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mäuer Bezirksmuseum und schließlich in die Handschriften- und Inkunabelabteilung der Südböhmischen Wissenschaftlichen Bibliothek, die infolge der Aufhebung des Konvents 1950 stattfand, abgeschlossen.

In der Zusammenfassung ihrer Abhandlung hebt die Autorin hervor, dass die Krumauer Minoritenbibliothek mit ihren 90 erhaltenen mittelalterlichen Handschriften eine der am besten erhaltenen mittelalterlichen Bibliotheken in den böhmischen Ländern darstelle.


Rom

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The volume under review represents a revised version of the author’s 2015 PhD dissertation, undertaken at the University of Bochum. At its heart lies an examination of the writings of three authors of the Ottonian period, Liudprand of Cremona, Widukind of Corvey and Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, with the focus being above all on the former. The intention, as laid out in the introduction, is to examine the strategies of communication employed by each writer, with an emphasis on their roles as „outsider“ (Liudprand) and „insiders“ (Widukind and Hrotsvit) within Ottonian society. In doing so, Brakhman pursues a promising line of investigation, building consciously on recent work on alterity in medieval society.

The book itself consists of three unequal parts: the entire first half is dedicated to Liudprand of Cremona, with the lion’s share of attention going to the *Antapodosis*; whilst the second half is divided roughly equally between Widukind and Hrotsvit, both of whom are used as points of comparison. By framing her investigation in this manner, Brakhman hopes to identify what distinguishes Liudprand from other writers of the Ottonian period. This is certainly a worthy endeavour, and her repeated comparisons between how these three authors treat the same events leads to a number of interesting insights. Nevertheless, this is a deeply flawed book, both in terms of conception and execution.

The main problem lies in the author’s tendency to allow hypothesis to become fact, drawing wide-ranging conclusions about the audience and function of these works from isolated – and often highly allusive – turns of phrase. This is most evident in the handling of Liudprand. The core argument here is that the *Antapodosis* was written before the author gained royal favour and in the hope of doing so – it was his CV, so to speak (a „Bewerbungsschrift“, as Brakhman puts it: p. 59). The possibility that the work was intended for this purpose should not be dismissed out of hand. Nevertheless, the concrete evidence adduced in its favour is remarkably slim (p. 41s.): in Liudprand’s *Homelia Paschalis* – his other purportedly „early“ work – he is addressed as both „deacon“ (in the rubrics) and „bishop“ (in the main text), with the latter perhaps expressing his ambitions rather than present standing (the rubrics may be autograph); meanwhile, at one point in the *Antapodosis* he speaks of how „we“ care for the memory of Henry of Bavaria and Liudolf (*quociens memoriam agimus*), the brother and son of Otto I, perhaps indicating a similar ambition to be counted amongst the „inner“ group charged with liturgical commemoration. This is hardly an ironclad case: if we posit a more
complex textual history for the *Homelia* – that it may have been drafted while Liudprand was a deacon, then revised during his episcopate at Cremona – then the first case simply becomes one of (unsystematic) textual updating; while in the second the most natural reading is not that Liudprand is an outsider looking in, but rather that he does indeed belong to those who care for the *memoria* of the deceased members of the royal family. In any case, it must be emphasized that nothing certain is known of Liudprand’s standing in these years: it may be that he was an outsider, as Brakhman maintains, but it is equally possible that he found entry into the royal chapel (as Wolfgang Huschner argues, albeit on tenuous grounds). The presumption that Liudprand did not enjoy favoured standing at court however soon becomes fact, with all other evidence read in its light: his use of Greek (and Graecisms) is seen not simply as a display of learnedness (as in the case of his contemporary Rather), but rather as an attempt to commend his services as a diplomat (p. 47s.); his choice of prosimetric form is treated as a demonstration of rhetorical skill, also of use in political and diplomatic contexts (p. 56s.); his descriptions of Italian history are read a strategy to present himself as a „local expert“ (p. 82–100); and so on. Brakhman even goes so far as to suggest that Liudprand consciously avoided citing works not known to his northern recipients (p. 57s.), in a particularly perplexing line of argument: we are meant to believe on the one hand that he was an „outsider“ in Ottonian society, yet on the other that he possessed a knowledge of local teaching sufficient to adjust his own citation strategy seamlessly to that of his audience (for purposes which, in any case, remain obscure – why should they be so perturbed by the citation of an unknown author?).

Yet it is not only here that hypothesis tends to become fact. One of Brakhman’s central concerns is naturally the audience of the *Antapodosis*. In this respect, she is quick to eliminate Bishop Recemund of Elvira, who is addressed in the preface, since he could not have helped Liudprand realize his ambitions; rather, the address is to be seen as a literary conceit designed to explain the author’s decision to write in the first place – and as such it constitutes further evidence of his weak position at the time of composition (p. 57–65). As should by now be clear, this line of argument will only convince those already persuaded of the work’s self-promotional character; the rest are likely to be left confused as to why a spade cannot be a spade after all. That the *Antapodosis* had an audience closer to home should certainly not be overlooked, and Brakhman is right to emphasize that there is no positive evidence for it circulating in Spain (p. 64 – though how meaningful this is may be questioned). The most plausible alternative suggestion is that Rather of Verona was amongst the intended recipients; Nikolaus Staubach has already mooted this possibility, and Brakhman suggests that the handling of both Rather and his opponents indicates a desire to win the Lotharingian bishop’s favour – and perhaps through him that of Archbishop William of Mainz, the illegitimate son of Otto I (p. 71). Brakhman also argues that Liudprand had Otto I in mind as his „ideal“ audience; again, this is far from impossible, though the positive evidence in its favour remains little more than the work’s purported „Bewerbungsscharakter“. While at this stage she is careful to note the hypothetical nature of these suggestions, soon they become established fact: by p. 106 we hear of the „fundamental orientation of the text towards William of Mainz“ („grundsätzliche Ausrichtung der Schrift an Wilhelm von Mainz“) whilst by the conclusion the metropolitan has simply become the „intended recipient“ („avisiert[er] Rezipient“, p. 249) – all of this in a work in which William is not once named! (More soberly, the author admits at p. 73 that an address to William „remains hypothetical“ – „bleibt … hypothetisch“). Most extraordinarily, throughout this Brakhman scarcely considers the text’s transmission. She briefly surveys the surviving manuscripts earlier (p. 15s.), coming to the perplexing conclusion that these „offer no information“ („liefert … keine Informationen“: p. 16) regarding the author’s communicative strategies; thereafter they are left almost entirely to one side. Yet as many readers will be aware, the most recent editor of the *Antapodosis*, Paolo Chiesa, argues that
the author's autograph is to be found amongst the corrections to Munich, Staatsbibliothek Clm 6388. While there remains some room for doubt, even those (such as Hartmut Hoffmann) who are not convinced admit that the corrector must be sought within the circles immediately surrounding Liudprand; his activities thus take us as close as we are likely to get to the author. This is not all: Clm 6388 was in the possession of Bishop Abraham of Freising (episcopate: 957–994), in whose circles the sole surviving manuscript of Liudprand’s *Homelia Paschalis* also survives. We therefore have a clear focus of transmission for Liudprand’s works at Freising. Yet Abraham is not once named as a potential recipient of his writings, nor does he receive any extended treatment by Brakhman.

Similar, though less acute, problems attach to the later sections of the book. As noted, these are intended as contextualisation for the arguments advanced regarding Liudprand. Still, Brakhman continues to posit alternative audiences for well-known works, often on slender evidence, insisting, for example, that the future Otto II must have been the recipient Widukind initially had in mind for the *Res gestae Saxonicae* (p. 193s.) and arguing that the *Primordia coenobii Gandersheimensis* was intended for a royal, rather than local, audience (p. 218s.). As elsewhere, the problem is not so much that these suggestions are inherently implausible, as that they are entirely conjectural – and all too soon become fact, shutting down alternative possibilities. Perhaps most troubling of all, in placing so much emphasis on the position of these writers as „insiders“ and „outsiders“, Brakhman leaves almost no room for authorial identity: where Liudprand differs from Widukind or Hrotsvit this is invariably ascribed to his position as an „outsider“, without allowing for the possibility that he simply thought otherwise.

The overall verdict on this book can, therefore, only be negative: though Brakhman makes a number of interesting suggestions – and many of the audiences she hypothesizes do deserve consideration – she is too quick to make sweeping inferences, which are rarely (if ever) backed up by close consideration of textual strategies and manuscript transmission. The result is thus a *petitio principii* only likely to convince those already sympathetic to Brakhman’s case. If we are to establish the communicative strategies employed by these authors, we will need to start afresh, making more allowance for authorial identity and proceeding on a firmer philological basis. Till then, all that can be said is: *caveat lector!*

Exeter

Levi Roach

