

*Art, Ritual, and Civic Identity in Medieval Southern Italy.* Nino M. Zchomelidse. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014. xix + 288 pp. \$84.95.

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Books can be like fruits. Some are mature and sweet; others are sour and tedious to eat. This book certainly belongs to the first category. A carefully arranged layout and beautiful illustrations contribute to its attractive appearance. Having worked on this theme at length — the book has its origins in the author's 2001 *Habilitationschrift* in Tübingen — Zchomelidse has reached a state of clarity that benefits the reader greatly.

Only a map of the often very small villages mentioned in the text and a short catalogue of the objects are missing. She presents a solid, concise, well-written book, which is not only highly informative, but interesting and enjoyable to read as well. The author deals with liturgical furniture and manuscripts — ornately decorated ambos and pulpits, richly sculpted Easter candlesticks, and the so-called Exultet rolls of the Beneventan rite, all major works of Southern Italian art between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Her aim is to reconstruct the functional relationship these objects had within the spatial context of the church and the allegorical meaning lent to them by the dynamic enactments of liturgy.

The ambo in the Ravello cathedral, commissioned by Bishop Constantine Rogadeo at the beginning of the twelfth century, serves as a starting point. This is not the earliest example, but the author uses it to skillfully introduce the reader to the crucial questions linked to this kind of liturgical object. She shows how the two Jonah scenes of the Ravello ambo can be related to the Exultet rolls used in Easter liturgy, and to the deacon's chant at the lighting of the candle. Going back to early Christian times, she traces the history of pulpits as a response to discussions about the form liturgy should have. Although the early church fathers criticized antique pagan theater as *idolatria*, new forms of dramatic liturgical enactment were allowed and explored. The ambo thus became a multifunctional object for reading, singing, and preaching. By referring to Byzantine tradition too, she shows how the iconographical program of the images — scenes from the life of Jonah — could be enriched by further theological meaning, alluding to Mount Zion as well as to the Holy Sepulcher.

Going back to the tenth and eleventh centuries, she discusses the significance of the Exultet rolls used during Easter liturgy. The color illustrations are especially valuable here because they allow the reader to imagine seeing these rolls hanging from a pulpit, when the splendor of the miniatures was combined with the luxury of the marbles and mosaics used for the ambo. Unfortunately, no liturgical clothing has survived to provide further insight on this multimedia spectacle. Paying attention to the individual iconographic programs of the manuscripts and their political significance, Zchomelidse stresses how the unfolding of these rolls during the central part of the Easter liturgy invoked the idea of the holy Logos descending onto the Christian community assembled around the ambo. The reliefs on the sculpted Easter candlesticks beside the ambo served as a further element in this rich network of visual and auditory relationships.

On this premise, the third and fourth chapters deal with subsequent developments and changes. Abandoning Beneventan liturgy in favor of the Roman rite further strengthened the tendencies toward a theatrical enactment of the Easter liturgy. Double ambos became a more common feature and the iconographic programs centered on Jonah were often replaced with allegorical and biblical figures. The last three chapters of the book turn to the issue of civic identity, concentrating mainly on the Angevin period from the second half of the thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century. Antiquizing donor portraits appear as a new feature on the marble pulpits and strengthen the emphasis put on the donor's personal merit, previously given only by inscriptions and liturgical *memoria*. Narrative reliefs with the lives of individual saints started to rival old

Christocentric programs. Zchomelidse proposes a convincing reconstruction here of the lost ambo of the Naples cathedral and connects this evolution with Tuscan and other Central Italian prototypes. These chapters are methodologically important as she links medieval art in Campania back to Central Italian art history, going beyond the stylistic Sicilian connections proposed by Dorothy Glass in *Romanesque Sculpture in Campania: Patrons, Programs, and Style* (1991). This book therefore constitutes an important step toward a further inclusion of Southern Italian art into the general discourse of the discipline.

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