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Evaluation of

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The Treatise "Epistolary Styles" of Pseudo-Libanios and its Later Versions: Byzantine Letter Writing Manuals and Their Practical Use (Dissertational Council for defense August 29, 2021, 3 p.m. Moscow Time)

I read this thesis both with great interest and pleasure. In his study D. Chernoglazov presents a totally new view on the tradition of instructions in Greek epistolography and the history of teaching of letter-writing in premodern and early modern times. The starting points of his investigation were the editions by Valentin Weichert, *Demetrii et Libanii qui feruntur typoi epistolikoi et epistolimatoi characteres*. 1910 and Eberhard Richtsteig, *Libanii qui feruntur characteres epistolici prolegomena ad epistulas*. 1927. Both are still reference works.

There are three "versions" or new compilations of the collections of model-letters that Chernoglazov names PL1 (= Pseudo-Libanios and Pseudo-Proklos, Late Antiquity), PL2 (Macedonian pseudo-Libanios = 7th–9th c.) and PL3 ("Forty types of Letters", based on Byzantine versions of PL2 and a version dating to the 12th–13th c.); he also discusses the after-life of Pseudo-Libanios in the Ottoman Empire (the version is based on PL3 and translated into Modern Greek) and the letter types impact in Western (Latin) contexts.

The thesis consists of **7 parts**. In the **first ch.** Chernoglazov addresses a general questions on the theory of letter-writing in Byzantium. In comparison to Western traditions of education no *ars dictaminis* existed in the Middle Greek tradition. Therefore Chernoglazov correctly asks about patterns and possibilities of instructions for letter-

writing. In addition, he collects and presents a number of "Briefsteller". They can be divided into texts used for literary letters / or school and official usage (i. e. administrative correspondence). The first category includes the following treatises: A manual ascribed to Pseudo-Demetrios was known in Byzantium, but the manuscript tradition is rather slim (Chernoglazov counts 12 mss., p. 19).¹ Pseudo-Demetrios was of great influence to the Late Byzantine "Forty Types of Letters", but the "epistolary Styles" by Pseudo-Libanios or Pseudo-Proklos have been composed by an unknown author (probably 5th c., Chernoglazov names it PL1). That manual contains 41 types (p. 20) forming short definitions. PL1 and "extended" versions can be dated to the 6th–7th c.

Chernoglazov also deals with official letter writing manuals (p. 22ff.). An important element of such guidelines form the addresses, because they reflect the social status or administrative position of the receiver. Two famous mss. (Vaticanus gr. 867 and Palatinus gr. 367², pp. 24–27) offer neat examples of such instructions. There is another interesting collection edited by Giannino Ferrari, *Formulari notarili inediti dell'età bizantina*. Rome 1912 (quoted by the author) highlighting the importance to compare charters and diplomatic letters with "literary" letters.

A rare example of a short introduction into letters provides the monk Athanasios Chatzikes (pp. 27–28) dating to the 13th c. Chernoglazov gives an important remark: "by Chatzikes remain the only Byzantine model letter collection combining two methods of classification of the material 'rhetoric' by epistolary types and 'official' by social position of the author and addressee" (p. 28). One may add that Chatzikes introduced Michael Psellos, the most famous *literatus* of the 11th c., as a model.³

Ch. 2 is devoted to the mss-tradition of the various texts. Chernoglazov carefully lists all mss of the Libanios-Form (= LIB) and Proklos-form (= PRCL). The LIB tradition can be divided into 3 versions (A [6 mss]⁴, B [13 mss], C [4 mss]); the PRCL into D and E (according to the investigations by Chernoglazov the usage of letters in sequence does make sense) (D [4] E [7 ms]),

In this chapter – explicitly devoted to PL1 – Chernoglazov demonstrates his abilities to deal with a complicated transmission of texts and versions (and he also discovered more mss than the editors before him). The transmission becomes even more complicated, because mixed forms and other versions exist (pp. 45–57). After a small section on editions and translations (pp. 57–59) the author moves to Sources, Date and Authorship (pp. 59–68). Here, Chernoglazov demonstrates his extrinsic knowledge of Greek and Byzantine rhetoric: aspects of paraenesis (p. 65) and quotations (p. 67) are discussed;

¹ In his descriptions Chernoglazov always mentions the contexts of the *Briefsteller* in mss.

² The Palatinus collection is connected to Cyprus; interestingly the clerk in a chancery reuses a letter written by Eustathios of Thessalonica; he intended to impress the addressee with a well-worded proimion; here the procedure of writing documents becomes apparent: Nice or fitting passages have been reused or recycled without hesitation, see M. Grünbart, *Aus der Formularsammlung eines königlichen Sekretärs auf Zypern: Ein Fall typischer Mimesis oder Alltag in einer Kanzlei?* MG 16 (2016) 113–117

³ M. Grünbart, *Athanasios Chatzikes und Michael Psellos*. Byzantion 70 (2000) 307–308.

⁴ The author may add Diktyon-numbers in the publication of his thesis. See www.diktyon.org

Chernoglazov does not decide whether the author of the first version was pagan or Christian (p. 68); there are still too many *lacunae* (and in terms of Byzantine epistolography it does not matter because the church fathers put a lot of emphasis on Hellenic education). The example of Synesios is given: Even that prolific author still is under discussion (Hellen vs. Christian). In **ch. 2.3** Chernoglazov discusses the text history. A precious section forms **2.5**. Functions of PL1: Here Chernoglazov addresses the usage and function of the texts of his edition. He observes that PL1 normally is preserved / attached to textbooks on grammar (e.g. p. 79 Laur. Plut. 57.34). Chernoglazov also collects references of classifications that are attached to letters (e.g. Theodore Studites, Nikephoros Ouranos, John Tzetzes, p. 82). Ioseph Bryennios forms a special case, because he reflects the interest of the Palaeologan learned culture to classify letters (two mss are linked to Bryennios' activities).

In **ch. 3** Chernoglazov convincingly presents the "Macedonian Pseudo-Libanios"-collection,⁵ that serves as a new practical guide for letterwriting. PL2 comprises 55 model letters (2 mss offer the most complete versions: Vat. gr. 306 and Paris. gr. 2671). The collection has its basis in PL1, but adds some titles that are missing there (p. 89). PL2 is preserved in 9 mss. (pp. 90–95) (= F version), 3 mss. (= G-version), 1 ms. (= H-version), 2 mss. (= I-version) and 3 mss. (K-version).

In analogy to chapter 2 Chernoglazov discusses in **3.5** the various functions of PL2 emphasizing on forms of address and (pp. 115–121), letter closings (pp. 121–126), friendship motifs (pp. 126–136).

Chernoglazov does not restrict himself to the core Byzantine period he also investigates the "Forty Types of Letters" (=PL3) in **ch. 4** (pp. 139–204). These collection from the Palaeologan period proved useful in the post-byzantine period (up to the 19th c.). The corpus is preserved in 20 "main" mss. (pp. 142–159) and some fragments (pp. 159–161). Forms of address also reflect the social context of these models (pp. 187–191). It is interesting that another byzantine epistolographer became a model: John Tzetzes is the model for some passage. That is not surprising, because Tzetzes was an active and often copied teacher.

Ch. 5 is devoted to a kind of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (and demonstrates again the authors ability to follow traditions across chronological borders) (Pseudo-Libanios in Ottoman Greece). PL3 served as a basis for a new version or theory of letter writing (4 mss pp. 217–220).

2 mss. of the 15th c. demonstrate and prove the usage of such manuals in school (**ch. 6**, pp. 250–260).

Last not least Chernoglazov offers a look into the Western tradition (**ch. 7**). Several translations into Latin are known that complete the picture of an important learned tradition with its root in Late Antiquity. Chernoglazov demonstrates his classical training by interpreting the various levels of translation skills (from literal to liberal).

⁵ Or should it be called Middle-Byzantine Pseudo-Libanios?

Chernoglazov edits parts of the collections in the foregoing chapters, but in Appendix I he provides a critical edition of The Forty Types of Letters (PL3).⁶ Appendix II contains the text and translation of PL4 and PL4–TR.

In addition to my previous remarks I provide the following summary:

- Chernoglazov starts with a clear set of questions that he addresses to his topic. The main idea is how to write letters and learn letter-writing in the Greek-speaking world after antiquity.
- Chernoglazov offers a thorough investigation of a complicated text/corpus of texts. He carefully investigated the whole transmission of manuscripts and provides both critical remarks and new editions.
- Chernoglazov demonstrated his philological skills by his wholistic approach: He is well acquainted with all levels of Greek (from classical ancient to modern) and the transmission of Byzantine texts. The bibliography Chernoglazov used is complete.
- Chernoglazov adds to the reconstruction of the history of education and rhetorical training in premodern times; therefor his study will be an important contribution for future research dealing with instructions methods and schooling.
- [The English translation needs some polishing before publication (articles, sometimes too colloquial)]

D. Chernoglazov fulfills and meets the requirements established by the order "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University". He deserves the award of the degree of doctor of sciences in philology (Scientific specialty 10.02.14). I wholeheartedly support his promotion.

With kind regards



Prof. Dr. Michael Grünbart

⁶ 13,13 ἡδικηκότες legendum est.