

Conference Report

Evina Steinova, Huygens ING, The Netherlands

CONFERENCE TITLE: TEXTS AND IDENTITIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES XVII

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The Text and Identities group met for the first time in 1997 in order to promote cooperation between five centres of the study of the early Middle Ages - the Universities of Vienna, Cambridge, Leeds, Paris, and Utrecht. Twice annually these five universities bring young researchers together to share new ideas, once in the winter season for a PhD conference at one of the universities, and once in the summer season at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds.

This year, seventeen PhD and research Masters students gathered in Paris to discuss their research into early medieval texts and material culture. The papers presented covered the period from the sixth to the tenth centuries and topics as varied as the trading outposts in the Scandinavian world (Lucie Malbos, Paris) and the acquisition of relics from Muslim Spain (Sam Ottewill-Soulsby, Cambridge). The PhD conference was divided into six strands.

THE FATHERS

Four papers were presented in the strand concerned with the great figures of the Late Antiquity and

the early Middle Ages.

Eleni Leontidou (Cambridge) discussed how the treatises written by St. Cyprian in the fourth century against the Donatists, religious separatists in North Africa, were used by the sixth-century popes to quell the separatist tendencies in the Roman Church of their own time.

Zachary Guiliano (Cambridge) talked about the rapid dissemination of the *Homiliary* of Paul the Deacon, a collection of sermons which was compiled in the late-eighth century and for which we have over 100 witnesses from the ninth and the tenth centuries alone. Although it was produced on the order of Charlemagne, it could not be produced at a single place, but rather had to make use of information networks in the empire that allowed the major intellectual centres to acquire, copy and share the new text.

Evina Steinová (Utrecht) showed how texts could be ‘censored’ by adding specific symbols into their margins. Rather than being attacked directly, texts disseminating dangerous ideas could be debased indirectly in this manner.

The presentation of **Warren Pezé** (Paris) focused on the unique practice of annotating manuscripts by Ratramnus of Corbie (d. 870), a Frankish theologian who is associated with compiling several compendia with theological content. Many of the manuscripts used by Ratramnus for making these compendia have been identified thanks to particular annotations left in the margins by the circle of Ratramnus’ aides. Pezé was able to identify additional manuscript used in this manner and add to our knowledge of Ratramnus’ intellectual habits.

THE VERY EARLY MIDDLE AGES; THE BORDERS

Otávio Luiz Vieira Pinto (Leeds) discussed the role of Attila the Hun in the writings of Cassiodorus and Jordanes. He showed that both sixth-century authors depicted the Huns as the Others, in opposition to the Ostrogoths, in order to strengthen the self-perception of the latter and to make them look more Roman. This despite the fact that Goths were among the allies of Attila and that one document even calls Attila, ‘the king of Goths’.

N. Kivilcim Yavuz (Leeds) pointed out the changing fortunes of the Trojan narrative, particularly in the form of *De excidio Troiae* of Dares the Phrygian, throughout its history. Dares’ narrative came into being as a novel-like first-person retelling of Homer’s epic in Antiquity. However, the early medieval readers considered it a piece of historiography; for example, it was incorporated into the *Liber historiae Francorum*.

Ingrid Rembold (Cambridge) discussed the effect of political division on ecclesiastical structures and jurisdiction in the early medieval Carolingian realm. She showed that, at least in some cases, the early medieval archbishoprics were more enduring as building blocks than other political structures.

Lucie Malbos (Paris) examined the references to *prefecti*, *procuratores* and *exatores* in the texts pertaining to emporia in the early medieval Scandinavian world. While it has been assumed that these words referred to royal agents and tax collectors present at the emporia, Malbos showed that, at least in some areas, the trading outposts were independent and not founded by the king. Thus, the *prefecti* played likely distinct roles in certain settings, such as in Scandinavia, even though the same term could be applied to them.

TEXTS, IDENTITIES AND REAL LIFE; CHARTERS

The presentation of **Salvatore Liccardo** (Vienna) dealt with the emergence of ethnonyms in the Early Middle Ages. He showed how ethnonyms helped medieval thinkers to order and categorize the world, and to combine Biblical and Classical ideas with their own notions of the *gentes*.

Adrien Bayard (Paris) discussed the archaeological evidence for the continuity of military settlement in Aquitaine during the eighth and the ninth centuries. He examined how the local elites responsible for the maintenance of the strongholds in the area displayed their loyalty to the kings, but also their regional identity by participating in the local defence lines in times of crisis.

The presentation of **Hope Williard** (Leeds) examined the concept of friendship in Merovingian Gaul by looking at the vocabulary used by Venantius Fortunatus.

Claire de Cazanova (Paris) treated the redaction of the Passau cartulary, which took place during almost hundred years, between the beginning of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century.

Fraser McNair (Cambridge) examined the development of the princely charter in France in the second half of the ninth and the first half of the tenth century. He concluded that the nobility began to employ royal vocabulary in these charters once it began to fill the regional power vacuum created by weakening royal authority.

RELIGION IN EARLY MEDIEVAL NARRATIVES

Philipp Dörler (Vienna) introduced his project in which he planned to examine systematically the use of the Bible in medieval historiographical texts. His hope is to show what different uses Bible

had in shaping the perception of history, the community and identity.

Anya Sharma (Vienna) examined the differentiation between the secular and the profane in the universal history of archbishop Ado of Vienne (d. 875).

Sam Ottewil-Soulsby (Cambridge) discussed the *translatio* of relics from the Muslim Spain to the Carolingian Empire in the ninth century. By examining the relevant narratives he wished to throw more light on the relationship between the Carolingians and their Muslim neighbours.

Finally, **Michael Burrows** (Leeds) analysed an episode from the *Decem Libri Historiarum* of Gregory of Tours concerned with the pseudo-Christ of Bourges. He showed that this episode reflected the inter-city politics of Merovingian Gaul, specifically the enmity between the cities of Tours and Bourges, which was framed, in this episode, in terms of religion.

SUMMARY

Despite the lack of a unifying theme for the conference, other than the broad notions outlined by the larger *Texts and Identities* intellectual project, some topics were recurrent in the talks. Among them were the focus on the materiality of the manuscript and the archaeological evidence and a strong awareness of narratives as means for the construction of identities and standpoints. In this respect, the participants of Texts and Identities 2013 conference followed in trails of their predecessors from previous years.