Objets et art dans les transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale

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As part of a cycle of conferences dealing with „Cultural Transfer in the Medieval Mediterranean", the research group FranceMed (La France et la Méditerranée. Espaces des transferts culturels) at the German Historical Institute in Paris hosted a conference under the title „Objets et art dans les transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale". After having dealt with various conceptional approaches to the Mediterranean in June 2009 („Construire la Méditerranée") as well as the range of agents involved in cultural transfer in January 2010 („Acteurs des transferts culturels"), this third conference aimed at describing and analysing material and artistic processes of transfer. Specialists for the Latin-Christian and the Arab-Islamic world discussed different forms of transfer as well as their effects on artistic production in the medieval Mediterranean.

Dealing with an inner-Christian form of transfer, ELISABETH RUCHAUD (Paris) focussed on the Holy Sepulchre and its artistic representations diffused in the Latin West. Ruchaud recalled that the status of the Holy Sepulchre in medieval Christian thought as well as its primordial role at the centre of the mystery of resurrection prompted the use of the Holy Sepulchre's ground plan as well as its name to several ecclesiastical constructions of smaller and larger size. Hereupon she presented three copies of the Holy Sepulchre in the Latin West which stand for different types: The Holy Sepulchre of Bologna (5th and 11th centuries), a reconstruction of the various buildings pertaining to the complex of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in its entirety can be defined as an example of „memoria". The church of Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre (11th century) can be identified as a church founded by a returning pilgrim while the chapel of Saint Michael in the abbey of Fulda (9th century) contains a model of the Holy Sepulchre in the form of a tomb.

LORENZ KORN (Bamberg) dedicated his paper to the set of problems linked with the transfer of architecture in the medieval Mediterranean of the crusade period. Since architecture, in terms of entire buildings, cannot be transferred in the same way as other objects, architectural transfer generally concerns only individual aspects of a building. Analysing a wide range of examples, Korn identified several important points and underscored that architectural parallels and similarities do not necessarily have to be interpreted as the result of cultural exchange. First and foremost, the Greco-Roman heritage stands at the basis of a shared architectural vocabulary which was subsequently developed differently in the various regions bordering the Mediterranean. Other architectural parallels can be explained by pointing out to similar architectural problems and technical constraints which called for the same solution. Only after considering these possibilities can architectural similarities be regarded as the product of cultural transfer. In this case the diffusion of architectural ideas can be led back either to human agents who were inspired by monuments they had seen and visited, or to visual or textual media exchanged across the Mediterranean in the zones and periods favourable to cultural exchange.

Dealing with intercultural transfer, ERIC HOLD (Paris) presented a comparative analysis of Romanesque sculptured capitals in medieval France and Spain with the aim of determining the origin of this specific artistic expression as well as defining links existing between both regions. Dating from around 1040, the capitals in the entrance hall of the bell tower pertaining to the abbey of Fleury are usually considered as the earliest expression of this 'typically romanesque' art form. The capitals' sculptures display apocalyptic motives which may be linked with the translation of Saint Benedict's relics from Monte Cassino to Fleury. The royal pantheon of Saint Isidore of Léon, dating from around 1060, is one of the first examples of Spanish romanesque sculpture. Sepulchre of the kings of Léon, the pantheon gives witness to the will of reviving

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artistical forms of the Visigothic era. Juxtaposing both examples allowed to demonstrate the stylistic kinship of capitals produced in two adjoining regions and to elaborate on the evolution of early Romanesque sculptured capitals.

ANNETTE HOFFMANN (Florence) dedicated her paper to the analysis of a 13th-century Bible manuscript from Bologna which is attributed to the so-called Master of Gerona. Categorized as belonging to a type of manuscripts following the maniera graeca, the general composition, various motifs as well as the posture and countenance of several figures testify to the fact that the illuminations of this Bible were subject to Byzantine (mainly Paleologan), French and antique influences. Hoffmann insisted on the stylistic kinship between certain scenes depicting the history of Moses and several mosaics on the same topic in the basilica of Saint Mark in Venice. Placing the manuscript in a wider context, she was able to comment on the important role of Bologna, not only as an influential academic and commercial but also as an important artistic centre in exchange with the outside world.

The different cultural influences, characteristic of Norman Sicily, were treated by SULAMITH BRODBECK (Namur) in her analysis of the hagiographical programme in the royal cathedral of Monreale. Taking into consideration the possible involvement of Byzantine mosaists as well as local artists instructed by Greek masters in Palermo, Brodbeck made out three main influences, i.e. Byzantine, local and Latin, while at the same time confirming the existence of a consistent style identified as late Comnene. Linking the depiction of certain saints to a corresponding political context (marriage, diplomatic relations etc.), she pointed out that the iconographic programme in the cathedral of Monreale, particularly the depictions of saints, has to be understood as the artistic expression of political and diplomatic issues of a Norman dynasty situated between Christian Europe and the Mediterranean sphere.

Presenting work in progress, ISABELLE DOLEZALEK (Berlin) focussed on the ornamental Arabic lettering to be found on the ceremonial garb of the Norman kings of Sicily. Analysing three examples dating from the ruling period of Roger II and William II, she demonstrated that the use of this lettering did not only have decorative function and cannot be explained only by pointing to a shared sense of aesthetics prevalent among the Mediterranean courts of the period. Rather she underscored that the use of Arab writing was prompted by a certain knowledge of its function in a contemporary Islamic context, thus giving witness to a conscious ornamental 'policy' supported by the Norman kings.

In her paper, JEANNETTE ROSE-ALBRECHT (Lyon) traced the appearance and use of lustre ceramics around the Mediterranean. Beginning in Baghdad, she highlighted the contributions of archaeology and archaeometry in analysing this technique and in reconstructing its diffusion from the Orient to medieval Christian Europe. Analysing form, decoration and techniques employed, Rose-Albrecht provided several case studies to illustrate how these objects, their style, motifs and, eventually, their method of production were appropriated around the Mediterranean basin.

Dealing with the transfer of objects in general, AVINOAM SHALEM (Munich) juxtaposed the treatment of objects exhibited in museums on the one side and their actual history of transfer on the other side. Shalem observed that, in general, an exhibited object is only identified by its place of production while the various contexts traversed by the respective object as well as the number of multidimensional processes of transfer in which it was involved before it finally arrived at its place of conservation are completely neglected. Shalem insisted on the necessity of studying the 'anima' of an object, which developed in the course of an object's 'biography' formed in most cases by multiple processes of circulation, reception and appropriation in different areas, periods and contexts.

Concluding the conference, YANNIS KOÏKAS (Paris) introduced the audience to the project „Qantara – Patrimoine méditerranéen: Traversée d'Orient et d'Occident", directed by the Institut du Monde Arabe in cooperation with several partners from around the Mediterranean. In a presentation

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of the plurilingual (Arabic, English, French, Spanish) database and website of Qantara (*www.qantara-med.org*), Koïkas gave an overview over the different elements of the Mediterranean heritage (objects, monuments and places) in a period from late antiquity to the modern age. Koïkas took great care to explain the very elaborate and sophisticated pedagogical principles of the website which addresses itself to a large and diverse public ranging from schoolchildren to established specialists in the field.

Conferenve overview:

FRANCEMED (Paris): Présentation du groupe et introduction thématique

ELISABETH RUCHAUD (Paris): Le Saint-Sépulcre, un modèle entre royaume latin d'Orient et royautés occidentals

LORENZ KORN (Bamberg): Cross Cultural Exchange? Architecture in the Mediterranean During the Age of the Crusades

ERIC HOLD (Paris): France et Espagne. Aux origines de la sculpture romane

ANNETTE HOFFMANN (Florence): The 'Gerona Master'. Bologna and the Mediterranean in the 13th Century

SULAMITH BRODBECK (Namur): Monreale, la cathédrale royale de Guillaume II: diversité des influences et intention unificatrice (Sicile, fin du XIIe siècle)

ISABELLE DOLEZALEK (Berlin): Les emplois de l'écriture arabe sur les vêtements cérémoniaux des rois normands de Sicile

JEANNETTE ROSE-ALBRECHT (Lyon): Céramique émaillée et transferts culturels: rôle décisif des techniques et des formes, dynamique des décors

AVINOAM SHALEM (Munich): Object and Space and Histories of Belonging

YANNIS KOÏKAS (Paris): Présentation du projet Qantara, Institut du monde Arabe, Paris

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