

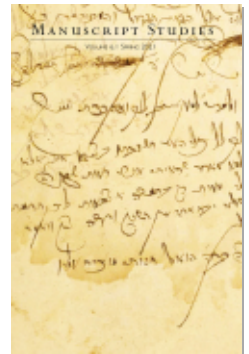


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Medicine at Monte Cassino: Constantine the African and the Oldest Manuscript of His Pantegni by Erik Kwakkel and Francis Newton (review)

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Erik Kwakkel and Francis Newton. *Medicine at Monte Cassino: Constantine the African and the Oldest Manuscript of His Pantegni*. With introduction by Eliza Glaze. Speculum Sanitatis 1. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019. xxxvi + 255 pp. 46 b/w ill. + 16 color ill. €80. ISBN 978-2-503-57921-4.

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THIS GROUNDBREAKING STUDY OF a single manuscript, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 73 J 6, its production, use, and significance, has important implications not only for our understanding of a pivotal moment in the transfer of Arabic medical scholarship to the Latin west, but also for the study of knowledge production and transfer in late eleventh-century Montecassino, and for research into southern Italian book production and monastic scribal culture in general.

The manuscript in question, copied for the most part in Caroline minuscule, but here identified for the first time as a product of the southern Italian abbey “between 1077 and 1086” (p. xxix), contains the earliest surviving copy of the theoretical part of the *Pantegni*, Constantine the African’s Latin translation and adaptation of the medical encyclopaedia *Kāmil al-ṣinā’a al-ṭibbīya* (The Complete Book of the Medical Art), by the renowned tenth-century Persian physician ‘Alī ibn al- ‘Abbās al-Mağūsī (d. between 982 and 984).

It is the book’s central and remarkable contention not only that the Hague manuscript was produced in the famous North African scholar’s own lifetime (Constantine died by 1098/99), but that the manuscript’s material features bear witness to a process of textual production and revision by a team of scribes who worked in close collaboration with Constantine himself at the abbey where he was received as a monk (ca. 1077). The manuscript is further interpreted as constituting new evidence of educational practice at the Abbey at a high point of its cultural and ecclesio-political sway.

Eliza Glaze’s lucid introduction to the volume delineates the contexts in which contemporary scholarship situates Constantine’s work. It orients the

reader to the conflicting sources for the author's biography (helpfully edited and translated in Appendix B), and traces networks, patronage, and practices of medical learning in three contexts: North Africa, where Constantine was born and received his education; the changing political landscape of mid-eleventh-century southern Italy and Salerno; and the Abbey of Montecassino under its famed bibliophile abbot, Desiderius (1058–1087). By these means, readers who will be interested in this volume from diverse disciplinary perspectives are neatly introduced to the contexts of the manuscript's production, and the pertinent scholarship of these dynamic fields.

The central section of the book examines the manuscript, its production, and its functions in detail. Chapter 1 identifies the principal scribe, traces his hand in contemporary manuscripts of a practical or educational nature, and considers the function and status of Caroline at the southern Italian abbey, otherwise known for its highly developed form of Beneventan minuscule. In Chapter 2, the authors describe the production of the manuscript, from its design and the first scribal activity, through omissions, erasures, and "suppletions," to twelfth- and thirteenth-century additions in France, and the book's modern provenance (Appendix A provides a full codicological description). Chapter 3 analyzes the work of the team of scholarscribes who, the authors innovatively and convincingly argue, worked as a "team" in Constantine's "translation kitchen" (p. 92). Chapter 4 considers the (intended) educational use of the book product, which is inferred not only from the type of text and script, but significantly from the material evidence of the manuscript's unusually narrow folio width in proportion to folio height. The final chapter makes explicit the implications of the preceding material analysis for our understanding of how translation processes worked in practice, for our knowledge of medical education in a broader context of schooling in the *artes* at Montecassino, and for the dating, location, organization, and funding of Constantine's entire ambitious and influential translation project. In addition to codicological and biographical material (Appendices A, B, and D), the appendices include the Latin text and English translation of Constantine's Prologue to the *Pantegni* (C); a list of manuscripts produced prior to 1200 with folio proportions (i.e., width/height) of less than 0.60 (E); and a handy summary of the four principal

scribes discussed in the work and the manuscripts for which, it is argued, they are responsible (F).

It is refreshing and, frankly, inspiring, to read a work so replete with new and significant identifications, and so incisive in their interpretation. The discoveries are too many to enumerate, and go far beyond the already remarkable identification of the manuscript as a Cassinese product in Constantine's lifetime. Here only a few of the many important findings can be listed. A team of scribes responsible for manuscripts of "scholarly use" in the Cassinese scriptorium is identified for the first time (pp. 55–58). A careful analysis of both the text and the script of the prologue in the manuscript leads to: (1) the identification of the hand of the Beneventan scribe responsible for the portions copied in red ink; (2) the identification of the monk Atto, who traveled as chaplain in the retinue of Empress Agnes, as the author responsible for providing rhetorical burnish to the translation in these red-ink additions; (3) the identification of Atto as one and the same as the monk Theodemar, also identified in contemporary sources as an imperial chaplain closely connected with medicine; and (4) the convincing argument that the text of Constantine's prologue in the later *Pantegni* manuscript, Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Amplon. 4° 184 (dated 1147), preserves an earlier version of the text, probably produced while the translator was still based in Salerno, before final revisions at Montecassino.

The volume draws on and combines the authors' considerable and distinct areas of expertise. Newton's magisterial work on the scriptorium and library of Montecassino, 1058–1105, is well known to manuscript scholars and intellectual historians of the period; he is also here building on and extending his earlier scholarship on education and the *artes* at the abbey, the use of Caroline minuscule in the Beneventan Zone, and on Arabic medicine in southern Italy. Kwakkel's quantitative approach to the description and dating of script and codicological changes in the twelfth century, which has already borne fruit in numerous innovative publications, crucially lies behind the re-dating of the Caroline script of the Hague manuscript, and contributes a rich and broad discussion of the occurrence and function(s) of manuscripts with narrow folio proportions. The latter, which can almost be read as an excursus, draws on and makes accessible Kwakkel's earlier work on the subject published in Dutch, and fruitfully applies these findings to

the interpretation of the (intended) function of the manuscript in question. The scholarly collaboration is thus a worthy and much-anticipated fruit of the research set in motion by the National Humanities Centre symposium “Excavating Medicine in the Digital Age” (2010), organized by Monica Green and Eliza Glaze, to which the authors contributed.

The volume is generously supplied with tables and photographs, and includes sixteen high-quality color plates. It is perhaps in the use of visual representation to isolate and describe features of the scripts, however, that lies one of the few weaknesses of the book. The principal scribe of the Hague manuscript is identified with the monk and priest named Geraldus, who signed in Caroline script a Cassinese charter dated June 1061, preserved at Montecassino. The accompanying black-and-white photograph (fig. 1.8) presents the single line of Geraldus’s documentary script in dimensions that make it hard, for this reviewer at least, to determine precisely what are the common distinguishing features that cause the authors to identify this hand with the book hand found in the Hague manuscript. A detailed written explication identifying the features common to the two witnesses is lacking. Magnified photographic comparison of individual letterforms or features may also have fruitfully supported and clarified the authors’ important palaeographical argumentation that identifies the scattered products of the “team.” Beneventan traces in the minuscule employed by the team of Caroline scribes are referred to, and visual evidence of the use of the typical Beneventan *r-i* ligature is provided (e.g., fig. 1.9). A detailed analysis of the presence or absence of other characteristically Beneventan traces in punctuation, abbreviations, ligatures, or letterforms, or of shared Cassinese codicological features, would have further undergirded the authors’ arguments and enriched the reader’s understanding of patterns of Beneventan influence on the Caroline scribes’ practices.

Lastly, the survey of evidence of early manuscripts having narrow folio dimensions in proportion to height leads to insightful inferences regarding the relationship between folio proportion and a variety of intended uses. These conclusions belie, however, the usefulness of the term chosen to label the feature: “holsterbooks” (chapter 4). This English term has been employed in manuscript studies to describe narrow ledger manuscripts and, within inverted commas, to label a broader group of manuscripts with narrow

folio proportions, by Pamela Robinson, whom the authors cite, and by others. The label unfortunately obscures more than it reveals. It implies that there is here a single “type” of book instead of a common material feature, and labels this type by referring to an inferred vehicle of transportation. The authors’ own careful analysis of the manuscript evidence, which is groundbreaking, points to the irrelevance of “holsters” for understanding the books’ use, and sheds new light instead on more pertinent reasons for and benefits of narrow folio proportions: (1) to fit luxury ivory bindings, (2) for ease-of-handling with one hand (for teaching and/or singing), (3) to enable use without a support (lectern, etc.), and/or (4) to contain relatively large amounts of legible lines of text while maintaining small dimensions and easy-to-handle shape.

In view of the major contributions of the work, these are very minor criticisms, prompted by the conventions of reviews, and inspired by the highly engaging work itself. It is a “high-protein” book that will be indispensable for scholars of the manuscripts and culture of Montecassino, southern Italy, Constantine the African, and the translation, transmission, and dissemination of Arabic medical scholarship. It illustrates and provides new insight into what we might call the “soft-production point” of the medieval translated book, whose creation began long before the parchment of the codex was prepared, whose production may build in the possibility for later alterations and re-translations (through the use of spacing, as the authors show), and whose adaptation and augmentation continued long after the principal scribes finished their work. By meticulous attention to textual and material details in this and related manuscripts, the authors reveal an object molded in a dynamic exchange with its remarkable translator and adaptor, Constantine, whom we, as a result, come to understand better.