

producciones, aunque su calidad sea indiscutible, escasean. Abordar sus razones escapan al cometido de una reseña.

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Joëlle Ducos & Patrick Henriët (eds), *Passages. Déplacements des hommes, circulation des textes et identités dans l'Occident médiéval. Actes du colloque de Bordeaux (2-3 février 2007)*, Toulouse: Éditions Méridiennes (Série Études Médiévales), 2013, ISBN 978-2-912025-89-0.

Current scholarship seems to need conceptual keywords to structure its highly prolific activism. After cultural transfer, *convivencia*, hybridity / *métissage* etc. we are now introduced to the concept “passages”, a concept developed by the German emigrant Walter Benjamin (1898-1940), in various volumes.

The introduction by Patrick Henriët (pp. 7-10) provides a short definition of the term “passages”, indicating that it can be understood geographically (*d'une région à l'autre*), linguistically (*d'une langue à l'autre*) and socially (*d'un statut à l'autre*). Henriët is justified in believing that Benjamin's abstract concept, developed in reaction to social phenomena of the late 19th and early 20th century, can be applied to the medieval era. Highly doubtful and unfounded, however, are his statements that a passage represented a much greater change in the Middle Ages than in our contemporary societies which Henriët classifies as “*toujours plus homogènes*” – surely not everyone would agree with this depiction of our world today. This equally applies to his subjective statement that time today is measured more in terms of quantity than of quality. Henriët's ‘Kulturkritik’, legitimate or not, seems slightly out of place in the introduction to a book that seems to set out to explore the scientific value of a conceptual notion for the medieval period.

The reader will soon notice that this is not always the case. Although the fourteen highly interesting articles treat various topics that are grouped under the chapter headings (1) passages of texts, (2) passages of people and (3) identity constructions, not all of them systematically deal with the question if the concept ‘passage’ is useful in their research context.

(i) José Martínez Gázquez, for example, provides an overview on Latin translations of the Qurān (pp. 13-22). He highlights the different context in which each translation took place, but seems to take for granted that the concept “passage” can be used interchangeably with the concept “translation”, the latter also among the many terms used by cultural historians today.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, the term is defined by the way: Gilbert Dahan who analyses the Latin translation of Maimonides’ “Guide for the Perplexed” with regards to the changes suffered by the text’s ‘typically’ Jewish elements in the course of the translation (pp. 23-38), speaks of “passage intellectuel”. In the title, however, he favours the term “transfert intellectuel”. The conceptual tool to analyse how the linguistic shift from a Judaeo-Arabic via Hebrew to a Latin-Christian context affected the text is the term “transfer”, specifically the “transfert des éléments d’une culture donnée dans une autre” (p. 25). Matthias Tischler (pp. 39-55) provides an elaborate definition according to which a ‘passage’ is more than a ‘transfer’: “accomplir un passage est toujours traverser un seuil entre deux entités, espaces et temps. C’est une notion existentielle, spatiale et temporelle, mais aussi une action accomplie dans la réalité. On traverse même des frontières mentales entre deux systèmes culturels, religieux ou politiques. Le ‘passage’ n’est pas une voie à sens unique, mais une création faite de bilatéralité, de correspondances et de perspectives.” (p. 40). He does not simply deal with the production or translation of texts, but points to the phenomenon that Jewish converts to Christianity on the medieval Iberian Peninsula in many cases resorted to anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim polemics after their conversion. In this context, Tischler defines the literary genre of the dialogue between different (often constructed) religious parties as the “genre par excellence caractéristique du ‘passage’ intellectuel” (p. 48), the Jewish catechumen as “type parfait de ‘l’homme de passage’” (p. 53). Conversion, in its psychological dimension and with its social and literary effects, seems to provide a perfect example for a ‘passage’. In a biographical sketch of Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini (p. 57-64), who translated his father’s uncompleted Latin history of Florence into the Florentine dialect in the third quarter of the 15th century, Outi Merisalo opens up further possibilities of defining a ‘passage’, among others the ups and downs of Jacopo’s relations with the Medici (from protégé to exile etc.), his literary and professional career as well as the transformation of a Latin manuscript to a printed book in the Florentine dialect.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 55-61, on the term “cultural translation”.

(2) In dealing with the ‘passage’ of Mozarabs, Arabized Christians from Muslim al-Andalus to Christian Spain from the 9th century onwards (pp. 67-76), Jean-Pierre Molenat provides an excellent introduction to the section dedicated to the geographical dimension of the concept ‘passage’. Molenat distinguishes between two forms, the first denoting active geographic mobility, the second a shift of geopolitical context. With regards to the first form, Molenat deals with the immigration and integration of Arabized Christians into the Northern Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. With regards to the second form, he addresses how Arabized Christians under Muslim rule became part of the northern Christian kingdoms as a consequence of the latter’s conquest of the Muslim south. Whereas in the first case, the Mozarabs were active and mobile, in the second case they passively witnessed the transformation of their sociopolitical environment. Pascual Martínez Sopena, in turn, deals with a different form of human mobility by focusing on the migratory movements from medieval France to northern Spain via the route to Santiago the Compostela in the 11th and 12th century (pp. 77-97). Here, ‘passage’ not only represents a geographical movement, it is also defined as ‘itinerary’ (*itinéraire*) and as the ‘corridor of urbanisation’ (*couloir d’urbanisation*) characteristic of this route. Moreover, passage also has a social dimension, given that ‘Franks’ moving on this route often settled along the way, thus integrating into local society, as the author traces on the basis of juridical and topographical source material. Eléonore Andrieu turns to the depiction of an individual’s mobility, the royal itinerary of the 9th-century Frankish king Louis the Pious (pp. 99-125). In this context, she explores the conceptual character of the Latin term ‘peregrinatio’ as used by one of Louis’ biographers, the so-called Astronomer. Confronted with the task of portraying the feats of a king who, on a political plane, could not measure up with his father Charlemagne, the Astronomer used the term ‘peregrinatio’ in a spiritual sense, thus equating the king’s physical movements – always restricted by the fragile political status quo, with a spiritual itinerary within the folds of the all-embracing Church. In her analysis of the “Libro del caballero Zifar” (14th cent.), Sophie Coussemacker presents a triple-passage including the circulation of a text, the mobility of humans as well as the transformation of identity constructions (pp. 127-58). According to the text’s anonymous author, the “Libro del caballero Zifar” was itself the product of various translations from Chaldaean to Latin, and then to Romance, even though modern scholarship has shown it to be a compilation of various eastern and western sources. Its protagonists are two travelling knights who wander in an area situated between Mesopotamia, India and China that, thanks to various geographic excursions based on Arabic sources, is depicted as real, although in fact it is presented as an essentially Christian space populated by emperors, kings, counts, apostles and

even Spanish *alcaldes* and *alguaciles*. All this provides the background to a kind of identitary quest of Zifar and his son Roboán, descendants of a long line of Indian kings, who as knights try to reconquer the throne they deserve by ancestry. In her quest to understand what kind of person actually wrote this text, Coussemacker thus leads her reader into the highly complex bricolage of a text feeding on various sources of different religious, ethnic and linguistic origin. In the last article of this section, Christine Gadrat focusses on letters written by Franciscan and Dominican missionaries of the 13th and 14th centuries on their way to the East. By listing and describing several groups of letters written from the Crimea, Persia, India and China, the author discusses the variety of addressees, the actual route taken by these letters from east to west and their diffusion upon arrival at their western destination. Here, their diffusion and conservation seems to have been very dependent on their concordance with the interests of Franciscans in recruiting human resources and papal support for their missions abroad.

(3) Part 3 is dedicated to the rather fuzzy topic of “identitary constructions and external contributions” (*Constructions identitaires et apports externes*). John Tolan deals with the complex textual history of a description of the Holy Land by the 8th-century Northumbrian monk Bede the Venerable (pp. 175-85). This text is based on an earlier description by Adomnán of Iona who supposedly compiled it on the basis of a description given to him personally by an unidentifiable Frankish bishop called Arculf whose existence cannot be assured. By going through the different textual layers, Tolan traces how the eye-witness account of the 7th-century Christian Arculf is transformed into a new narrative. Although both contain similar material, Bede almost eliminates the eye-witness Arculf and overemphasizes certain textual elements to such an extent that he can draw the picture of a Holy Land under the rule of a contemporary Saracen king who is actually Christian – an interpretation Bede would not repeat again in later works. Nora Berend turns the focus to medieval Hungary in the 11th to 13th century (pp. 187-96), a multiethnic and multireligious realm that had only recently been christianized. The royal adoption of Christianity as well as various kinds of immigrants contributed to forming divergent identity patterns in the realm which were in no way consistent. Royal documents could describe the inhabitants of the realm neutrally as residents of this particular polity (*gens huius monarchie, regni nostri incolae*, etc.), but could also distinguish between Hungarians (*in genere Hungarorum*), foreigners born in Hungaria (*in Hungaria natus, etiam alienigena*) or foreign ethnic and linguistic groups (*cuiuscunque lingue vel nationis*). The centralizing royal efforts of implanting Christianity could lead to a clear distinction between Muslims and Christians, the latter reinforced by Aragonese immigrants. However, the realm’s Christian

identity was also resisted with reference to traditional pre-Christian practices. Historical identity constructions referred to Huns and Scyths, but Romanized them to a certain degree while the royal patronage of pagan nomad immigrants such as the Cumans led ecclesiastics to complain about the kingdom's pagan character. In this way, but without using the concept 'passage', Berend explains how conflicting identity constructions resulted from a complex mixture of cultural elements within one realm. Maribel Fierros article on Alfonso X as the last Almohad caliph (pp. 197-215), already published elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> points to important parallels between Alfonso's cultural, religious and legal policies and those of the Almohads. According to Fierro, Almohad policy in the 11th and 12th century was based on a theocratic form of government in which the successors of the prophetic figure Ibn Tumart assumed the role of God's vicars on earth. This resulted in the creation of new religious and political elites controlled directly by the caliph on the one hand, legal unification and administrative centralization and standardization on the other side. These policies were accompanied by strong educational efforts on the part of the caliphs which were not only manifest in their missionary policy but also in their promotion of Berber and Arabic as well as the production of didactical and encyclopaedical works. Fierro asserts that all these aspects are also characteristic of the rule of Alfonso X in the 13<sup>th</sup> century: Frequently described as a king who represented God on earth, this ruler surrounded himself with new intellectual elites who helped to promote the king's programme of institutional and legal reform and standardization at the expense of the established ecclesiastical and lay elites, including his encyclopaedical translation programme. Although the term 'passage' is not used, Fierro thus suggests that a reception of Almohad policies may have taken place at the court of Alfonso X. With Jean-Marie Sansterre the reader is led into the textual and liturgical history of the Veronica, a relic allegedly portraying an original image of Christ (pp. 217-31). Starting out with a legend about the cure of the emperor Tiberius thanks to his contact with an image of Christ painted by a woman called Veronica, Sansterre shows how this image was increasingly identified with Jesus' legendary sweat-cloth from the 10th century onwards, the latter then becoming one of the most highly venerated relics of Rome and a symbol of the Roman papacy's primacy of the universal church. The last article of this section written by Vincent Deroche deals with contacts between Jews and Christians in the Byzantine sphere of the 5th to 12th century (pp. 233-43). Without neglect-

2 Maribel Fierro, "Alfonso X 'the Wise': The Last Almohad Caliph?", in: *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009), 175-98;

ing the role of anti-Jewish Christian polemics, Deroche aims at highlighting the porosity of normative and social borders between both religious communities. In spite of all efforts at Christianizing the Jews, conversion took place in both directions. Although a certain revival of Hebrew is discernable, Greek remained one of the main languages of Jews in the Byzantine sphere whereas Hebrew was highly respected as a language of effective magical practices and scholarship. However, judging from Greek sources, Byzantine interest for the Jews was lower than Jewish interest in their Christian environment. Whereas Greek Christian texts mostly have recourse to ancient literary stereotypes of Jews, sources written by the latter provide a more vivid picture of everyday relations.

The volume ends with an analytical epilogue by Joëlle Ducos that provides a conceptual approach to the topic ‘passages’ that is in part based on a summarical overview over the preceding volume. Led back to the Latin term *passagium*, the term is presented as a concept that allows to describe *a)* various kinds of movements, *b)* venues of mobility, *c)* textual excerpts, etc., all of which consist, Ducos claims, of a ‘point of departure’, a ‘point of arrival’ and a ‘transitory state’. The spaces traversed during a passage create habits, rituals and identities. As opposed to studies on cultural transfer or travels as such, the analysis of passages thus allows to highlight the close links between the mobility of people, texts and the creation of ‘habitus’, the latter being a manifestation of communal identity. In this way, Ducos claims, the passage can justifiably be described as the moment or place that gives rise to new textual, cultural, material, intellectual, religious or identity forms that are ultimately based on older models. If this elaborate definition allows to show, “to which degree medieval identity emerges within the frameworks of contact and transition” (*combien l’identité médiévale se fait dans les contacts et la transition*) is only debatable in terms of the question, if one decidedly ‘medieval’ identity exists at all.

All in all, the volume thus provides an interesting introduction to another concept of transition and transformation. In this way, it caters to the needs of a research landscape keen on deconstructing traditional categories and searching to define everything that transcends, breaks up or moves ‘in-between’ these categories. Although some of the authors could have made a greater effort to reflect on the use of the concept ‘passage’, all articles are highly interesting and, if read as a contribution to the concept, can open up further possibilities of defining the latter.

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