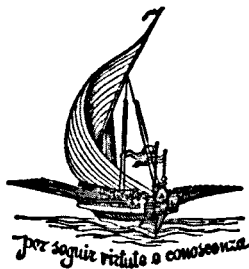


SCRITTURA e CIVILTÀ

2 (1978)



Bottega d'erasmo
torino

THE MADRID SCYLITZES

The Madrid Scyltzes is unique among Byzantine manuscripts. It is the only illuminated copy of any Byzantine historian, and the quantity of decoration is very substantial; there are five hundred and seventy-four illustrations, roughly equivalent to one for each page of the printed text¹. Before going any further I should make it plain that this unique status is subject to two qualifications. In the first place there are some slight indications that other illuminated manuscripts of historical texts were occasionally produced in Byzantium. One copy of the Bulgarian translation of the chronicle by Constantine Manasses is copiously illustrated (it is in the Vatican Library, MS. Vat. slav. 2) and the illustrations seem to depend on a lost Greek model. The same is true of one copy of a Russian version of the chronicle by George Hamartolos (now in the Lenin Library in Moscow, MS. F. 173 No. 100). Secondly, there are signs that some earlier historical texts, composed in the fifth and sixth centuries, may have been illustrated². Nevertheless the Madrid Scyltzes is the only Greek book of this particular category to survive, and the quality and range of the decoration are sufficient to make it an object of considerable interest to art historians. An important feature of the miniatures is that they are not unitary in style. Alongside the obviously Byzantine pictures are others that suggest a Western origin by the dress and portrayal of the rulers, while there are also some traces of familiarity with the Arab world³.

1. The editio princeps was published by H. THURN, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*. Editio princeps, Berolini et Novi Eboraci 1973 (Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae. Series Berolinensis, V).

2. K. WEITZMANN, *Illustration for the Chronicles of Sozomenos, Theodoret and Malalas*, in *Byzantion*, XVI (1942-3), pp. 87-134.

3. A. GRABAR, *Les illustrations de la chronique de Jean Skylitzès à la Bibliothèque nationale de Madrid*, in *Cahiers archéologiques*, XXI (1971), p. 208.

Scylitzes wrote at the end of the eleventh century, not earlier than the seventies and perhaps a good deal later⁴. His history deals with the affairs of Byzantium from 811 to 1057 and was a popular book; several manuscripts survive, whereas a number of important works of Byzantine literature exist only in one or two copies, and he had the dubious honour of being transcribed almost verbatim by one of his successors, George Cedrenus.

The purpose of the present paper is to offer an answer to the much discussed question: when and where was this extraordinarily rich and handsome copy produced? My argument is designed to show that the place of origin can be inferred with a reasonable degree of certainty once the date is established, but that no one has hitherto been able to date the book to the right century.

Views about the date have varied a great deal, and one may fairly comment that the diversity is disturbing. Some authorities have thought it as late as the fourteenth century⁵. More recently opinion among the experts has altered and the range of estimates varies from 1250-1275 to circa 1300⁶. There is also a rather more agnostic position according to which it may be dated anywhere between the last quarter of the twelfth and the second half of the thirteenth centuries, but that is not a dating so much as a confession of ignorance⁷. Yet something is at stake. The consensus of expert opinion suggests that the book is a product of Palaeologan art but leaves open the possibility that it belongs to the Nicaean period (I use these terms only as chronological indications, not wishing at present to commit myself to any geographical implications). But does the book fit in with what we know of late Byzantine illumination, of which a good deal survives? The most recent general study of Palaeologan illumination mentions the book as a product of the late thirteenth century but deals with it extremely briefly, showing that the illuminations depend on a model dating from the period of the

4. His career is now discussed by W. SEIBT, *Ioannes Skylitzes. Zur Person des Chronisten*, in *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, XXV (1976), pp. 81-5.

5. GRABAR, *Les illustrations*, p. 196 is prepared to contemplate this dating.

6. See the conspectus of views offered by I. SEVČENKO, *Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXIII-IV (1969-70), p. 187 n. 2.

7. J. M. F. POMAR, *El Scylitzes de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*, in *Gladius*, III (1964), p. 37.

Comnenian emperors⁸. Without wishing to seem captious I feel bound to observe that if the book is really as late as it is generally assumed to be, the question of its origin, that is to say the identity of the persons who commissioned and executed such an unusually luxurious product in an age of decline and poverty, requires a searching investigation.

Although a full palaeographical description of the manuscript is not essential, it will be useful to state at this point the basic facts about it. The parchment on which it is written is of good but not exceptionally fine quality. The colour varies from white to yellow, and it shows signs of having been well thumbed by readers. The text is written almost entirely by one scribe. But two quires, folios 88-95 and 187-194, seem to be the work of a second hand⁹. The first hand is highly unusual, as is not surprising in view of the uncertainty as to its date. It is quite regular in appearance, and probably the most important single characteristic is a tendency to very tall vertical strokes in the letters kappa, phi and iota. Some other features will be considered later. No similar hand has yet been adduced as a parallel or means of establishing the date.

The second hand is much the same, but the small differences that it exhibits constitute one of the reasons for believing that the book may not be as late as c. 1300. Although the letter shapes are not dissimilar, one sees fewer of the enlarged letters that mark the first hand; these are zeta, rho, tau with a 'mushroom' cross-stroke, and phi. In other words it is a more normal hand, and the rarity of the enlarged letters, combined with its fluent and unforced appearance, makes an earlier date more than likely.

One other fact about these two quires written by the second hand is important. They are not illustrated. Instead spaces were left blank for the pictures. A reasonable explanation for the change of hand and the absence of illumination would be that the original quires were damaged and had to be replaced, and although a scribe could be found to write the text in almost identical style, the original illuminators were no longer available and no others could be found, with the result that the pages remained without decoration. If this hypothesis is correct, the argument for an earlier date is not signifi-

8. H. BELTING, *Das illuminierte Buch in der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft* (Abb. Heidelberg 1970, 1), p. 21.

9. Shown as plate 3 by POMAR.

cantly strengthened, if at all; the need to repair the book can have arisen very soon after its completion, and a long interval is not likely in view of the similarity of the hands.

The script in fact belongs to the middle or second half of the twelfth century, not the thirteenth or fourteenth. This new dating results from a comparison of both the hands, but more particularly the second, with a hand found in a medical manuscript in the Vatican (Vaticanus graecus 300). The similarity has evidently not been observed before. The volume consists mainly of an Arabic medical treatise in seven books by Abu Gafar Ibn al Gazzar, translated into Greek (folios 11-267); the remaining contents, a number of small items, are also medical. In the printed catalogue it is described as « saec. XI?-XII »¹⁰. This presumably means that Giovanni Mercati considered a date in the eleventh century possible, but that the twelfth seemed more likely. Two facts about the book indicate that it is a product of the Italo-Greek world. At least once in the text (folio 17r) and several times in the marginal notes we find observations by a certain Philippos Xeros, a doctor from Reggio, who speaks of himself in the first person and addresses his son Nikolaos; since the marginalia in question are not written by any of the scribes responsible for the text one does not know which if any of the hands may be regarded as his autograph; it may be that despite the use of the first person all this material is transcribed from the exemplar. A further hint of the origin of the book is that one of the marginal notes in a later hand alludes to the Salerno school of medicine (folio 248r). I do not know of any other Greek manuscript in which there is such an allusion, but this is not surprising, since the reference books do not suggest that Greek texts were used in the original language at the Salerno school.

The book is written on parchment of quite good quality, not the miserable material that is so often found in books from that area. On some leaves the lines to guide the script have been ruled in pencil, which is almost certainly a proof of origin in the Italo-Greek area. Mercati thought that there were two or three scribes; with all due respect I am convinced that there are four or five. The most important

10. *Codices Vaticani Graeci 1-329*, by P. F. de' CAVALIERI and G. MERCATI, Rome 1923, p. 430. Cfr. G. MERCATI, *Notizie varie di antica letteratura medica e di bibliografia. I. Filippo Xeros Reggino, Giovanni Alessandrino iatrosostata e altri nel codice Vaticano degli «Ephodia»*, Roma 1917 (Studi e Testi, 31), pp. 10-7.

of them wrote folios 11-211 and 273 (verso line 12)-304. If this were the only hand in the book one would be tempted to assign it to the late eleventh century, and this must explain Mercati's hesitation about the date of the book as a whole. The other hands must be presumed contemporary, as there is no sign that any part is a later addition or substitution for lost original folios. In fact two scribes wrote marginalia in parts of the book for which they were not responsible, and one of them, whose hand looks early, wrote notes on folios 242r and 253rv, where the scribe of the text at first sight seems later. But though the book is a coherent unit without additions the eleventh century date cannot be maintained in view of the hand that wrote folios 262-273. It is of the type that is now often known as Reggio script, a style found in its mature form by the middle of the twelfth century in such books as Messina MS. gr. 172 of A.D. 1149 and Harley 5786 of c. A.D. 1153¹¹. Given the appearance of the main hand, which shows no sign of that archaism so frequent among Byzantine scribes, this example of Reggio script should probably be regarded as contemporary with the examples I have just cited.

There are two other scribes in the book whom I have not mentioned yet. They wrote folios 211v-230v and 231r-261r respectively, and are somewhat similar in style. It is the first which concerns us, because it is so like the script of the Madrid Scylitzes, especially that of the second hand, that it must be regarded as the work of a member of the same scriptorium, and I personally would be inclined to believe that it is the work of the same person at an interval of a few years, the differences being of a kind that may be expected to occur in the hand of an individual over a certain period of time. I now turn to a more detailed discussion of the script. The style is unusual and to the best of my knowledge there are no published photographs of any example other than the Scylitzes. In the Madrid manuscript the difference between the work of the two scribes is small and can best be described by saying that the main hand indulges in a large number of extravagant long strokes, and as these are not to be found in the Vatican manuscript the proper basis of comparison is between it and the second hand of the Scylitzes. The general similarity is immediately obvious, and this general impression can be

11. Both illustrated in the collection of K. and S. LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts to the Year 1200*, nos. 353 (pl. 651-2), 80 (pl. 140-1).

confirmed by the agreement in certain details, most of them easily found on any page.

Among the consonants one can cite the almost uncial beta; the delta with a very flowing upper loop; a zeta which has a much longer initial stroke than is usual, stretching down almost as far as the base of the letter; the large uncial kappa; a very elegant xi; a lunate sigma of two sizes, one very large, the other a little larger than necessary; a phi with a stroke rising higher than usual. As to the vowels, the open epsilon, the omicron and the omega are often prominent, being a little larger than the scale of the hand requires, the omega sometimes much larger. The upsilon tends to be extravagant. There are also interesting ligatures: alpha followed by kappa sometimes results in a very tall minuscule kappa, and epsilon followed by rho has two slightly differing variants, both found in each book. Sigma preceded by alpha or upsilon is often open on the left-hand side, which is not common in other manuscripts. A combination of tau and rho, in which the tau stands above the rho, is found once in each hand (225r in the Vaticanus, 95r in Scylitzes) and is something of an oddity. A combination of alpha and phi in which the left-hand side of the phi is open is quite common in the Scylitzes and can be found occasionally in the Vaticanus (221r, 223r). A constant feature of the Scylitzes which is rare in the other book is that the down-stroke of the tau turns away to the left. Prolonged search in the Vaticanus did in the end produce a few examples (e.g. 213r, 215r, 221v), but it must be admitted that there is a slight difference here between the two scripts, one which may have occurred in the evolution of an individual's hand in the course of a year or two. Two other differences which need to be recorded are in my opinion of the same kind. The Scylitzes often shows eta in the middle of a word written as a curving stroke, and it sometimes has the double accent on $\mu\grave{\epsilon}\nu$ and $\delta\grave{\epsilon}$. One may remark in passing that this form of eta is very rare outside the twelfth century¹². Neither of these habits seems to be found in the Vaticanus. There are not many compendia but one of them is interesting. Both books show the practice of substituting for the omega-nu compendium an omega written above the line. The reference books on Greek abbreviation do not cite this practice from medieval ma-

12. If one may trust the information in G. ZERETELI, *Sokrashchenija v greche-skikh rukopisjakh*, St. Petersburg 1904².

nuscripts. It is certainly not common, and at present I have no other example to offer.

To sum up: despite a few slight differences the script in the two books is so alike that one must accept at the very least a proximity of date and origin, and my own belief is that we are dealing with the same scribe at an interval of a few years. The main scribe of the Vaticanus belongs to the middle or late twelfth century, and the book is presumably to be located in the Italo-Greek area. At first sight Reggio might seem to be the obvious place for such a book to be written, but the Reggio script, if it is rightly so called, was certainly used over a wide area, and we cannot say anything about the movements of the doctor Philippos Xeros of Reggio, even assuming, which is by no means clear, that one of the hands in the book is his autograph. A better indication of the origin of the book may be the fact that the main text is a translation from the Arabic, which may point to the trilingual culture of Palermo under the Norman kingdom. This would coincide very satisfactorily with the hypothesis put forward by the eminent art historian A. Grabar, to whose discussion of the Scylitzes illuminations I now turn¹³.

Grabar accepted the *communis opinio* about the date of the Scylitzes and went so far as to say that a date early in the fourteenth century is not excluded. He was naturally very puzzled by the absence of anything in the miniatures that could be regarded as a feature of Palaeologan art, and one must assume that he thought the book an exceptionally clever example of Byzantine imitation and conservatism. It is true that on p. 194 of his article he says that not only the palaeographical argument but also certain features of the paintings point to the late date, and promises to deal with these features later in the article, but I cannot see where this promise is made good.

His analysis of the miniatures led him to identify four styles, the first two of which, being very similar to each other, reminded him strongly of eleventh century art as seen in such manuscripts as Laur. 6. 23 and Paris gr. 74. The third and fourth styles are both less skilful and less dependent on Byzantine antecedents; one reminded him of the *exultet* rolls, the other of a Bern manuscript of Peter of Eboli. A connection with the Italo-Greek world seemed obvious and he hazarded the guess that a model or ancestor of the Scylitzes was prepared at the court of Palermo in the twelfth century (pp. 203-4).

13. GRABAR, *Les illustrations*, pp. 191-211.

The existence of a few Muslim motifs (p. 208) adds strong support to the idea.

The palaeographical arguments that I have produced enable us to simplify the genesis of the miniatures. The Madrid book is itself the copy produced at Palermo in all probability; given the date, the style of the script and the quantity of illustration it is hard to believe that it was produced anywhere else. We may pause for a moment to consider in more detail how it was made. Grabar thought that he could distinguish not only four styles of illustration but seven different illuminators. If he is right this evidence again points to Palermo; where else except at the royal court could there be a scriptorium with so many illuminators at its disposal? It is however a real question why four styles should be discernible, two of them Byzantine, the others at least partially Western. Perhaps anxiety to finish the commission within a reasonable time led to the employment of every available illuminator, including those who did not habitually work on Greek texts. In that case one would expect to find the lengthy task of copying the text calligraphically divided similarly among several calligraphers, who as a profession were probably more numerous and easy to engage than illuminators. So the need for haste in the production is a possible rather than a fully satisfying explanation of the four styles.

We next have to ask what the four styles suggest about the models for the Scylitzes and whether the text was being illustrated for the first time. If this was the first set of illustrations devised for Scylitzes, it is very hard to see why this author should have been singled out for such treatment; I am not aware of any special link with Sicily that could justify it. On the other hand it must be said that the absence of an illustrated copy to work from would have forced the illuminators to apply their inventive energies in the styles to which they were accustomed. The alternative is to assume that the model was a book from Constantinople. In that case the assumption must be that it was illustrated in a more or less coherent, at any rate fully Byzantine style, but that some of the Sicilian illuminators could not or would not copy the model very closely. There is no harm in crediting them with a desire to show a degree of independence or originality.

We next have to explain the arrival in Sicily of an exceptional and luxurious book from the capital of the empire. That is not dif-

* Βήχει ξηροί βραχεία έρεθίζονται. Θάυματος και ούτος λόγος. τάλυ δε και βωματος και ελυσος
 και εβιομημοστος. λεγα γαρ. οτι υποκειται διασκαλοπρετος. και τι τοις. ου γινεται διψα. και γινεται ελ
 ροτιος. τούτο διατι γινεται. εσα δλιμικρον υποκειται μηχον οπρ το μερι ακιμοσι. μεριωνω φερει ερε
 τιτα παρα του ορεκτι και προου. και παραμυθειται μεν του διψα οκαμωων. οφων τε λγος αυτην πω ε
 καλωσ δε ειπε βραχίον. και ον κει πε βραχ. Επειδμη η μαλακωσ. μεγαλη ποι ετι κίρησιν και θουριωδη.
 οτι δε ουλό γα τω μαλακωσ. εδωλωσε δια του ετην εκ κρε ερεθίζονται. και εκ του λεγα ου θουριωδη
 τροπω. θουριω
 θεισ δε μαχασ τη
 λγιστην. η των η
 μολεων ην (ω) ελκη
 του πρι ελμοσ.
 η οταν ασκαριδες
 και ελμωθεσ. ε
 μεχδωσ παρα του
 εμαχον και τα
 εφο χειρια. ποι

α

γαραρι βεσθι οφωσ θηματος τισ γλυκυριζισ τισ εθηθει
 σισ ιχυρωσ. και αυρωσασ. αμα μεγε μετω θηματος. και
 εθησων τω μαμφωσθωσιν. αιχρισαμ πιξη και γυνηται φσ με
 λι. και αμ γαραρι σθητω. ωσωτως ποιησων μετω του
 γλακωσ των ιουδαων. +

Η εκτη πηλη. πησ βραχισ. +

ωσ ο ορος της μαχασ. ετι κίρησιν σκοιμη. απο τε τισ αμα
 πησ και τισ φισωσ. φισικη τε μοσας εμ τοις οργαμοισ
 τισ αμ αμμοισ. του ελαττωσιν πι βην την υλαμω δε αυτων.
 η δε λωσισ του ορου τουτου. ούτως. η γαρ φισισ. κίρησιν τω
 οργαμοισ τισ αμ αμμοισ. του ελαττωσιν την υλαμω εκ του
 τωσιν. οπρ ουτρει ουτα. εμη διατησ αμ αμμοισ κησ
 δω αμωσ. σω βρωσισ και τισ φισωσ αυτησ. μοτη
 οκαλωσ του πρι ελμοσ. εμ το αυτω εμη χυμωσ δε
 και κεροι σδη. ετην εμ αμωσ τισ φισικησ δω αμωσ.
 ημ αμωσ δε αυτω οπρ χειρ εβη εισ το απο δω κειν.
 βωει αυτη η φισικη δω αμωσ. εχει σιμαλην την πρι ελμοισ
 δω αμωσ. η τισ κίρησιν αδωσ. παρα λαμωσ οισισ
 δε ταυτησ τισ δω αμωσ κατα το φηθωσ. και αμ εκαζου
 σισ τον πρι ελμοσ. εκ κημωσ τον ομτω εμ τω πρι ελμοισ εε
 ρω. μετω του ευρι σκαμωσ εμ τω λελαμω του πρι ελμοισ.
 σιμαμω δε και το μαχωσ. απο των ερεωσ των του σθηθε.
 και λευτολικωσ σιμαμωσ. πημωσ. απο δασκρωσισ
 εμ δ παλληλου θωρμωσ η τυχεωσ οπρ ιουδαωσ κατα το μ
 οργαμωσ τισ αμ αμμοισ. πη δε. δε ελυσωσ ποικρωσ.

ησωσ την μαχ
 ταυτα δε ωσ σω
 ρια απο μαλτα
 δλιω θουριωδη
 λεγα την μαχ
 την απησων ητη
 γινεται. η διαπ
 χω χυμωσ. η δια
 αωσθωσισ αμ δω α
 μωσ. η δια ε
 πο ταυ τισ
 λωσ καταρρωσ.
 ταυτη μοσ λεγα
 την μαχ την εμ
 πρι ελμοισ ημ.
 πησ δε φηλωσ.
 εισηται γαρ ημα
 και εμ τη πρι ελ
 τισ. οτι γινεται
 μη και δια φη
 χωσ πρι ελμοισ
 πρι ελμοισ. και
 δια προ φασ δε
 ματερασ. και δε
 κοινοσ του τρα
 μου του του τρα
 χη ερ τηριαμ.
 ταυτων ομ λεγα
 μαχωσ την απη
 φηλωσ πρι ελμοισ
 ημωσ ημωσ. και
 δλιωσ τουτου εκτ
 θεσ απησασ. ετημ
 γαρ ωσωσιν τη
 εμα. η μετωσ ρωσ. η μετωσ η χειλεων. και μη εσθε χειρ φησισ αερ. παύται η μη ε. ταυτω δια
 ταυτων παραδιδωσιν. Βηχεσ ξηροι. ξηρα γαρ επετην μαχωσ. εσα δλιμικρον. και ον κει πε βραχ
 τισ η κίρησιν μεν κηκτωσ μη χίον. εαυτην αχισκεται ετην παραμωσ αμ εδω φησ.

ficult. We know that the leading intellectual at the Palermo court was sent in the year 1158 as an envoy to the Byzantine emperor and that he came back with a copy of Ptolemy's *Almagest* from the imperial library¹⁴. This book was a gift, presumably made by the emperor direct from the holdings of his library, unless we are to imagine a copy specially made from the imperial exemplar in the palace scriptorium, thus allowing the emperor to keep his library intact. Another book that reached Sicily as a gift from the library of the emperor Manuel was the so-called Prophecy of the Erythraean Sibyl¹⁵. I would suggest that the envoys may have received a number of gifts, a Scylitzes among them. The reason for choosing this text is not immediately clear, but one can imagine that a man with the intellectual curiosity of Henricus Aristippus wished to learn something about the history of Byzantium, and Scylitzes at least gave him a tolerable account of two and a half centuries of it. The copy on my hypothesis will have been illuminated, and I should like to suggest that the original in the imperial library was a special illuminated copy presented by the author to the emperor. The author had held high offices of state, so that connections with the court were a matter of course, and there is a trace of an analogous presentation copy.

At the beginning of this paper I mentioned that although the Scylitzes is the only Greek chronicle to be illuminated, there are two examples of similar texts in Slavonic translation with miniatures. The one which concerns us is the Bulgarian Manasses. The copy can be dated c. 1344-5 and has nearly seventy illustrations, two thirds of which relate directly to the text of the Greek original and are thought to be based on the pictures in a lost exemplar. Particular attention has been devoted to the miniature on the first folio, a composition with the three figures of Christ, the tsar Ivan Alexander and the chronicler Manasses.

It is difficult to resist the inference that this is a suitably amended version of a Byzantine copy with a portrait of the emperor Manuel Comnenus¹⁶. The chronicle was written for the princess Irene, wife of Andronicus the sebastocrator, brother of the emperor

14. C. H. HASKINS, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1927², pp. 157-64, 178-9, 191-3.

15. Our source says that it was « de aerario Manuelis imperatoris eductum ».

16. I. DUJČEV, *The Miniatures of the Chronicle of Manasses*, Sofia 1963, esp. pp. 24-5, 127-32.

Manuel, and a presentation copy for the royal library would seem appropriate in the circumstances. Either this book or a specially prepared copy of it was subsequently given to the Bulgarian court.

If this reconstruction of events is acceptable the Scylitzes is no longer unique. It belongs to a very small and special class of books, presentation copies for the imperial library that cannot be regarded as typical of Byzantine book production. Two further facts, which I have deliberately withheld so far, may now be added in support of what has inevitably been a very hypothetical solution to the problem. Firstly, the Madrid Scylitzes may originally have had a similar frontispiece. If one examines the first page, now folio 9 of the manuscript, one finds that underneath the title there was a picture, now so badly damaged that virtually nothing is visible in the facsimile. Nevertheless a few clear traces survive and they show a cross like the one held in the Bulgarian manuscript by the tsar. It is not therefore rash to suppose that there was a picture of the emperor at the appropriate point in the Scylitzes. Secondly the text of the Madrid Scylitzes can give some support to the idea that it descends from a good, one might almost say official, copy. The editor of the chronicle records¹⁷ that it has been affected by a number of interpolations. When one looks at the list of the manuscripts affected by these interpolations one discovers that the only group exempt from this deterioration of the text is the one consisting of the Madrid manuscript, its close relative in Naples and the source of Cedrenus. The inference is obvious; the copy in the imperial library was sheltered from the activity of readers who interfered with the text, and the purity of its text has not yet been lost in the descendant that we are dealing with.

To recapitulate: Scylitzes arranged for a copy of his history to be presented to the imperial library, and the book was elaborately illuminated, with a frontispiece depicting Christ, the emperor and the author. About a generation later Manasses, who also had connections with the court, arranged a similar presentation. In 1158, when envoys came from the Norman king of Sicily, a copy of this luxurious Scylitzes was made for Henricus Aristippus. When he brought this back to Sicily a third illuminated exemplar was required for some reason which cannot now be guessed. That third copy is the book in Madrid. It is one of the few indications we have of the

17. Pp. XXIX ff.

state of miniature painting in the middle of the twelfth century at the trilingual court in Palermo. I have attributed it to the middle of the century because of the likelihood of its being the result of Aristippus' journey to Constantinople, and because it is well known that the best years of king William I's reign were 1154-60, after which social and political upheavals became serious. But the possibility that the third copy was commissioned somewhat later in the century cannot be dismissed out of hand. In fact surprisingly little is known about the manuscripts produced at or for the court in Palermo, as may be inferred for instance from the absence of Palermo from the index of Mgr. Devreesse's study of the manuscripts of southern Italy and Sicily. Apart from Vaticanus graecus 300 one other manuscript which fairly obviously belongs to this milieu is the famous trilingual Psalter in the British Library, Harley 5786, in Greek, Latin and Arabic and thought to belong to the year 1153. Yet it remains surprising that the medical book, the Psalter and the Scylitzes should be the only surviving products of this civilisation.