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Review of *The Origins of Medieval Architecture: Building in Europe, A.D. 600-900*, by Charles B. McClendon

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rization of bridges from fully wooden to mixed to fully stone, Ulrich suggests, plausibly, that these types were coeval. Wooden piles, he argues, remained important throughout.

The best known wooden structures from ancient Rome are the Iron Age huts from the Palatine for which only the postholes remain. These huts and their proposed reconstructions serve the discussion of the post-and-lintel system and associated terminology in the chapter on walls and framing. A brief section on wooden columns considers indirect evidence of their use in surviving terra-cotta bases and capitals from the sixth century BCE. Ulrich then addresses the framing of large structures such as theaters, amphitheaters, and spans for bridges in which the basic techniques using vertical, horizontal, and diagonal beams were scaled up to create cantilevered or arcuated support systems. The Column of Trajan provides visual evidence of wooden frames for bridge spans and amphitheaters.

The chapter on wooden flooring, based on a previously published article, demonstrates that the Vitruvian description of a multilayered flooring system corresponds closely to Roman practice.³ Vitruvius's seventh book provides a term for this system (*contignatio*) and its components. *Contignatio* was used in both public and private structures for the upper floors and in some cases supported a floor surface of mosaic, particularly in luxurious houses. Most of the evidence for the floors he discusses comes from Ostia and Herculaneum, which has some carbonized remains.

Roofing technology had antecedents in Greek and Etruscan structures, and Ulrich emphasizes the role of wood in the external protective layers of pitched roofs. With regard to support, Ulrich postulates that the timber-trussed roof was a Roman invention of the second century BCE, a result of the need for a clear span in basilicas built in that period. Vitruvius's account of his basilica at Fanum sets the stage for a discussion of technical and philological problems surrounding roofing and ceilings. Ulrich

offers an interesting argument to support the hypothesis that the state halls of Domitian's Palace in Rome had a timber-trussed roof and coffered ceiling rather than vaults. He acknowledges the importance of wooden centering for concrete vaults and domes, but because of the lack of literary or visual evidence, he does not speculate on the technical aspects of vaulting. He does, however, raise the question of whether wooden vaulted ceilings might have existed. Portals, doors, and shutters are included in the last of the chapters dealing with structural matters.

The three final chapters concern types of wood and their sources. The first focuses on the veneers and parquetry used to decorate furniture in the Roman world. Here Ulrich relies on pictorial representations in various media as well as on the inventory of partially lost carbonized examples from Herculaneum.⁴ Certain types of wood were prized above others and a chapter follows that lists the types of trees available and the uses of their various woods. This material is offered in the form of a catalog with entries alphabetized according to the Latin names for the species. A final short chapter provides an overview of the sources of timber used by the Romans, concentrating mainly on wooded areas in the environs of Rome.

The glossary is an extensive and valuable resource for those philologically inclined, but it would have been easier to navigate were it organized alphabetically rather than broken down by chapter and type. A useful appendix gives a selection of tools and provides detailed information about the actual examples as well as the types of media in which they are depicted.

In researching his book Ulrich has cast a wide net, but the results have been uneven and have led to compositional difficulties. This is manifest in the catalog chapters where, for example, the entries in chapter three are in English while those in chapter twelve are in Latin, and the glossary (which is organized by chapter) contains entries in Latin. The variety in the length and depth of

the narrative chapters also reflects the inherent difficulty of organizing the material. Despite these shortcomings, Ulrich's book offers scholars one handy volume containing a wealth of information on the subject of ancient Roman wood, a material once ubiquitous, though all but invisible today.

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Notes

1. William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*, rev. ed. (New Haven, 1982), 1:147.
2. Henry C. Mercer, *Ancient Carpenters' Tools* (Doylestown, Pa., 1929).
3. Roger B. Ulrich, "Contignatio, Vitruvius and the Campanian Builder," *American Journal of Archaeology* 100, no. 1 (1996), 137–51.
4. Stephan T. Mols, *Wooden Furniture in Herculaneum* (Amsterdam, 1999).

Charles B. McClendon

The Origins of Medieval Architecture: Building in Europe, A.D. 600–900

New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, 280 pp., 35 color and 175 b/w illus. \$70, ISBN 9780300106886

In the language of architectural history, "medieval" means Romanesque and Gothic. Older forms of Christian architecture are classified as the end of classical antiquity (as Kenneth John Conant put it, "Ancient Rome created no new monumental types after the Christian Roman basilica"¹) or as ethnographic expressions of the wandering peoples who subsequently occupied Roman territory: Visigoths, Lombards, Saxons, Franks. The value of these buildings is measured by their perceived contributions to the ultimate crystallization of the Romanesque, just as Romanesque used to be assessed primarily in terms of innovations that could be considered proto-Gothic. Conant's *Pelican History of Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture* famously contains a single chapter on Carolingian architecture called "The Carolingian Romanesque," within a section titled "The Pre-Romanesque and

Proto-Romanesque Styles.” At the opposite pole from this traditional view stand a small number of postmodern histories, notably Jerrilynn Dodds’s *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*, which refuse the teleological narrative of style. Dodds insists on the radical particularity of premedieval buildings and their role in “the formation of cultural identity,” both in their own time and in the self-defining narratives of modern nation states.²

On a spectrum anchored by Conant at one end and Dodds at the other, Charles McClendon’s book stands much closer to Conant; its stated aim is to trace “the architectural transition from late antiquity to the Middle Ages in the Latin West,” more precisely, “the innovations . . . that transformed the Early Christian basilica into the medieval church in both form and function” (1). To that end, the book opens with a chapter describing the churches of Constantine and subsequent church building in Milan and Ravenna, followed by a chapter on “The Roman Response to the Cult of Relics,” focused mainly on crypts, culminating in the invention of the “annular crypt” in St. Peter’s in the last decade of the sixth century. The third chapter traces the “blending of barbarian and Roman” (35) in the previously Roman territories of Gallia, Germania, Hispania, and in Italy itself under the Lombards.

McClendon’s approach is exemplified by his account of São Frutuoso de Montelios near Braga, a Visigothic cruciform mausoleum, and the ways in which it differs from that offered by Dodds. Both authors depart from the building’s close resemblance to the so-called mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, but whereas Dodds moves from this resemblance to the emulation of contemporary Byzantine court forms and ceremonial by Visigothic kings in Toledo, positing a “taste” or deliberate symbolism of contemporary royal power in São Frutuoso, McClendon stresses “the desire of the Visigoths to instill their architecture with a sense of *romanitas* through design, mode of construction, and even reuse of ancient columns and capitals” (39).³ Of

course, *romanitas* could mean Byzantinism, since Byzantium was Rome in the sixth century and continued to provide the West with models for the material culture of empire until 1453. But as McClendon uses it, *romanitas* generally denotes reference to old Rome, either as the seat of the papacy or as a repository of authoritative architectural vocabulary (witness the “reuse of ancient columns and capitals”). As such *romanitas* is a leitmotif of this chapter and of the book as a whole, and agreement or disagreement with its thesis depends, in large part, on whether one finds this use of the term persuasive.

Chapter four finds *romanitas* in Britain, in the dedications of churches, ground plans, crypts, galleries, and decoration, including the presence of columns and stained glass. In Britain aspirations to Roman-ness have good documentary support, and this chapter dwells at length on the churches associated with the known Romanizers Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop. As in the previous chapter, McClendon finds that *romanitas* is combined or offset with local tendencies, resulting in a “unique synthesis of continental and insular traditions” (84) that was brutally cut off by the Viking invasions of the late eighth and ninth centuries. Consequently the focus shifts to Carolingian architecture, which occupies the second half of the book. The well-known Carolingian penchant for *romanitas* is described as “a shift in degree rather than kind” (195) from that of the Visigoths, Franks, Lombards, and Anglo-Saxons; and the Carolingian contributions to the architectural future are identified in the innovations that drove church design away from the Roman vocabulary: westworks, outer crypts, alternating supports.

In some ways McClendon’s history is not very different from Conant’s, although it is differently expressed. Overtly writing a history of style, Conant described the Carolingian contributions in terms of principles, abstractions, and effects: “the fine tradition of Gallic mason work,” “the will to make Rome live again in a classical revival,” a trans-

formative “northern vigour and bravura,” the perpetuation of “the old Roman idea of substantial structure,” and a receptivity to the subtlety and sophistication of Byzantium and the Orient.⁴ McClendon’s history is literally more cryptic, focused on architectural motifs rather than spatial and atmospheric effects: the annular crypt, the outer crypt, the westwork, etcetera. He is at his best, in my opinion, with buildings that relate to human personalities, in which choices of motifs can be animated by anecdotal information about the patron; the extended unpacking of the formal genealogy and biblical iconography of Theodulf’s church at Germigny-des-Prés is an especially satisfying example.

Other reviewers have rightly praised McClendon’s book for its beautiful production, its careful attention to a neglected era of Western architectural history, and its useful synthesis of decades of published research. At the same time, it has been faulted for failure to fully incorporate the results of recent archaeology, lack of attention to secular and wooden architecture, and its limited focus on Rome as the locus of *romanitas* rather than the entire Romanized landscape of England and Europe west of the Rhine, including Spain.⁵ These criticisms highlight the fact that *The Origins of Medieval Architecture* is a fundamentally traditional project; its aim is to integrate its subject into a larger narrative that is inherited, highly standardized, even to some extent formulaic. Unquestionably, as Dodds has shown, the very same buildings could have been made to tell a different story, driven by more contemporary interests in socioeconomic history, local regimes of power, the vernacular, the environment, and daily life. But that is not the story the author set out to tell.

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Notes

1. Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture, 800–1200*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1966), 37.
2. Jerrilynn D. Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (University Park, Pa., 1990), 1.

3. Ibid., 13.

4. Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*, 55.

5. Reviews of McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture*, include those by Richard Hodges, in *Catholic Historical Review* 92 (2006), 298–99; John Steane, in *Medieval Archaeology* 50 (2006), 407–8; and Deborah M. Deliyannis, in *Art Bulletin* LXXXIX (2007), 364–66.

Lucienne Thys-Senocak

Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan

Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007, 346 pp., 88 b/w illus. £60, ISBN 9780754633105

Hadice Turhan Sultan was captured by slave raiders on the Russian steppes in 1640, when she was about twelve years old. Taken to Istanbul, she was given as a gift to the Ottoman queen mother, or *valide sultan*, the most powerful woman in the vast Ottoman Empire. Within a few short years, the young slave girl converted to Islam and received a Muslim name, underwent training in religion, language, and courtly arts in the Topkapi Palace, and was presented by the *valide sultan* to her son, Sultan Ibrahim, as a possible concubine. Although not the sultan's favorite concubine, she was the first to conceive a son. The boy was only six years old when his father died and he became Sultan Mehmed IV. A power struggle ensued between his mother and grandmother over the position of *valide sultan*, culminating in the murder of the older woman in 1651. At the approximate age of twenty-one, Turhan Sultan became the *de facto* ruler of the Ottoman Empire. She ruled with distinction even after her son came of age, since he disliked both the task of ruling and his capital city, Istanbul.

In *Ottoman Women Builders*, Lucienne Thys-Senocak documents the architectural patronage of this fascinating woman. Shortly after becoming *valide sultan*, Turhan Sultan faced a military threat from the Venetians, who were making incursions into the Dardanelles, the narrow strait connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara. Thys-Seno-

cak has unearthed fascinating archival documents showing that Turhan Sultan responded by beefing up the Ottoman navy and constructing two castles at the Aegean entrance to the Dardanelles, one on the European side and one on the Asian side. Her next major project was a large religious complex called Yeni Valide in the heart of Istanbul, consisting of a mosque, a royal pavilion, a dynastic mausoleum, a covered market, a fountain, and a Quran school. Other constructions elsewhere in the empire included a palace near Edirne and the conversion of several churches into mosques after the Ottoman conquest of Crete. Turhan Sultan was clearly a significant figure as both a ruler and a patron, and Thys-Senocak has illuminated a fascinating case study from a period that has often been erroneously dismissed as an era of Ottoman decline.

The book forms part of the series *Women and Gender in the Early Modern World* and is the first to venture slightly outside Europe; most of Turhan Sultan's constructions are located within Europe, while her Dardanelles fortifications straddle the continents of Europe and Asia in the most dramatic way possible. Although it is lavishly illustrated in black and white, the book would have benefited from at least one color illustration of the Iznik tiles inside the royal pavilion at the Yeni Valide complex.

The book is divided into six chapters: the first introduces the parameters and aims of the study, which include documenting the Dardanelles castles for the first time, challenging the paradigm of Ottoman decline in the seventeenth century, and comparing Turhan Sultan with several European patrons to show how this particular queen mother used architecture for self-representation as well as political and religious legitimization. The second chapter documents the early life of Turhan Sultan, and the third contrasts her with Elizabeth I, Catherine de Medici, and Maria de Medici, emphasizing how the Ottoman woman was restricted in her means of self-representation by customs, related to her gender and imperial status, that prevented her

from being seen by anyone outside of her immediate entourage. Turhan Sultan used her architectural patronage as a way of making herself visible to her subjects, and she had the financial means to do so because Ottoman laws allowed women to own property and control their finances in ways that European laws of the time did not. She was also free to choose the type of building she wished to construct, whereas there were typological restrictions for her Western European counterparts (namely, fortresses were at this time constructed only by men). The fourth chapter surveys the castles of Seddülbahir and Kumkale, and is based on the results of a project led by Thys-Senocak and published in this volume for the first time. The fifth chapter discusses the construction of the Yeni Valide complex, which entailed expropriating property from Jewish inhabitants of the commercial district of Eminönü and was consequently presented as a local expansion and triumph of Islam. Thys-Senocak argues that the layout of the Yeni Valide complex, which was previously dismissed by architectural historians as disorganized, derivative, and emblematic of decline, was actually shaped by the gender of its patron, who wished to view as much of her complex as possible from the royal pavilion. The final chapter surveys the evidence for Turhan Sultan's other constructions, arguing that she would have been able to communicate extensively with the chief architect of the Ottoman court and thereby shape the design of her projects.

This book represents a major contribution to the study of imperial female patronage and to architectural history as a whole. Turhan Sultan provides a fascinating case study, and Thys-Senocak achieves the aims she outlines in chapter one with exhaustive research and convincing argumentation. The documentation of the Dardanelles fortresses alone is a significant achievement that adds considerably to our knowledge of an often-neglected aspect of Ottoman architecture. As Kumkale, the castle on the Asian side of the Dardanelles, is still occupied by the Turkish military, gaining