Introduction

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In the process of the Christianization of the Roman Empire and the transformation of Graeco-Roman Classical culture into established Christian tradition, this volume considers the rise of monasticism as one of the most significant developments. As institutionalized monasticism emerged in the fourth century and manifested itself in a variety of forms over the next 100 years, the burgeoning movement increasingly engaged the attention of both emperors and bishops. By the sixth century, monasteries, and their leaders, were important actors in imperial, state, and local politics. Within the Christian community itself, monasteries rapidly became centers for the transmission and transformation of culture and literature – a role they gradually lost in the West in the medieval period, and in the East, only in the last century.

This volume disputes the assumption that expressions of Christian monasticism were unprecedented and simultaneously retained no obvious precursors and/or Graeco-Roman parallels. It presents, instead, monastic establishments as cultural and ecclesiastical centers that created an institutional framework largely responsible for the preservation and spread of not only Greek and Latin literature but also the skills of reading and writing. Within the structures that embodied monastic life, established conventions of agriculture, crafts, medicine, art, and architecture were also transmitted. As Classical sources and traditions melded with Biblical and monastic teaching and practice, existing norms were redefined and new structures of use were developed. In each arena, the importance of monasticism for the development of Christian culture, Western as well as Eastern, can hardly be overstated.

Traditionally, emergent monasticism has been studied through two primary lenses. One focus has explored the question of monasticism's roots and first representatives in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria; the other, developments within the Latin tradition. Less emphasis has been accorded the links that trace the development of practice in the East and the role played by non-Latin monastic traditions in preserving, transforming, and transmitting Classical and Graeco-Roman models to the broader Christian culture.

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Recent studies have sought to widen the perspective by investigating individual actors and specific questions. Important sources have been made increasingly available in critical editions, but much work remains to be done. Many texts emerging from non-Latin monastic traditions of the fifth and sixth centuries have not yet been studied in full. Further, a large portion of this literature remains unavailable to scholars due to the lack of proper editions. As a result, fundamental questions about the rapid rise of monasticism; its social, political, and economic role in society; its relation to Classical philosophical thought and to patterns of education, social welfare, and communal organization remain largely unresolved.

Previous lack of research on developments in Eastern/non-Latin monasticism, and especially the role of the monastic tradition in the transmission of the Classical cultural heritage, is due at least in part to the fact that these emerging monastic strains have often been interpreted as a movement comprising poor and uneducated rural figures, with little or no knowledge of Classical and/or Christian intellectual tradition.[1] Grounded in an acritical, highly selective, and rather literal reading of the sources, this culturally biased viewpoint has relegated the early monks to the "desert" (or sometimes the "mountains"), where they remain disconnected from urban Late Antiquity. For many, these monks thus have little relevance as conduits in the transmission of Classical heritage.[2] Even in studies that have rightly emphasized the monks' social role and civic interactions, such Eastern constituencies often remain outsiders, creators of and actors in a new and different societal order.[3]

Recent research on archaeological and papyrological sources,[4] engagement with/interest in previously neglected monastic texts,[5] and reinterpretation of older texts using new methods[6] has dramatically challenged traditional

[1] Heussi 1936; Dörries 1949; Marrou 1956, and others.
[2] Although the relation between Greek *paideia* and emergent Christian culture is generally accepted on the level of ecclesiastical leadership and patristic literature, it is less common in the study of early monasticism. Similarly, while it is widely acknowledged that the major Christian patristic authors were steeped in Greek *paideia*, monastic authors are generally regarded as less literate, or even uneducated. For example, although recent studies of bishops of the fourth to sixth centuries put an emphasis on their education and dependence on Classical *paideia*, studies of monastic leaders tend to frame their protagonists as outsiders to Greek culture.
[3] See, for example: Burton-Christie 1993; Gould 1993; Harmless 2004; and others.
[4] See, for example: Bagnall 1993, 2009; Giorda 2010, 2011a; Larsen 2006a, 2013a, 2013b; Wipzycka 1996, 2009; and others.
[5] See, for example: Brock 1995; Dahlman 2007; Harvey 1990; Holmberg 2013; Rubenson 1990, 1995, 2007; Sheridan 1998; Westberg 2010; and others.
[6] See, for example: Brakke 1995, 2006; Dahlman 2013; Faraggiana di Sarzana 1997, 2002; Goehring 1993, 2005; Larsen 2001, 2008, 2013a; Lundhaug 2010; Pevarello 2013; Rapp 2004, 2010; Rönnegård 2010, 2013; Rousseau 1985, 2000; Rubenson 1990, 2013a; Rydell Johnsén, 2007, 2013; Westergren 2012; and others.

understandings of emergent monasticism. An increasingly broad range of evidence indicates that early monastic practice, at least in Egypt and Palestine, was well integrated into the commercial, political, and intellectual life of the cities, and some portion of its proponents were educated members of the upper social classes. Education, literacy, and literate communication are mentioned in the earliest monastic sources;[7] likewise, papyri and school texts found at monastic sites in Egypt offer new insight into the foundational character of literary investments and activities.[8] The texts that emerge from the early monastic movement, as well as the contents of the earliest monastic libraries testify, moreover, to the presence not only of Biblical material, but also the availability of a broad range of philosophical and theological literature.[9]

The present volume is a further step in the ongoing reinterpretation of the rise and early history of monasticism in the East. As such, it embodies and expands existing research aimed at contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of emergent monasticism in the transmission of Classical pedagogical models that began in Antiquity and extended into the Renaissance.[10] In pursuing these ends, the volume also presents a reformulation of basic theoretical approaches, vigorously arguing against models that have often depicted Christian, and more specifically monastic, thought as inherently antithetical to Classical culture. It likewise resists presenting Christian and Classical Antiquity as inherently different entities.[11] Instead, included essays examine the growth of Christian literature and monastic culture in conversation with Greek and Latin precedents. Expressed through continuous reinterpretation and reintegration of existing models, this results in the melding of Classical and Biblical texts in Christian religious life and practice.

Many of the volume's essays consider early monastic texts ranging from inscriptions and notes on ostraca and papyri to philosophical treatises. Others examine ancient Christian texts that discuss early monasticism and read monastic source material as part and parcel of the society in which these texts were created – that is, a society steeped in Classical *paideia*. The broader aim, however, involves viewing texts and contexts as part of the re-evaluation of monastic educational and literary

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[7] Larsen 2013a.   [8] Larsen 2006a; 2013a; 2013b; Cf. Cribiore 1996, 2001; Bucking 2007, 2012.
[9] Emmel and Römer 2008; Klingshirn and Safran 2007; Kotsifou 2007; Maravela 2008; Roberts 1979; Rydell Johnsén 2007.
[10] Cf. Cribiore 1996; 2001; Morgan 1998.   [11] Cf. Markschies 2006.

traditions, and locating monasteries within the gradual reorientation of schools in Late Antiquity. Examining emergent monastic pedagogies relative to increased social and geographical mobility[12] and in dialogue with the challenges caused by political, economic, and social changes[13] affords new insight into the reshaping of genres, literary forms, and styles, and the reinterpretation of moral and philosophical teaching. Within this framework, the transformation of Classical into Christian *paideia* is seen as a reformation rather than a revolution. In turn, emergent conflicts between the monastic and Classical tradition are interpreted as manifestations of competition and rivalry within a culture, not as a conflict between opposing cultures.[14]

The first part of the volume discusses both the basic issues of Greek educational terminology and the rhetorical use of education in selected early Christian texts. The final part turns to discussion of the manuscript transmission of monastic sources in broader cultural settings. Parts II through IV are structured in relation to conventionally established levels of education in Antiquity. The papers included in Part II address questions of functional literacy and elementary education. In Part III, essays explore monastic evidence for grammatical and rhetorical instruction. Contributions introduced in part four assess the evidence for philosophical training within monastic settings.

In Part I, Samuel Rubenson introduces discussion of *The Language of Education.* Against the more traditional view of monasticism as unrelated to the Classical school tradition, Rubenson explores the degree to which emergent monastic educational and philosophical sources use the same basic terminology for the conditions, practices, and steps of monastic formation as found in established models of Hellenistic education[15] and Classical *paideia*.[16] Reiterating the overarching questions that have guided the team's broader research focus, Rubenson emphasizes the importance of moving beyond constructs that place schools and monasteries in opposition, underscoring the degree to which a fresh look at the evidence demonstrates that the emergent monastic tradition ought to be understood as an educational movement, and monasteries viewed as centers of instruction.[17] Narrowing Rubenson's more general focus, Peter Gemeinhardt addresses the issue of education in the reception history of the *Life of Antony* (arguably the most influential text used to support claims for monastic opposition to learning). Comparing the educational layers of

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[12] Cf. Watts 2006.   [13] Cf. Becker 2006.   [14] Rubenson 2013b; Urbano 2013; and others.
[15] Larsen 2013a.   [16] Rydell-Johnsén 2013.   [17] Larsen 2001; 2006a; 2006b; 2008.

argumentation in the Greek text with two early Latin translations, Gemeinhardt explores the reshaping of philosophical emphases in the *Life*, arguing that Evagrius of Antioch changes these to emphasize content and moral formation in order to suit his well-educated Latin elite readership. Andreas Westergren addresses a second argument often used in support of monastic illiteracy by considering the Church historian Socrates' descriptions of the early monks, relative to their involvement in the first Origenist crisis. In this essay, Westergren demonstrates that these depictions of monks are, in fact, framed by a nuanced and balanced discourse about *paideia*. He concludes that in Socrates' portrayal, the opposition between literate and illiterate monks is leveraged to criticize a politicized use of the masses (*hoi polloi*). The ideal society is one in which learned and unlearned live in harmony, a society governed by the learned; and the ideal monastic life is a life directed by the educated monks.

In Part II, *Elementary Education and Literacy*, Roger Bagnall introduces discussion by examining a broad cross-section of monastic letters. Addressing evidence that has traditionally been left out of discussions of monastic education, Bagnall analyzes the format, handwriting, style, and content of letters drawn from a number of monastic papyri collections. He argues that the writers, and most presumably the authors and recipients of the letters, manifest educational training at a level commensurate with bureaucratic roles in local administrative and business enterprise. Bagnall likewise suggests that, with certain variations, the letters display a familiarity with scribal conventions and some training in the specifics of Christian epistolography. Lillian Larsen takes this discussion in a more theoretical direction. Returning to themes addressed in the first part of the volume, Larsen examines the ways in which long-standing interpretive emphases have influenced the identification, collection, and categorization of monastic pedagogical texts. Testing an alternate rubric for engaging the material record of monastic education, she demonstrates the importance of recognizing both the stability and fluidity of "form" and "content," while attending to both "text" and "context" in documenting monastic reuse of established pedagogical models. Anastasia Maravela's paper evaluates the evidence for the presence and use of Classical school texts – here Homer and Menander – in monastic environments. Giving particular attention to material remains of Theban provenance, Maravela argues for the presence of educational activity, and explores the degree to which it was based on Classical models. She suggests that such activity was

presumably directed towards monks and novices lacking a literate background. The question of "if," and "to what extent," elementary education took place in the monasteries is raised in both Larsen and Maravela's papers.

Part III, *Grammar and Rhetoric*, takes up the question of monastic involvement in more advanced training. Blossom Stefaniw's and Ellen Muehlberger's essays re-examine the educational practice of two fourth-century Christian teachers/monks – Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Ponticus, respectively. Mark Sheridan's paper addresses the degree to which training in rhetoric is evident in the writings/teachings of a less familiar figure, Rufus of Shotep, a sixth-century monk who became a bishop. Stefaniw's close reading of the Tura Papyri introduces this section. Drawing examples from the extant corpus of Didymus' classroom notes, Stefaniw challenges established tradition in arguing that Didymus the Blind was more likely a Christian grammarian than an ecclesiastically appointed teacher of catechumens. Echoing themes that likewise surface in Larsen's rereading of the "elementary" record of monastic pedagogical remains, Stefaniw suggests that what distinguishes Didymus from the grammarians of Classical *paideia* is not the contexts, methods, forms, or even subjects of his instruction, but rather the literary examples he employs. By integrating the Bible into the social space previously reserved for the pagan classics, Didymus' position as a grammarian is best understood not in opposition to his ascetic and monastic network, but rather commensurate with it. Muehlberger's analysis of the rhetorical methods employed by Evagrius Ponticus strengthens Stefaniw's assessments. As Muehlberger examines Evagrius' writing in light of well-documented rhetorical structures, she addresses the question of whether the methods that govern Evagrius' use of *ethopoeia* should be understood within the context of a program of monastic formation. Muehlberger concludes that Evagrius, like Didymus, far from creating a specifically Christian rhetoric deploys established educational practice but replaces Classical *exempla* with Biblical figures. Sheridan places similar emphasis on the continuity that characterizes the use of classic rhetorical forms in Coptic literature from Late Antiquity. Through analyzing structures that govern the text-based homilies of Rufus of Shotep, he draws numerous examples from Rufus' Coptic corpus to elucidate applied practice. Sheridan concludes that his protagonist hardly fits the stereotype of the uneducated and rustic Coptic monk. Rather, Rufus' ready command of sophisticated rhetoric attests the presence of rhetorical influence in Upper Egyptian monastic settings through at least the seventh century.

In Part IV of the volume, *Philosophy*, the relation between the Classical tradition and early monasticism is discussed from three different perspectives. Again, returning to themes taken up in Part I, Henrik Rydell Johnsén examines the ideal of being uneducated as it appears in Classical philosophical texts, elucidating the degree to which images of the rustic philosopher have their roots in broader teaching. Highlighting examples of the rejection of *paideia* and of books in Epicurean and Cynic sources, Rydell Johnsén argues that the weight monastic sources place on virtue rather than education does not isolate monasticism from Classical pedagogical emphases. Rather, it affirms the monk's role in continuing this tradition by naming certain forms of education – especially what comes to be called the *artes liberales* – as useless for real spiritual progress. Arthur Urbano likewise accentuates the importance of recognizing a shared philosophical tradition that links the monastery with its contemporary counterparts. In his analysis of two biographical works of the fifth century, Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa* and Marinus' *Life of Proclus*, Urbano suggests that these biographies should be seen as elements in a struggle over the appropriate reception and authority of a shared heritage – in this case, the teachings of Plato – rather than the expression of different ideals. Daniele Pevarello, in turn, explores an alternate strand of the same shared heritage as he reconsiders the transmission of Classical source material that links the *Sentences of Sextus* with later Christian expression. By comparing different stages in the reuse of *Sextus* by Christian ascetic teachers, Pevarello argues that the *Sentences* became a vehicle for transmitting Classical philosophical teachings into the monastic milieu. He simultaneously details the process by which a pagan text, through minor changes, is transformed into a source attributed to a Christian bishop.

In Part V, *Manuscript and Literary Production*, discussion turns to how monastic education is manifested in the process of textual transmission. Britt Dahlman highlights the value of heeding the fluidity that characterizes monastic texts, arguing that apparent variations in extant manuscripts should not solely be understood as evidence for a practice in which texts were corrupted by scribes. Rather, adducing *comparanda* from Classical literature, she suggests that early monastic sources may well have been revised and republished by the authors themselves, as different versions prepared for different audiences. With examples drawn from the *Historia Lausiaca*, and the writings of Cassian, two major sources on early monasticism, Dahlman traces the reshaping of this content in collections of miscellaneous texts used for monastic

formation. Building on Chiara Faraggiana di Sarzana's foundational work, Dahlman critiques established tendencies that give primacy to ideal, standardized versions and dismiss partial texts preserved in non-standard collections.[18] She argues that by focusing on standard editions of presumed original versions of monastic texts, scholars run the risk of missing both the creative work that has shaped non-standard collections and the rich value inherent in very old versions preserved in manuscript traditions not affected by later revisions. In their consideration of the Nag Hammadi Codices, Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott employ a different, but related critique of textual approaches that privilege idealized models over actual manuscript evidence. Drawing on close, detailed analysis of the colophons included in the codices, Lundhaug and Jenott argue that the codices are marked by the same literary forms apparent across a broader spectrum of early monastic manuscript tradition. They suggest that irrespective of the contents of individual texts, the codices preserved in the extant Coptic collection should be read in light of monastic literary production of the fourth or early fifth centuries, and thus afford an important additional source for the study of monastic education. Jason Zaborowski's essay, the volume's final contribution, explores complementary themes over a longer chronological trajectory. He examines how one collection of the monastic *apophthegmata* continued to be used as a basic educational text within a new cultural context. Presenting a range of examples that document a second period of transition and transformation, Zaborowski introduces a new generation of translators who adapt the monastic "classics" to an Arabic-speaking audience, shaped by yet another emergent set of linguistic and cultural norms.

Zaborowski's contribution brings the conversation full circle, as discussion returns to one of the collected essays' core issues, the persistence of established forms and traditions across linguistic and cultural borders. Like early Christianity, early monasticism has too often been imagined as something radically new and independent of its cultural and historical setting, only gradually being influenced by it.[19] The contributions of this volume support an alternative image in which the historical setting is gradually transformed by changes in literary references as well as political and social developments. Through detailed analysis of material evidence and theoretically informed revisions of previous assumptions, the contributions document the striking continuity that characterizes how education

[18] Faraggiana di Sarzana 1997; 2002; and others.   [19] Cf. Larsen 2001; 2006a.

was understood and practiced across generations – from Classical school settings to the monasteries of Egypt, Palestine and Syria. As manifested in both extant remains and transmitted literature, the monks did not distance themselves from established educational models, whether elementary, grammatical, rhetorical or philosophical, but rather used these forms in dialogue and competition with one another and with non-monastic contemporaries. Through active engagement in the pursuit of education and literary production, new generations of monastic "citizens" were formed. In fostering monastic "civic" space,[20] the early monks lived with and used Classical *paideia* to create what would become the central institutional agent of Christian and secular education, in both the East and the West.

[20] Larsen 2006a, 2008, 2013a, 2013b; Cf. Westergren 2012.