Palestini in Peter Comestor’s Historia Scholastica

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Abstract
As participants in the Historia Scholastica Project, our obligation for the 2022-2023 academic year is the advancement of the transcription, translation and contextualization of Idaho's oldest publicly accessible book, Peter Comestor's Historia Scholastica. Boise State University's manuscript was printed in the mid-late 1470s, 300 years after its original composition. Because of its wide popularity, Historia Scholastica was copied multiple times in various vernaculars and served as a biblical commentary, placing the world and events of humanity in relation to the events of the old and new testaments, from Genesis to Revelation. In order to accomplish this, Comestor utilized a variety of extra-biblical ancient Jewish and Greek sources. His use of these sources has provided both a research avenue, and a challenge to modern readers. The specific contextual issue we explore here is Comestor's mention, reference, and discussion of the term Palestini. With contact flowing between the east and the west due to the Crusades, we strive to understand Comestor's potential perception and understanding of Palestini, and how Palestine as its own distinct nation transcends into the complicated geopolitical issues and conversations of our modern era.
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INTRODUCTION
Our responsibilities as members of the recurring Historia Scholastica Project (HSP) at Boise State University include transcribing, translating, and researching Peter Comestor’s bibliographical commentary of The Book of Judges. Our ultimate objective as an original research project is to cultivate the first annotated and contextually informed translation of Boise State’s copy of this particular manuscript which was highly popular, copied, and widely discussed in theological classrooms across medieval Europe. In discussing the story of Samson during weekly translation sessions, the student team discovered a passage for further inquiry: Qua cogito palestini posuerunt custodes in parte civitatis ex exentum mane occident. We collectively determined our translation to be: When this was discovered, the Palestinians placed guards at the gate of the city, in order that they might kill him coming out in the morning. The team was intrigued by Comestor’s specific use of Palestini rather than Israël, as is featured in the Bible, and of which he used with much greater frequency throughout The Book of Judges.

In order to meet our goal of creating a translation informed by the text’s historical context, our methodology has involved applying critical textual analysis and relevant historical discourse to compare the Boise State copy to the 198th volume of Jacque Paul Migne’s ecclesiastical magnum opus, the Patrologia Latina (PL198). This process has allowed us to create a comparative textual transcription to note content and structural changes between manuscripts.

Second, we have begun to research and compare through academic literature the origins and various understandings of the term “Palestini” via ancient source materials which might have influenced Comestor’s work. This contextual background hopefully will provide a clearer context for future student participants in the Historia Scholastica Project to create an informed translation of a portion of Boise State’s Historia Scholastica.

CONCLUSION
We conclude Avenue B: that Peter Comestor often intentionally deviated from the Biblical sources and Judaic texts he was using, but we don’t know his reasoning for the deviation. In this particular section, he employed the term palestini to describe an area that is more frequently referred to as israel. We posit that Comestor utilized a variety of ancient texts from Greek historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, to inform his word selection. We theorize that Comestor applied the terminology to draw upon their perceived authority. We know with definitive confidence that Comestor’s word choice of Palestini was absolutely not meaningless. At time of presentation, the team hypothesizes that Comestor was relaying word choices from Ancient Greek sources in order to better understand the geographical area around the Mediterranean Sea.

There is more risk today of geographical confusion due to our modern context and potential to mislead with “Palestine”, and it is the responsibility of the translation team to negotiate historical nuances.

REFERENCES (Ancient)

REFERENCES (Modern)
2. Wadley, Karen. “Foreword”, in HSP Overview and HSP Provenance reprinted and adapted from paragraphs. A few marginalia show on the pages of the Book of Genesis, and little leather tabs mark off the 200999 pages remain, set in double columns, with forty-two lines in each. The lettering is in calligraphy.

We would like to thank all earlier contributors to the HSP: Judges for their various contributions to earlier sections of this paper.