

REVIEWS

Medieval

Rosa Bacile and John McNeill (eds). *Romanesque and the Mediterranean, Points of contact across the Latin, Greek and Islamic Worlds, c.1000- c.1250* (British Archaeological Association Occasional Publications). 2015. Leeds: Maney Publishing. ISBN 978-1-909662-80-3 paperback £55.

This informative and well-presented volume is the result of papers presented in Palermo in 2012 at the British Architectural Association's second international Romanesque conference. The Romanesque is essentially a Latin, central and western European expression of art and architecture and the papers identify and question those points of contact with the established traditions of Byzantium and Islam. Few places are better placed to see this interaction than Sicily and this is reflected in two of the main papers on the Cappella Palatina, Roger of Sicily's new Norman palace in Palermo (it should be noted that the papers vary considerably in length). The first by Johns concerns Moslem Fatimid artists of the painted ceiling and how they were influenced by the Byzantine and Romanesque images they encountered in Palermo. The second based on a recent doctoral dissertation by Anzelmo analyses the huge range of dress and personal adornment portrayed on the same ceiling. Another significant contribution to Norman studies by Bacile is to establish the five porphyry sarcophagi from Palermo and Monreal not as spolia as they were normally assumed to be but as Norman manufacture with demonstrably 12th century carvings, a sure sign of the ambitions of the Sicilian Normans to engage in the legacy of both Islam and Byzantium. Another major paper by Rosser-Owen looks more broadly from Yorkshire to Fatimid Cairo and asserts that the prestige ivory carved horns known to art historians as Olifants were essentially a cultural symbol sponsored by the Norman elite consolidating their control in Sicily and southern Italy, without any direct connection with Fatimid Egypt as has been claimed. Many of these papers reflect the hegemony of the Norman rulers over their former Arab and Byzantine subjects and this is also apparent in architecture especially in Apulia, where Bari acquired grand new Romanesque churches, especially the shrine of St Nicholas ('translated' by the men of Bari from Myra in Lycia). A short paper by Fernie draws attention to the earlier major cult of St Sabinus at the rival city of Canosa which can be interpreted, despite much later rebuilding, as a five domed basilica, comparable in form to the sixth-century Apostoleion in Constantinople, a form

reasserted in Venice with the Basilica San Marco begun in 1063. In this instance he argues for a date in the 1040s or 1050s before the Norman conquest of Apulia in 1071, when Byzantine control of southern Italy was still quite secure.

For a Byzantinist this volume provides a number of examples of the maintenance of Byzantine influence, especially art historical across the Mediterranean, but in other instances such as the church at Feldebrő in Hungary (Szakács), what might be seen as Byzantine influence on closer analysis can be seen to have closer Latin connections. Ultimately the Romanesque in the southern lands, as in Norman England, was to define a new hegemony, but unlike the later Gothic styles would have no place in the heartlands of the empire.

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