

a sort of *lingua franca* that is spoken in whispers and still circulates almost silently from one religion to another' (244). This reader applauds the attempts made by Albera, Couroucli, and Cormack to break the 'silence' and to bring such shared spaces to our attention.

Contributor Details

Amanda Luyster received her Ph.D. from Harvard University and is a Lecturer at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. Her publications in medieval European and Islamic art history include essays in journals such as *Medieval Encounters* and *Word & Image*. She also co-edited (with Alicia Walker) a volume entitled *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art: Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist* (Ashgate, 2009). She has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Aga Khan program, the Woodrow Wilson foundation and the Paul Mellon Centre.

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THE ISLAMIC VILLA IN EARLY MEDIEVAL IBERIA: ARCHITECTURE AND COURT CULTURE IN Umayyad Córdoba, **GLAIRE D. ANDERSON (2013)**

Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 258 pp., 82 b/w illus., 16 colour illus., ISBN 9781409449430, \$109.95 (hardback)

Reviewed by Alex J. Novikoff, Fordham University

This clearly written, well-organized and handsomely produced volume makes a signal contribution to the study of material culture in early medieval Iberia and beyond. The central thesis of the book, supported by an impressively expansive and interdisciplinary approach, is that the Mediterranean suburban villa of Roman antiquity did not die off with the Islamic conquest of Spain in the eighth century, but persisted well into the Islamic period in the form of the Umayyad *munya* (pl. *muniyat*); and, moreover, that these 'Islamic villas' offered economic and architectural continuity both with Late Antiquity and with the broader Mediterranean basin in the medieval period. Combining a wide reading of the archaeological and art historical evidence with a close examination of Arabic literary texts, Anderson argues that these *muniyat* were both suburban retreats and productive sites for the rulers and members of their court, and as such offered cross-cultural parallels to other times and places. In this book, the revisionist work on post-Roman villas undertaken by Oleg Grabar and James Ackerman meets the newest archaeological finds and digital technologies, opening new perspectives on the social and aesthetic functions of gardens and landscapes of Islamic Spain.

A brief introductory chapter surveys the evidentiary materials and the parameters of analysis, including the thorny problem of terminology and translation. Anderson defends her choice of the term 'villa' precisely because it invites comparisons with earlier (Roman) and later (early modern) periods and because it helps to bring discussion of Islamic buildings more in line with traditionally 'western' art historical discourse. Chapter 2, 'Social Dimensions of Patronage', examines the estates as the privilege of a highly select group within the ruling class, providing a textured analysis of *munya* patronage among three competing factions at court: sovereigns, unfree elites and free aristocracy. The identification of the 'unfree elites' is an especially interesting one, which is defined by Anderson as the non-Arab or Berber men and women who were enslaved and eventually manumitted (such as concubines and eunuchs), and subsequently rose to positions of great prominence and wealth at court. Surveying the history and building projects of the Umayyad rulers of Cordoba, Anderson contends that these unfree elites were directly involved in artistic production as designers and as supervisors, especially beginning under al-Hakam II (r.971–76), when Arabic chronicles refer to Slavs and other unfree elites specifically as *munya* patrons. The eunuch Ja'far was the most notable of the palace eunuchs during the caliphal period, and he is linked with the major architectural projects of the caliphal state. This includes the initial work on Caliph al-Hakam's private residence at Madinat al-Zahra, an unidentified caliphal construction project in Cordoba, and most importantly, al-Hakam's expansion of the prayer hall at the Great Mosque at Cordoba, completed in 965.

Chapter 3 segues into an examination of *munya* gardens and cultivated spaces. At over fifty pages, it is the longest of the book's six chapters, although this is in part due to its numerous photos and architectural plans, all of a very high quality. The chapter focuses primarily on the *munya* of al-Rummaniyya, a villa situated at the foothills of the Sierra Morena and traditionally identified with the Slav functionary and ex-slave Durri al-Saghir, and the nature-inspired decorative objects, including ivory boxes and stuccos, that are now scattered in collections around the world. The layered effect created by juxtaposing interior ornament and landscape views provided a subtle interplay between the natural and the man-made, a symbiotic relationship that in turn gave meaning to the interior and exterior spatial arrangements of the villas:

Even as the highly formalized depictions of flora and fauna in the architectural ornament and on the surfaces of the ivories play with the notions of natural and artificial, so would the framed vistas of the cultivated garden terraces and the suburban landscape visible beyond the pavilion arcades have created a striking visual statement about nature, orderly, and flourishing under human control. (97)

Chapter 4 focuses on the practicalities and mechanics of garden design and is accompanied by some digitally created hypothetical reconstructions of the now-famous villa/palace of Madinat al-Zahra outside Cordoba. Drawing on Umayyad agricultural texts and a wealth of archaeological evidence, much of it unearthed in just the past two decades, Anderson builds on the pioneering work of Thomas Glick and D. Fairchild Ruggles (among others) and makes a convincing case for seeing the *munya* gardens as not just sites of agricultural production, but as laboratories of aristocratic self-fashioning. Like Ruggles, Anderson discusses particular plants and their uses, exploring

some of the more evocative texts by Arabic authors that comment on the refined natural surroundings of aristocratic life. She also makes suggestive comparisons with the landscape and architecture of Christian monasteries, both regionally and in the more distant Middle Eastern communities, where contacts between Christians and Muslims were quite commonplace. But since the anecdotal evidence of Muslim notables visiting Christian monasteries does not necessarily produce a shared socio-architectural inspiration, Anderson maintains a critical distance from the concept of 'connectivity' among Mediterranean cultures proposed by Horden and Purcell. The comparisons of Islamic *muniyat* with the villas of Renaissance Italy and the allegory of good governance in Lorenzetti's fourteenth-century frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena are perhaps a little forced, but not entirely unwarranted.

Chapter 5, 'The Landscape of Sovereignty', is both the most speculative and most original chapter of the book, for here the author directly confronts the question of meaning and political legitimation in the *muniya* culture of early Islamic Spain. Anderson's contention, based on a wide reading in the theory of court culture in post-medieval and non-Islamic societies, is that after 'Abd al-Rahman III's assumption of caliphal authority in 928, a string of increasingly formal, elaborate political feasts and civic ceremonies were held within *muniya* walls, thus transforming the spaces into dynamic venues for the articulation and display of Umayyad kingship. The function of such ceremonial rituals thus offered 'a performative parallel to the architectural framing of panoramic landscape views as Madīnat al-Zahrā', and prefigured similar strategies used by the Fatimids in Egypt and the Crusaders in Jerusalem' (155). She further suggested that the success of *muniya* culture also played a role in the rise of urban aristocratic elites, a phenomenon that contributed directly to the eventual collapse of the caliphate in 1031. A brief epilogue resumes the multiple ways in which *muniyas* were used, viewed and enjoyed, and it pushes further the notion that architecture and objects became agents in social processes, in turn embodying philosophical and aesthetic attitudes of the aristocracy. This, Anderson concludes, must surely be the necessary background for appreciating the fourteenth-century palace and gardens of the Alhambra and the Generalife, a much more familiar time and place which she wisely leaves for others to connect to her findings.

The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia is an excellent book that productively engages cross-regional and interdisciplinary discourses that have led scholars to rethink many key aspects of Islamic culture in medieval Spain and elsewhere. Historians and architectural historians of all periods will benefit from this compact and highly readable study, which is fully annotated and based on a thorough command of primary and secondary sources in all the relevant languages. In the present academic environment of cutbacks and budgetary constraints, the publisher is to be congratulated for producing such an elegant volume, replete with photographic and digital images (a full sixteen in colour), a fold-out timeline, an appendix with parallel Arabic texts and fresh English translations by Stuart Sears, a useful index and a handsome cover.

Contributor Details

Alex J. Novikoff teaches medieval history at Fordham University, and is a member of Fordham's Center for Medieval Studies. His work ranges widely over the fields of intellectual and cultural history, including Christian–Jewish–Muslim relations, medieval Spain, scholasticism and the intersections between

ideas, aesthetics and performance. He is the author, most recently, of *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), and *A Short History of Muslim Spain* (I.B. Tauris, forthcoming).

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ROUTES AND REALMS: THE POWER OF PLACE IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC WORLD, ZAYDE ANTRIM (2012)

New York: Oxford University Press, 240 pp., 8 b/w illus.
ISBN 9780199913879, \$69.00 (hardback)

Reviewed by Juan E. Campo, University of California, Santa Barbara

This book is concerned with the Islamic imaginary resulting from human engagements with place that emerged between the ninth and twelfth centuries from the Iberian Peninsula to the frontiers of Sind. The central argument put forth by Zayde Antrim, a cultural historian of the pre-modern Middle East, is that Muslim elites successfully cultivated lasting attachments to places in a variety of authoritative textual genres that proved more durable than the specific states that actually ruled over them. At the conclusion of this fascinating and elegantly written study, she suggests that these medieval expressions of geographic imagination with their politics of attachment contributed to the formation of modern nationalist loyalties in the region.

Antrim has organized her book into three sections that coincide with levels of spatial affectivity, which she calls 'categories of belonging'. The first involves expressions of desire, longing and loss for one's home and homeland (*al-hanin ila 'l-awtan*) found in classical Arabic *adab* anthologies. The second section focuses on attachment to Islamic cities as rendered legible by the *fada'il* (merits) genre and other topographic literature. Here, the sacred histories of Mecca and Jerusalem, written respectively by al-Azraqi (d. c.241/855) and Abu 'l-Ma'ali (eleventh century), are highlighted, as is Baghdad's foundation narrative as presented in al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's *Ta'rikh Baghdad* (eleventh century). In her close reading of these texts, Antrim points out how Abu 'l-Ma'ali's account of Jerusalem's history parallels al-Azraqi's earlier history of Mecca: both cities were founded at the world's creation, both were centred on sacred sanctuaries, both were rebuilt by prophets and both were focal points of later caliphal building projects. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's account of Baghdad differs significantly in that it was founded as a caliphal building project during the Abbasid era, not in primordial time, and its story was overtly more about the struggle to achieve political unity than a claim to divine origin. Antrim then turns to consider textual representations of the built environments of these three medieval cities as forms of visualization that communicate an impression of