

1-1996

The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol (Review)

Martin Arbagi

Wright State University - Main Campus, martin.arbagi@wright.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Arbagi, M. (1996). *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol (Review)*. *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*, 71 (1), 120-121.
<https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history/8>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the History at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact library-corescholar@wright.edu.

guments for adaptation and continuity will prevail over arguments for *mutationnisme*, the effect of his argument is not, in fact, to substitute a static “traditional” society for the dynamic social formation posited by mutationists, but rather to reestablish the early twelfth century, rather than the year 1000, as the main turning point in medieval French history. Another effect of his work is to demonstrate both the empirical and the theoretical inadequacy of the conceptual oppositions (e.g., public v. private, legality v. anarchy, slavery v. serfdom, power v. violence, nobility v. knighthood, allod v. fief) out of which previous historians have constructed such a stark contrast between eleventh-century seigniorial society and its predecessors. Because Barthélemy’s attack on *mutationnisme* is based both on an intensive analysis of charter evidence and on a sustained effort to rethink the categories that regional historians of the last forty years have used to construct a model of French society during the central Middle Ages, a model then contrasted with a model of Carolingian society, the book, if properly understood, should leave an indelible mark on the field.

STEPHEN D. WHITE, Emory University

RODERICK BEATON and CHARLOTTE ROUECHÉ, eds., *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*. (The Centre for Hellenic Studies, King’s College London, Publications, 1.) Aldershot, Eng., and Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1993. Pp. xxvii, 206; 1 black-and-white figure, maps. \$63.95.

Perhaps taking their inspiration from Angeliki Laiou, who notes that late Byzantine authors usually used “north,” “south,” “east,” and “west” with reference to Constantinople, the editors have organized this festschrift into three sections: the history of the future, present, and past—with Byzantium itself as the starting point. In deference to space limitations, this reviewer will observe his normal procedure of not commenting on every article.

Paul Magdalino, “The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy, and Propaganda,” traces messianic expectations in the Byzantine Empire through good times and bad (e.g., the binge of church building during Justinian’s reign can be explained by the need for suitable residences for Christ and the saints, whose arrival was momentarily expected). Walter Hanak, “Some Historiographical Observations on Nestor-Iskander’s *The Tale of Constantinople*,” examines how a Slavic narrative of the fall of Constantinople blends and uses a number of eschatological and messianic themes appropriated from earlier sources. Michael Angold’s “Were Byzantine Monastic *Typika* Literature?” concludes this section. A *typikon*—what a Western medievalist would call the rule book of a monastery—was frequently more than a narrowly legal or liturgical document. It sometimes incorporated the *vita* of a monastery’s founder or its first abbot. Consequently, Byzantine *typika* on occasion do qualify as literary sources.

Richard Greenfield’s “Sorcery and Politics at the Byzantine Court in the Twelfth Century: Interpretations of History” begins the second section by establishing that black magic was not purely a phenomenon among the uneducated, but that there also existed a learned tradition of necromancy among the elite that can be traced to classical sources. Constantine Constantinides’ “Byzantine Scholars and the Union of Lyons (1274)” is a careful prosopographical study. Angeliki Laiou’s “On Political Geography: The Black Sea of Pachymeres” demonstrates that the Byzantines of the post-1204 period did indeed have some degree of geographical knowledge, though Pachymeres at least seems mainly to have been interested in those areas whose inhabitants directly interacted with the empire, militarily, diplomatically, or economically. Alexis Savides’ piece on the *tourkopouloi*, soldiers of mixed Turkish-Greek parentage who served in both late Byzantine and crusading ar-

mies, is an interesting mixture of military and social history. Michael Kordoses maintains, in the article that concludes this section, that Constantine Palaiologos never had a coronation ceremony in Constantinople for fear of a confrontation between Unionists and anti-Unionists.

The highlight of the final section (which is historiographical—recall that the editors use Byzantium as the center of their universe of reference) is Charlotte Roueché's biography of Georgina Buckler. Roueché throws light on higher education for women of the middle and upper classes in England at the turn of the twentieth century and concludes that Buckler became interested in Byzantium because it was a *Christian* state. Her mother had taught herself Greek to read the New Testament, and Georgina's first Greek readings were also biblical. But Roueché also shows how Buckler, a brilliant scholar whose biography of Anna Comnena is still standard, fell prey to the amateurism characteristic of Anglo-American historiography in the nineteenth century. J. B. Bury, Buckler's contemporary and a fellow Byzantinist, fought to persuade English historians to adopt a greater professionalism, modeled after the faculties of German universities.

A bibliography of Donald Nicol's publications through 1992 is included in the volume.

MARTIN ARBAGI, Wright State University

LARRY D. BENSON, ed., "*King Arthur's Death*": *The Middle English "Stanzaic Morte Arthur" and "Alliterative Morte Arthure."* Rev. ed. by Edward E. Foster. (Middle English Texts.) Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, for TEAMS, in association with the University of Rochester, 1994. Paper. Pp. xii, 292. \$13. First ed. published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1974.

ALAN LUPACK, ed., "*Lancelot of the Laik*" and "*Sir Tristrem.*" (Middle English Texts.) Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, for TEAMS, in association with the University of Rochester, 1994. Paper. Pp. vii, 282. \$12.

JULIAN OF NORWICH, *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Georgia Ronan Crampton. (Middle English Texts.) Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, for TEAMS, in association with the University of Rochester, 1993. Paper. Pp. ix, 218. \$10.

The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (TEAMS) is to be congratulated for producing good quality, inexpensively priced student paperback editions of interesting Middle English texts. Though designed for classroom use, these editions will prove useful as well to scholars in a number of fields who wish convenient access to a range of works "adjacent" in the Middle English canon to those of Chaucer, Gower, Langland, the *Pearl* poet, and Malory. The introductory and explanatory notes in these volumes are economical but adequate, the marginal and foot-of-page glosses generous and accurate; and though the texts themselves are normalized in spelling and modernized in punctuation, they are based upon otherwise conservative editorial practice. Simple glossaries and select, up-to-date bibliographies have also been supplied.

The first volume reviewed here is Edward E. Foster's adaptation to the new format of Larry D. Benson's 1974 edition of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, fourteenth-century poems that were the primary English sources for Malory's inspired fifteenth-century prose compilation, *Le Morte Darthur*. These two poems represent competing traditions of the demise of Arthurian Britain, which Malory conflated, in coordination with his French prose sources, to produce what became for later ages the definitive conclusion of the Arthurian legend. The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* comprises 3,833 verses in eight-line rhyming stanzas and narrates the increasingly fraught romantic entan-