

ABSTRACT

Aristotle from York to Basra

An investigation into the simultaneous study of Aristotle's *Categories* in the Carolingian, the Byzantine and the Abbasid worlds

Author: Erik Hermans

Advisor: Robert Hoyland

In the eighth and ninth centuries CE intellectuals in three different societies were studying the same classical text in three different languages. In Western Europe, Carolingian intellectuals were studying the *Categories* of Aristotle in Latin, while in Byzantium contemporary scholars were reading it in Greek and in the Middle East Abbasid scholars did so in Arabic. My dissertation addresses the question of why the *Categories* was studied at the same time in these three different culturo-political worlds. The primary sources that I use include paraphrases and translations of the *Categories* that are found in the works of John of Damascus and Photius in the Byzantine world, Alcuin and John Scottus Eriugena in the Carolingian world and Ibn Al-Muqaffa' and Al-Kindī in the Islamic world. Rather than providing an analysis of the philosophical interpretations of the *Categories* by any of these intellectuals, I explore the possible explanations of the simultaneous study of the *Categories*, such as direct contact between these scholars, movement of manuscripts and coincidence. I conclude that the most likely explanation is that the late Roman

educational curriculum which was established by the sixth century and which included Aristotle's *Categories*, continued to exert its influence in all three cultural zones. As a result, I argue that early medieval scholars living as far apart as England and Iraq had a similar intellectual horizon in which exposure to Aristotelian logic in schools played an important role.