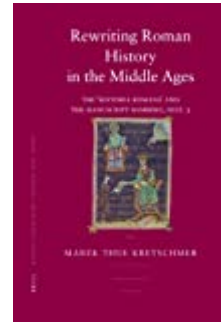




Marek Thue Kretschmer. *Rewriting Roman History in the Middle Ages: The "Historia Romana" and the Manuscript Bamberg, Hist 3.* Leiden: Brill, 2007. xii + 428 pp. \$159.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-15710-1.



Reviewed by Eric H. Limbach (Department of History, Michigan State University)

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On Revised Histories and Revisionist Historiography

The codex Bamberg Hist. 3 belongs to that category of medieval texts that historians and philologists interested in recovering “original” or “authentic” historical sources have often overlooked. As a compilation of texts that have been extensively adapted and paraphrased, this codex might appear useless to any scholar looking to produce a definitive edition of an author’s original text; however, focusing on the version of Paul the Deacon’s *Historia Romana* included in this codex, Marek Thue Kretschmer demonstrates that, far from disqualifying these types of texts from serious study, paraphrased and edited versions are potentially useful to historians. By studying the variations of language and content between extant versions, as well as paratextual evidence (such as marginalia and surrounding texts), Kretschmer provides an analysis of the historiographical, political, social, and religious contexts surrounding the creation of this manuscript. This is an important methodological step for scholars of medieval historiography, and Kretschmer’s work, a revision of his doctoral thesis (completed at the University of Bergen in 2006), is an excellent model for this sort of analysis.

The *Historia Romana* is a particularly important text for those studying medieval historiography and the history of the Holy Roman Empire. It was a key source for medieval authors and compilers looking to demonstrate continuity between the empire and its medieval descendants, particularly the integration of an imperially based world history with Christian eschatology. Furthermore, the idea of a *translatio imperii* meant that these continuities were necessary through the series of national histories that followed the *Historia Romana*, including works by Orosius, Bede, Cassiodorus, and Jordanes, among others. Kretschmer argues that the inclusion of all of these texts means that the author of the Bamberg codex intended it to be read as a single continuous world historical text, rather than as an anthology of national histories.

Kretschmer’s linguistic analysis is notable as well, as it is the first scholarly attempt to thoroughly catalog the distinctive linguistic aspects of this particular text. He cites numerous examples of colloquial vocabulary and syntax, reflecting the increasing gap between written and spoken Latin; the appearance of such changes reflects the transition from Latin to written vernaculars. In addition,

this analysis allows Kretschmer to argue that most of the texts included in the codex were rewritten at the same time, a contention based on numerous similarities of syntax and vocabulary. He argues that this was likely the result of a conscious decision to provide a single homogeneous world history rather than an anthology.

Kretschmer's real contributions to the fields of imperial history and medieval historiography come in his final chapter, in which he compares the paraphrased *Historia Romana* in the Bamberg codex to Amedeo Crivellucci's edition in the *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*. Kretschmer argues that the paraphrased and edited passages in the Bamberg codex reflect the text's ideological and literary context, in particular a close Christian reading of imperial Roman history. Obviously, this view necessitated the removal of references to the apotheoses of pagan Roman emperors, but, as Kretschmer points out, the cause of the *translatio imperii* was also aided by the omission of references to events threatening imperial political stability in favor of a moral interpretation of imperial history. He notes that the text also seems to have been edited and rewritten to provide a coherent narrative structure. This

required the elimination of superfluous historical figures and seeming contradictions of geography and chronology, particularly in relation to other texts included in the manuscript. This is more evidence for the unified nature of the codex, a contention that is also supported by the redactor's practice of occasionally citing other texts in the collection.

While highly specialized, Kretschmer's work should be of interest to many readers, especially those studying the medieval empire, though his exhaustive analysis of conflicting Latin passages might be daunting to the reader unfamiliar with this sort of textual criticism. However, his well-written and very clear introductions and conclusions to each chapter should be beneficial for most readers. Scholars of medieval literature and historiography will also be interested in Kretschmer's analysis, in particular from his discussion of the linguistic transition from Latin to early Romance that he sees in the paraphrased text. Finally, this work provides an excellent methodological example for future research in medieval historiography; Kretschmer ends with a call for other scholars to continue in this line of research.

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