Collaborators and Sub-Projects

Dr. Mirko Vagnoni, SNF Doktorassistent für Forschung. (mirko.vagnoni@unifr.ch)

Royal Epiphanies in the Kingdom of Sicily and Naples (1130-1343).

This sub-project sets out to investigate forms and functions of bodily representation of the king in the south of Italy, a particularly important geographical area for the project owing to its location right in the centre of the Mediterranean and its openness to cultural influences from different origins (Byzantine, Islamic, Germanic, Frankish and Hispanic). The investigation will begin in 1130, the year in which, thanks to his political expertise, Roger II of Hauteville managed to found the kingdom of Sicily from scratch, and will continue until 1343, when the death of Robert of Anjou would cause a great political, institutional and cultural caesura. Over these more or less two centuries, the research will deal with four different reigning dynasties (Norman, Swabian, Angevin and Aragonese) and twelve sovereigns (outstanding personalities on the medieval panorama: Roger II himself; Frederick II of Swabia; Charles I and Robert of Anjou; Frederick III of Aragon), as well as with the formation, following the Sicilian Vespers (1282), of the kingdom of Naples on the mainland.

As highlighted in preliminary work carried out through the University of Fribourg Forschungspool, there is a great abundance of both iconographic and written sources on these two kingdoms and in some cases they have not been studied with as much attention as would be required. Furthermore, while historiographic research has concentrated above all on analysing the representation of power during the Norman-Swabian domination, much less attention has been paid to the Angevin and above all Aragonese domination, making intervention in this respect even more necessary.

Mirko Vagnoni will concentrate on this geographical area. Dr Vagnoni has been dealing with the representation of power in the Mediterranean context for several years now (scientific coordinator of the international congress Representation of Power at the Mediterranean Borders of Europe held in Kassel in December 2013). His main focus has been on analysing royal iconography in the kingdoms of Sicily and Naples between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. He has written several publications on this topic (some of the main ones being: M. VAGNONI, Il significato politico delle caratteristiche iconografiche di Federico II di Svevia, “Iconografia. Rivista di iconografia medievale e moderna”, 5 (2006), pp. 64-75; M. VAGNONI, Una nota sulla regalità sacra di Roberto d’Angiò alla luce della ricerca iconografica, “Archivio Storico Italiano”, 167/2 (2009), pp. 253-268; M. VAGNONI, Le rappresentazioni del potere. La sacralità regia dei Normanni di Sicilia: un mito?, Bari, 2012; M. VAGNONI, L’invisibilità di Federico II di Svevia nel regno di Sicilia, in Il Principe invisibile. La rappresentazione e la riflessione sul potere tra Medioevo e Rinascimento, eds. L. Bertolini, A. Calzona, G. M. Cantarella, and S. Caroti, Proceedings of the International Congress (Mantova, 27-30 November 2013), Turnhout, 2015, pp. 491-506).

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Royal Epiphanies in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (1198-1375)

This sub-project is dedicated to forms and functions of royal bodily representations in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia. In the second half of the tenth century, when the Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros II Phocas reconquered Cilicia and some parts of northern Syria from the Arabs, a large Christian population migrated back to these regions. The Armenians, being the majority among them, soon created their principality in Cilicia, which, with the coronation of Lewon I Rubenian in 1198, became the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, also known as Lesser Armenia or Armenian Cilicia. Receiving recognition from both the Holy Roman Empire and Rome, the newly founded kingdom had in fact to play the role of an ally of the West in the Levant, in particular by assisting the participants of the Crusades. In aligning its political orientation with the West, the Cilician court adopted the so-called Latin model of royalty, incorporating the power symbols and royal traditions typical of European and particularly of Crusader kingship, and at the same time using the native oriental traditions taken from Greater Armenia. The analysis will follow this kingdom during the two centuries of its existence: from the beginning (1198) to the end (1375), covering three dynasties representing the Rubenian, Het’umian and Lusignan families.

The most recent survey indicates that almost all the kings possessed at least one image that has come down to us. They are represented on artworks encountered in different art media, such as miniatures of manuscripts, coins, seals, a reliquary, a relief, an icon and a tomb. Although far less researched, the integration of Armenian Cilicia into the overall analysis is particularly important because it will enrich the project with an
eastern point of view. Moreover, since the Armenians migrated from Greater Armenia to the Eastern Mediterranean, it played the role of mediator between Western and different Eastern and Far Eastern traditions and cultures.

This part of the project will be carried out in the frame of post-doctoral research by Mrs Gohar Grigoryan who has currently completed her doctoral thesis ‘Royal Imagery of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia (1198-1375)’ under the Prof. Dr. Bacci’s supervision at the University of Fribourg. In her doctoral thesis, Mrs Grigoryan has collected a large image dossier of Cilician kings that will be very useful for this research. This work will give her the possibility to obtain the habilitation.

Sofía Fernández Pozzo, SNF Doktorandin. (sofiafpozzo@gmail.com)

Royal Epiphanies in the Kingdom of Aragon (1164-1387)

This sub-project sets out to investigate forms and functions of royal bodily representation in the Iberian area and, specifically, in the kingdom of Aragon which covered a large part of the Mediterranean. In addition to including the lands of Aragon and the county of Barcelona, over the centuries under investigation it also came to dominate the territories of Roussillon, Valencia, the Balearics, Sicily and Sardinia and, furthermore, it entertained trading relations with Egypt, Greece, Byzantium, Cyprus and Armenian Cilicia.

The investigation will begin in 1164, the year when Alfonso II, first holder of this crown, came to the throne, and will continue until 1387, the year of the death of Peter IV the Ceremonious; to take the research any further would effectively concern a cultural context that was too different from that under investigation in the project as a whole. So the research will deal with eight sovereigns, in particular personalities of the calibre of James I the Conqueror, Peter III the Great, James II the Just and the same Peter IV the Ceremonious. Studying the kingdom of Aragon will enrich the overall analysis with the perspective of a western Mediterranean situation which, with its countless political, economic and cultural bonds, fits well into the wider geographical context subject to the study. Moreover, the court in this monarchy was particularly active, as reflected in the wealth of preserved sources: suffice it to think of the royal initiatives in both the artistic (sculptures, paintings, illuminations, goldsmithery) and literary spheres (poems and chronicles, in some cases produced directly by the sovereigns themselves), without counting the extraordinary archival patrimony at the General Archive of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona.

Sofía Fernández Pozzo will deal with the studies of the kingdom of Aragon. Under the supervision of Prof. José Luis Senra, in 2015 she graduated in History of Medieval Art from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and she has currently completed her MA at the University of York. Her interests particularly concern the painting and architecture of the kingdom of Aragon. She will work on this project as a PhD student in the History of Medieval Art, under the Prof. Dr. Bacci’s supervision, at the University of Fribourg, and this activity will enable her to obtain her PhD.