

they could play an important and guiding role. Some might argue that the people who lived in the time and space covered in this book did not think in terms of a “Chinese” identity, but perhaps for those in the twenty-first century who do, this book offers a vision of the intellectual foundation for a national identity and the role intellectuals should play in its construction.

Peter K. Bol

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**Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński**, ed., *Writing History in Medieval Poland: Bishop Vincentius of Cracow and the “Chronica Polonorum.”* Cursor Mundi 28. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. Pp. xii+289. €80.00.

In the late eleventh century a learned discourse about the developing cultural unity of Europe started to embrace Europe’s geographical and political peripheries, that is, Scandinavia and the three kingdoms of east central Europe (Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland). In both areas, converted to Christianity *grosso modo* in the late tenth century, the first generations of intellectuals, almost exclusively clergymen, came from abroad. However, from the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries onward one can see ever more people from the peripheries of medieval *Latinitas* going west for an education, to the schools and universities that were just then starting to develop. One of these people was the Polish cleric Vincentius, who probably studied in Paris and Bologna in the 1180s. He returned home with a master’s grade, became bishop of Cracow (1207–18), and at the end of his life became a monk in the Cistercian abbey of Jędrzejów (d. 1223). He is remembered first and foremost as the author of an extraordinary account of Polish history, doubling as a moralistic treatise of political virtues, written in a very rich ornamental Latin and containing countless references to both Christian literature and works of classical antiquity. This *Chronicle* has until recently been virtually unknown to the international scholarly community. After the recent bilingual Latin-German critical edition (*Die Chronik der Polen des Magisters Vincentius*, ed. E. Mühle [Darmstadt: WBG, 2014]), we have now been provided also with an English-language volume of analytical studies on Vincentius and his work, edited by Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński of the University of Melbourne.

In a short, technical introduction, the editor states that the twelve contributions that make up the volume, prepared by Polish historians from various generations, offer “an examination of Vincentius’s impact on the writing of history of Poland and the region”

and explore “the circumstances surrounding his authorship of *Chronica Polonorum*” (ix). The first three articles (by the editor himself, Jacek Maciejewski, and Józef Dobosz) sketch the chronological and factual framework for further analysis. The chronicle, written most probably between ca. 1190 and 1207, was commissioned by Kazimierz the Just, Duke of Cracow, who had broken the rules of succession introduced by his father, Duke Boleslaw Wrymouth, in 1138. Vincentius, closely connected by family ties to the political elite of the country as well as to the ecclesiastical elite of the bishopric of Cracow, witnessed the ensuing feudal dismemberment of the Polish state.

The chronicle, divided into four books (three in the form of a dialogue between two eminent Polish bishops and the last one in the form of a narrative), reshaped the image of the national past that had been created almost a century earlier in the *gesta* of the Polish rulers written by the so-called Gallus Anonymus. The pre-Christian past is now presented as a period of spectacular Polish achievements in wars against Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar himself, successful thanks to their “unity, order and obedience to law” (57). Vincentius’s view gained a permanent place in the Polish collective imagination. The chronicle was read, copied, and excerpted by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century authors of historical and hagiographical accounts. Its oldest existing manuscript, the so-called *Codex Eugenianus*, dates from the 1340s. However, Marcelli Zwiercan emphasizes that the highest wave of interest in the text came in the 1430s when the chronicle was included in the reading matter of university courses on moral philosophy and rhetoric. Until the early 1480s numerous copies were produced, containing Vincentius’s text together with the abundant academic commentary written by the university professor Jan Dąbrówka.

Four other contributions to the volume discuss the textual features of the chronicle. According to Edward Skibiński, Vincentius’s superabundant Latin included various forms of the *cursus*, strings of words, plays on words, fictive dialogues, metaphors, and allegories. He strongly opposes the opinion that the language is exaggerated and unclear. In his view, the variety of rhetorical and stylistic devices was applied on purpose—in order to describe psychological motifs behind events (97).

Undoubtedly, a great part of the chronicler’s textual instrumentarium was taken from the Christian and classical texts he alluded to, paraphrased, or quoted. Katarzyna Chmielewska counted almost 140 references to the Bible (half of them referred to the books of Kings and the Psalms) and to some of the most often-read patristic authors: Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Isidore of Sevilla, and also to one of the fathers of the Eastern Church, Athanasius of Alexandria (123). The number of references to classical authors is even higher: more than 160, and especially those to the historians Justinus (sixty-six!) and Valerius Magnus. Vincentius also used works of the Roman poets (Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Lucan, and Juvenal) and of masters of rhetoric and philo-

ophy (Seneca, Cicero, Boethius, and Quintilianus). Legal literature, skillfully analyzed by Zénon Kałuża, provided sixty-four references to Justinian and evidence suggesting that Vincentius also knew the *Decretum Gratiani* and other collections of canon law (148).

The last three contributions (by Paweł Żmudzki, Robert Bubczyk, and Marcin Pauk) discuss the opinions of the chronicler about the nation, the church, the princely court of Cracow, and his depiction of the social relationships in the early thirteenth-century Polish lands. A great merit of these articles is the presentation of these problems in the context of the twentieth-century scholarly debate on the socioeconomic principles of the early Polish state.

The volume has been equipped with three maps, a list of members of the Piast dynasty (until ca. 1230), and a list of the main political events in this period.

While appreciating the editor's efforts, one nevertheless has to note some shortcomings of the volume, especially the fact that the articles seem not to have been edited with an eye to producing a coherent collection. There are many repetitions, both in the papers and in the bibliographical apparatus. But more worrying is the lack of attention to the broader European context, the general literary and historical culture that forms the background against which Vincentius's chronicle appeared. Recent developments of research on the twelfth-century Renaissance, on manuscript culture, and on narrative strategies used when narrating a community's shared past, seem to have been hardly noticed by Polish scholarship. These reservations do not change the fact that the volume discussed here is important and useful. Its usefulness will augment even more when the English edition of the *Chronica Polonorum* of Vincentius, announced repeatedly by Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński, will finally become available to the English-speaking scholarly community.

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**Olga Weijers**, *A Scholar's Paradise: Teaching and Debating in Medieval Paris*. Studies on the Faculty of Arts, History and Influence 2. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015. Pp. 257. €45.00.

In spite of its small size, this volume contains a wealth of information on the events and intellectual movements that shaped the development of the Faculty of Arts in the early days of the University of Paris. Olga Weijers has published extensively on