The Correspondence Between Peter The Venerable And Bernard Of Clairvaux: A Semantic And Structural A

Reviews

King Arthur. Myth-making and history. By N. J. Higham. Pp. xi+303 incl. 39 figs. London-New York: Routledge, 2002. £25. 0 415 21305 3

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The problem of whether Arthur is a historical figure or not will never be definitively resolved unless a dataeable and authenticated inscription from the sub-Roman period turns up. Hopes were raised by the 'Artognou' find at Tintagel in 1998, but, as N. J. Higham shows in this sceptical survey of the debate on the historical Arthur, it has nothing to do with the case. Nor, in Higham's view, is there much else – indeed, anything else of any substance – that will help us. He analyses persuasively the political and cultural background of the earliest evidence, the Historia Brittoniam and the Amnales Cambriae, and shows why each author had reason to create an Arthur-figure. His most interesting discovery is the parallel between Joshua in the Old Testament and Arthur, which certainly offers a new framework for the account in the Historia Brittonian. He is keen on the idea of a folkloric Arthur figure, but mixing folklore and historical analysis is always difficult: none of the folklore evidence can be shown to pre-date the literary Arthur — the Historia is probably our earliest source for both — and most of it is very much later. The arguments for a folklore Arthur as the origin of a pseudo-historical Arthur rely on a high valuation of folklore as evidence. The weight of argument must still be in favour of a historical personage called Arthur, of whatever period, to whom both the history (invented or borrowed from other historical figures) and the popular fictions of folklore were attached. This apart, Higham's survey is an admirably measured and wide-ranging contribution to the ever-growing literature on the subject. Alas, it will not stem the tide of popular 'solutions' to the identity of Arthur, but it will put them firmly in their place.

RICHARD BARBER

Per una storia dei santuari cristiani d'Italia. Approcci regionali. By Giorgio Cracco. (Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento. Quaderni, 58.) Pp. 504. Bologna: il Mulino, 2002. €28.50 (paper). 88 15 08789 3

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Volume Iviii of the Quaderni, published by the Italo-German Historical Institute in Trent, contains twenty-three studies relating to pilgrimage centres in the various regions of present-day Italy, both mainland and insular. Many of the pieces are by teams of apparently younger scholars, though some of the single-authored contributions suggest a more mature hand, quite apart from the introduction and conclusion by established scholars. The survey of such centres, their history (and where

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