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Liudprand von Cremona: Eine Studie zum Ost-Westlichen Kulturgefälle im Mittelalter by Michael Rentschler (Review)

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cycle, dating back to the ninth century, the Beatus cycle, which appeared two hundred years later in northern Spain, and the Anglo-Norman cycle including the present work.

In a concise introduction (pp. 5–11), Félix Lecoy summarizes and brings up to date the lengthy study of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 403 made by Léopold Delisle and Paul Meyer for the Société des Anciens Textes Français (*L'Apocalypse en français au XIIIe siècle* [Paris, 1901], 2 vols.). Lecoy sketches the history of the manuscript, which originated in England after 1250 and crossed the Channel twice during the Middle Ages before becoming part of the royal library at Blois. After identifying the specific group of manuscripts within the Anglo-Norman cycle to which this copy belongs, he turns his attention to the circumstances which gave rise to the large number of French translations of the Apocalypse in the thirteenth century, pointing out in particular that many individuals showed deep concern at predictions found in the writings of Joachim of Fiore and his successors that the Day of Wrath was in the offing. The translation and gloss were probably composed by the same author; the gloss was based on the Latin commentary in the *Bible moralisée* composed for Louis IX.

Lecoy concedes that the manuscript is notable for its illustrations rather than for its text and refers readers to specialized studies by G. Henderson (1967–68) and P. K. Klein (1979). Two other less technical discussions are worth mentioning in this regard: Peter Brieger, *English Art 1216–1307* (Oxford, 1968), chapter 9 (“The Illustrated Apocalypses”); and Frederick van der Meer, *Apocalypse: Visions from the Book of Revelation in Western Art* (Antwerp, 1978).

The French text provided by Otaka and Fukui, professors at the University of Osaka and Otemae Women's College, respectively, corrects a number of faulty transcriptions made by Delisle and Meyer and is more in keeping with modern editorial practice. Printing the gloss separately also allows easier reference. Finally, art historians will find the color reproductions a vast improvement over the black-and-white illustrations in the S.A.T.F. edition.

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MICHAEL RENTSCHLER, *Liudprand von Cremona: Eine Studie zum ost-westlichen Kulturgefälle im Mittelalter*. (Frankfurter Wissenschaftliche Beiträge, Kulturwissenschaftliche Reihe, 14.) Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981. Paper. Pp. vii, 100. DM 28.

MICHAEL RENTSCHLER has undertaken to summarize Liudprand's reactions to and opinions of the Byzantine empire, its rulers and citizenry, its religion, art, architecture, food, clothing, customs, and usages. But Liudprand, who is nothing if not loudly outspoken in his opinions, has little need for an interpreter. Does one really need to be told, after reading the account of his 968 embassy to Constantinople (*Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*) that Liudprand was a less than ideal diplomat, at least for this mission? This is obvious even to the general reader who has seen the work in translation. Is it absolutely necessary for Rentschler to compare Liudprand's famous description of Nicephorus Phocas with that of Leo Diaconus, a contemporary Byzantine source, to conclude that Liudprand's picture is reasonably accurate, though the less flattering features of the great *basileus* are emphasized? Like the late American satirist, S. J. Perlman (who must have read Liudprand, their styles are so similar), the Lombard bishop was a caricaturist and his descriptions of people often verbal cartoons.

Nonetheless, a number of shrewd observations reward the reader who wades through the superfluous portions of this monograph. Rentschler notes that Liudprand's descriptions of Byzantium and its emperors in the *Antapodosis* vary from friendly to hostile, but nowhere approach the animosity of the *Legatio*. This is obvious. But Rentschler goes on to point out that even the hostile passages of the *Antapodosis* must be placed in context. With the notable exception of Liudprand's hero, Otto I of Saxony, virtually every individual and ethnic group which appears in the *Antapodosis* is subjected to some degree of ironic or sarcastic criticism. Thus, in this work Liudprand is even less anti-Byzantine than appears at first glance. In view of the obsession in some quarters with the Byzantine imperial ideology, it is refreshing to read Rentschler's observation that although the Byzantine court was upset by Otto's assumption of the imperial title in 962, titular protocol was a secondary matter for Liudprand, and he struggled to avoid wrecking his 968 embassy upon its shoals. Still, his assertion to Byzantine officials that the titles *rex* and *basileus* meant essentially the same thing (*Legatio* 2) was not necessarily the effort of a polished diplomat to gloss over a potentially troublesome protocol conflict. I suggest that it would be more consistent with Liudprand's personality to think of it as yet another sly dig at "Greek" pomposity.

Rentschler concludes his monograph with a brief chapter, only loosely connected with the main body of his work, on how the papacy viewed the Byzantines during the Investiture Conflict. This final chapter raises a number of interesting questions which cannot be considered in a brief review, but I do find myself in agreement with most of his observations.

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ELSE ROESDAHL, *Viking Age Denmark*. Trans. Susan Margeson and Kirsten Williams. (A Colonnade Book.) London: British Museum Publications, 1982. Pp. 272; 53 figures, 51 black-and-white plates. £16.95.

THIS BOOK has grand ambitions: "to define important features and developments of the Viking Age in Denmark and to put them in their context: to describe the domestic background to the great adventures in foreign lands and to investigate what actually happened at home and abroad" (p. 9). Included in the wide scope of *Viking Age Denmark* are chapters which treat social structure, transportation, daily life, art, settlement patterns, the development of the first towns, fortifications and arms, the old pagan religion and the conversion to Christianity, and contacts between the Danish world and the rest of Europe.

Such a project, nothing less than a complete review and reevaluation of the archaeological material bearing on the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries in the old Danish realm — an area which includes sections of modern Germany and Sweden — is clearly a massive undertaking, but one to which the author is equal. Together with Klaus Randsborg's *The Viking Age in Denmark: The Formation of a State* (London, 1980), a study with somewhat different goals and conclusions, Roesdahl's *Viking Age Denmark* represents the first work to take up Danish archaeology of the period on such an expansive scale since the second edition of Johannes Brøndsted's *Danmarks Oldtid III. Jernalderen* (Copenhagen, 1960). Roesdahl includes discussions of numerous recent discoveries which have begun to alter our understanding of the Viking Age in Denmark, in particular, the finds at Lund, Ribe, Saedding, and Trabjerg and the Skuldelev ships. The author's sober and scholarly treatment of the material is augmented by her experience in the field as an archaeologist — it was Roesdahl who excavated the prow of Skuldelev ship 3, the only example of a complete ship prow from the entire Viking Age.