

The *Paideia* and the *Mercatores*: Tracing Socio-Economic Determiners of Linguistic Education
in Late Antique North Africa and Egypt

It has long been attested that access to the coveted *paideia*, the education of the “ideal” Roman man which progressed the student through the full grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric stages of linguistic training (among other subjects), was highly restricted to an elect class of the Roman population. This class-based educational disparity became even more complex during years of Late Antiquity when Christian and Germanic cultural forces destabilized and syncretized traditional Roman educational practice (Bonner 1977). In turn, despite the lack of access to the traditional *paideic* elite education, a vast quantity of late antique Greek-speaking *mercatores*, merchants, learned Latin well into the 4th and 5th centuries through the use of bilingual text and narrative pedagogical techniques, allowing them to gain an advantage in Roman commercial life (Dickey 2016).

Analyzing the evolution of the *paideia*'s linguistic pedagogy from Quintillian's notion of *doctrina duplex* (Maurice 2013) to the methods adopted by the last classical schools of late Roman North Africa and Egypt (Marrou 1956), I will show how the motivations and pedagogical techniques associated with late antique Greek *mercatores* learning Latin for commercial benefit compared and contrasted with those associated with late antique elite students completing the then culturally syncretized stages of the *paideia*'s linguistic education. In support, I will analyze textual evidence including late antique bilingual learning papyri, excerpts from the grammatical works of 4th century writers such as Dositheus, Charisius, and Gaius Iulius Victor, and documented experiences from late antique North African and Egyptian *grammatici* such as Horapollo (Maurice 2013).

I will then synthesize the textual evidence with the history of the Christian and Germanic destabilization and syncretization of late antique society to argue that late antique linguistic education, of both the *paideic* and commercial class varieties, increasingly prioritized the engenderment of “codes of conduct” over the fulfillment of traditional Quintillianesque educational sentiments because of an across-class desire to conserve social stability. I will conclude that this mutual desire for social stability intimates an *alignment* of motivations for linguistic education in late antique North Africa and Egypt despite differences in pedagogical techniques among the classes (Watts 2012).

It is my hope that this study not only sheds light on socio-economic barriers relating to late antique linguistic education and how those barriers might have been overcome through common educational motivations, but that it also raises awareness of the historic privilege associated with the *paideia* and how that privilege might have worked itself into modern linguistic pedagogy. Learning from the cultural destabilization and syncretization of Late Antiquity and how the ancients dealt with it in their educational processes, I aim for this study to give us historical reference to our current efforts to make Greek and Latin instruction more readily available to those who are socio-economically disadvantaged today, especially in a world that is facing culture-wars and social fragmentations that are arguably much akin to those of Late Antiquity. I also hope that this further application of the late antique bilingual learning materials recently begun by Eleanor Dickey and others can contribute in a historical-critical manner to the continuing conversation on current classical language pedagogy, particularly in light of the meteoric rise of interest in SLA active-learning methods which are often promoted as restorationist pedagogies.

Bibliography

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