

logos & littera

Issue 2 / 2015



Editor-in-chief Neda Andrić

Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches to Text

Institute of Foreign Languages
University of Montenegro

LOGOS ET LITTERA

Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches to Text

ISSN: 2336-9884

Issue 2

2015

Podgorica, Montenegro

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Reviewed by: Georgios Alexandropoulos

ANTHONY KALDELLIS, *ETHNOGRAPHY AFTER ANTIQUITY: FOREIGN LANDS AND PEOPLES IN BYZANTINE LITERATURE. EMPIRE AND AFTER.* PHILADELPHIA: UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 2013

The main purpose of this book is to explain why the Greek byzantine literature has abandoned the classical genre of ethnography after the seventh century introducing this issue into the general frame of the ethnographical discourse evolution in Greek literature until the 1360s. I will comment on each chapter in turn and conclude with general comments about the book as a whole.

The book is organized in six chapters including the epilogue as follows. The first chapter offers a comprehensive introduction to the topic; Kaldellis is occupied with ethnographies contained in the works of late Roman authors, such as Priscus and Procopius. In the second chapter, the author focuses on the decline of the ethnographic genre after the seventh century, presenting the examples of Theophanes (9th century) and Zonaras (12th century) who decided to omit his ethnographic excursuses on Procopius' stories.

In the following third chapter Kaldellis makes an attempt to explain the reason for this neglect. He tries to explain this neglect presenting some elements that certify his syllogism. For the author there is 'no reason to expect any ethnography along classical lines' (45) in authors such as Theophanes, Genesius and Leo the Deacon. Kaldellis argues that ethnographies are also absent in the works of Attaliates, Choniates and Psellos; he states that Choniates and Psellos were not imitating Herodotus or Thucydides, and what their writings constituted some type of "internal ethnography," (52). Another factor, in Kaldellis'

argumentative view, that led to the decline of the ancient ethnography was also the change of the social conditions, such as the empowerment of the Christianity¹ around the world, the rise of the Caliphate and the redefinition of power in the Mediterranean world.

Then, the author continues his study and attempts to define the ethnographic genres of the Middle Byzantine Period. For this reason, he deals with the *Taktika* of Leo VI and *De Administrando Imperio* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Kaldellis believes that *De Administrando Imperio* contains less ethnographic elements than what has been assumed by scholars and he states that it has a lot of common points with the Byzantine genre of *origo gentis (origines)*. In addition, the author describes the genre of narratives and briefings, whose traces have survived in Anna Comnena and John Scylitzes.

Chapter five provides us with information on the Palaiologan period. He focuses on travel literature, the Mongols, Gregory Palamas, and, finally, the Latins. As regards travel literature, he presents elements such as Nicephorus Gregoras' voyage to the Serbs and Andreas Libadenus' journey to Egypt.

In the epilogue, Kaldellis provides some information on Byzantine ethnography after the 1360s; he especially reports to the ethnography of the Ottomans by Laonikos Chalkokondyles.

In overall, the book is very accessible and I consider it a must-read. The book is certainly a useful source for students and scholars alike who are interested in the Byzantine literature and especially in the issues of identity and ethnicity². I believe that this book will be useful in a wide range of courses. The general presentation of the book is satisfactory and the author did a very good job in harmonizing the presentation of the different elements for the justification of his view.

¹ For more details about the foundations of Christianity see Cantor (1993), Johnson (1976). For the contradiction between Christianity and other religions see Lucas (1910), Momigliano (1963).

² For more details about the issue of identity and ethnicity in Byzantine literature, see Baldson (1979), Gruen (2010), Maas (2012), Walter (1997) and Parker (2008). For the issue of ethnicity in the Romans see de Lee (1993).

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