin on a golden plate—which is characteristic of the Hermetic tradition. For Heiduk there is no doubt that Hermes Trismegistos influenced the history of Christianity, as is witnessed by the works of some Church Fathers, such as Lactantius (d. 325), in whose work we can find traces of Hermetic texts. The second is a summary of treatises from the twelfth century, including passages of the works by Peter Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor, Robert of Melun, Hermann of Carinthia and Bernardus Silvestris, where we can find different Latin versions of Asclepius. The third includes some writings related to cosmogony, alchemy and astrology from al-Andalus. According to Heiduk, translations of these texts are

evidence of the relevance of Hermeticism in Iberian society during the twelfth century, as well as of the transfer of knowledge between Muslims and Christians. Among other authors, Heiduk focuses on Gerard of Cremona and John of Seville as crucial transmitters of ideas in this age.

In 'Wit and Irony—Rhetorical Strategies and their performance in political and learned communication in England (1066-1259)' (pp. 147–159) Katrin Beyer studies how relevant humor was for the English society between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. Beyer focuses on rhetoric of humor as central elements of king's discourses addressed to clergy and nobles. She opens her study considering the learning context of rhetoric with concepts such as *facetia* and irony, stressing the importance of *facetia* (wit) as a virtue of the ruler. This idea can be found in the works of William of Malmesbury where he explains the importance of this virtue among kings and rulers. Moreover, Beyer describes the *facetiae* as a kind of virtue among people who acknowledged it as evidence of a good reputation. Nevertheless, the author concludes, rhetoric and irony were more exercised in the context of politics than in social life.

In her 'The Use of Emotions in the North-European School Milieus, c. 1000-1200' (pp. 162–181) Mia Münster-Swendsen analyses the different emotions which, due to the influence of Stoicism, entered into Christianity. Among these emotions she analyses *ataraxia* and *apatheia*, explaining how the signs of personal emotions whether in public or privately were negatively perceived—students were trained to hide their emotions even in private.

Finally, the third part of the volume ('Conclusions') opens with Sita Steckel's study 'Networks of learning in Byzantine East and Latin West: Methodological considerations and starting points for further work' (pp. 185–233). Steckel reviews the current conditions of research on learning in Byzantium and in the Latin West, as well as the studies on the relationship between them. Thus, she provides both an updated analysis of the main issues on this topic and a very clear presentation of the spirit of the volume.

Niels Gaul's 'Rising Elites and Institutionalization—*Ēthos/Mores*—"Debts" and Drafts. Three Concluding Steps Towards Comparing Networks of Learning in Byzantium and the 'Latin' West, c. 1000-1200' (pp. 235–280) is the second conclusive paper within the third part of the volume. It aims to show the importance of a social elite that during the tenth century became more interested in learning. This elite promoted different changes in the model of learning, and consequently a change also in the perception or application of the Classical concepts of *ēthos* and *mores*. Gaul's study also describes the learning scheme of this period of change, when the educational system was to be adapted to the needs of those students whose careers were not oriented to monastic life. For Gaul, the transfer of ideas related to learning between Byzantium and the

Latin West was very important, and although these two worlds grew separately, it seems impossible to understand them disjunctively.

The volume includes an extended and updated bibliography (pp. 283–352), also including a section on the history and context of learning in Byzantium and in the Latin West from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.

Starting from different perspectives, *Networks of Learning* is altogether a collection of innovative essays carefully selected by the three editors, on the relationships between 'Scholars in Byzantine East and Latin West, c. 1000-1200'. It is fair to congratulate the authors for their stimulating contributions and the editors for the final outcome.