

renew the vision we have of this world and this volume itself provides a new perspective on the importance of actors involved in processes of cultural exchange.

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The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia: Architecture and Court Culture in Umayyad Córdoba

GLAIRE D. ANDERSON, 2013

Farnham: Ashgate

xiv + 225 pp.

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This important and richly-illustrated book argues that the *Munya* estates of early medieval Córdoba can legitimately be described as “villas” and that the social, political and economic practices that grew up around them can be labelled as a “villa culture” as defined by the standards of the Roman Empire and the Italian Renaissance. Anderson pursues this argument in reaction to the long-standing understanding of the medieval period in Spain and elsewhere in the Mediterranean as lacking the attributes of Classical villa culture. Anderson’s method is interdisciplinary in approach and implication. She scours the records of recent archaeological excavations and long-known written sources to construct an account of the *Munya* estates of early medieval Islamic Iberia that will be of interest to art, architectural, landscape and economic historians, to archaeologists and to those who are interested in the political and social history of the period. To my mind, Anderson demonstrates convincingly that the *Munya* culture is a villa culture that is worthy of comparison with the better known examples of Roman and Renaissance Italy.

Chapter 1, “Introduction” (pp. 1–14) begins with a brief narrative of the history of early medieval Islamic Iberia, often known as Al-Andalus. The rest of the chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, “An Islamic Contribution to the Villa Discourse”, Anderson outlines the key features of the *Munya* estates and states her argument about their similarities to the prototypical villa cultures of Roman and Renaissance Italy. The second section, “The *Munya* and Andalusi Umayyad Art History”, provides an overview of previous scholarship on *Munya* estates.

The second chapter, “Social Dimensions of Patronage” (pp. 15–46), offers a deeper analysis of the genesis and development of the *Munya* tradition. Anderson explores the central role that was played by the Umayyad rulers, their concubines and powerful court eunuchs in establishing various *Munya* estates as key sites for the display of emiral – and later caliphal – power. Although

located in the suburbs of the capital city, the estates functioned as central sites within the social and political economy of Al-Andalus and their importance reduced in line with the breakdown of the caliphate in the late tenth century and the rise of the power of the free aristocracy. Particular emphasis is placed on the *Munya* of Rusāfa under Muḥammad I, for which we have particularly plentiful records.

Chapter 3, “Architecture and Ornament” (pp. 47–104), is richly illustrated and seeks to relate the architectural and archaeological remains of the *Munya* estates to other, better-preserved material remains of early medieval Islamic Iberia (and from further afield, in some cases). The similarities of these artefacts to a range of ivory objects (probably) produced in the workshops of the palace complex at Madīnat al-Zahrā, also located in the suburbs of Córdoba, are particularly striking. The key conclusion of this chapter is that there were many similarities between *Munya* architecture and elite iconographic schemes deployed elsewhere in contemporary Córdoba.

The fourth chapter, “Gardens” (pp. 105–35), explores the importance of gardens to the *Munya* estates and to elite culture in Córdoba more generally. Drawing on the latest archaeological research, Anderson demonstrates convincingly that these were productive spaces rather than pure “pleasure gardens”, although crops that were grown were intended for consumption, often conspicuous, by the elite of Córdoba and their entourages. The gardens thus functioned symbolically as well as agriculturally to reinforce the power of the ruling elite.

Chapter 5, “The Landscape of Sovereignty” (pp. 137–67), examines a number of different socio-political functions of the *Munya* estates, including: diplomacy, feasting and civic processions. The section on “Agriculture, Good Governance, and Political Legitimacy” (pp. 155–62) demonstrates how agricultural productivity, fertility and wealth were intimately connected to ideas of good governance in Andalusī texts. The *Munyas* and the social and political activities that took place in and around them thus inscribe Umayyad political legitimacy on the landscape in architectural form.

The book is rounded out by an “Epilogue” (pp. 169–80), which sums up the specific findings about the *Munya* of early medieval Islamic Córdoba and also explains the more general implications of the study for scholarship on Mediterranean villas and villa culture. There is an accompanying fold-out timeline of emiral and caliphal Al-Andalus. As already noted, there are numerous very high quality illustrations (some of which are provided in both colour and black-and-white). The appendix (pp. 181–9) contains short translations by Stuart Sears of five key passages from Ibn Hayyān’s *al-Muqtabis* on the *Munya*. These source extracts, perhaps in combination with the many excellent photographs and digital reconstructions elsewhere in the volume, will be of particular use to teachers seeking to engage their students with this fascinating topic.

My only caveat is the lack of contextualisation in relation the elite residences of pre-Islamic Iberia and elsewhere, suburban or otherwise. More could have been said about the existence (or not) of earlier and/or later villa culture in Iberia. Given that one of the key overall aims is to situate the *Munya* culture in relation to the villa culture of Roman and Renaissance Italy, more could also have been done to establish these bases for comparison. Nevertheless, whether or not one accepts Anderson’s argument about the *Munya*-as-villa, the insights of this excellent

study can definitely be applied productively to the study of the suburban estates and to the architectural economy of Islamic elites elsewhere in the medieval Mediterranean.

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Crusading in Frankish Greece: A Study of Byzantine–Western Relations and Attitudes, 1204–1282

NICKOLAOS G. CHRISSIS, 2012

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In recent years there has been growth in interest in the history of the crusades and yet, despite the wide range of publications that consider various crusading frontiers, few authors have turned their attention to the campaigns fought in Frankish Greece following the capture of Constantinople in 1204. The Fourth Crusade itself has of course been exhaustively researched, and authors such as Longnon, Wolff, and Lock have devoted some attention to the Latin Empire of Constantinople and its satellites but – as Chrissis quite rightly points out – a great deal more remains to be said. *Crusading in Frankish Greece* seeks to redress this imbalance by offering a study of papal policy towards the Franks in Romania and its neighbours between 1204 and 1282, with specific emphasis on crusading. Some consideration is given to Byzantine perspectives and the objectives of European aristocrats active in the eastern Mediterranean, but it is the actions of the pontiffs that form the core of this study. Structurally, this monograph works phase-by-phase through this period, with chapters often dedicated to a particular pontificate.

Chrissis starts his analysis in the wake of the conquest of Constantinople by considering the implications of the city's fall for Pope Innocent III. In this section, the author ably reconstructs the various pressures that moulded papal policy at this time, examining the pontiff's motives for launching the crusade to support the Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1205. He presents this as the first crusade directed by the papacy to this region, following Rowe¹ in his belief that Bohemond I's campaign in 1107 was not authorised as an expedition against the Greeks. Chrissis then shows that Innocent's commitment to this frontier was not maintained and seems to have declined somewhat after 1207. Under his successors, papal support for crusading in this area waxed and

¹John Rowe, 'Paschal II, Bohemund of Antioch and the Byzantine Empire', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 49 (1966–1967), 165–202.