



**Review of Jornadas sobre San Martín de Frómista: ¿Paradigma o Historicismo?, Frómista, Spain, Sept. 17-18, 2004.**

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The objective of this symposium was to address the historical significance of the late eleventh-century church of San Martín de Frómista and to weigh the results of its polemical restoration, completed one hundred years ago. This building has been alternatively considered a paradigm of the Romanesque style and held up as the most perfect surviving example of architecture on the Pilgrimage Road to Santiago de Compostela, or ridiculed as a nineteenth-century pastiche whose historical importance was destroyed by over-restoration. The symposium was organized by José Manuel Rodríguez Montañés of the Fundación Santa María la Real. Rodríguez Montañés is also editing the volume in which the symposium proceedings will appear. Publication is said to be imminent.



Six scholars were invited to give hour-long talks on various aspects of San Martín and its restoration. [The presentations were made in Spanish, but for this review, I will give English translations of the titles.] The first day was devoted to the monastery's historical context. Frómista holds pride of place among Spanish buildings as one of the earliest incarnations of the mature Romanesque style and the first manifestation of sculpture by the so-called Orestiad Master, whose influence scholars such as Serafín Moralejo have traced to sites throughout northern Spain and southern France. Santiago Peral Villafruela, Historian of the Ayuntamiento de Frómista, spoke on "Frómista and San Martín in the Middle Ages: A Conflicted Relationship." Using medieval documentary sources, Peral Villafruela traced the history of San Martín and its often uneasy interactions with the town of Frómista that grew up around the monastery. José Luis Senra Gabriel y Galán of the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela presented his research entitled "The Material Reality of the Church of San Martín de Frómista in the Twelfth Century." He drew a convincing connection between Frómista and the nearby Benedictine monastery of San Zoilo de Carrión de los Condes, expounding his theory that the west facades of both originally consisted of two-story "galilees." Therese Martin of the University of Arizona concluded the first day's presentations with her "Crouching Monsters, Apes, and Orestes: The Sculptural Context

of San Martín de Frómista.” Following the career of the “Orestiad Master” from Frómista to Jaca, León, and Compostela, she addressed issues related to Romanesque sculpture, including its public nature, the varied representations of lust on church facades, and the overlapping iconography of Samson, David and Hercules.

The following day focused on the restoration of the church undertaken by Aníbal Alvarez in the late nineteenth century and completed in 1904. Due to the radical nature of the restoration, in which most of the masonry was removed and replaced, and to its poor documentation of such matters as the extent of the sculpture to be substituted, Frómista’s restoration continues to be one of the most controversial in Spain’s history. Pedro Navascués Palacio of the Escuela Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid opened the day’s talks with his “Theory and Practice of Restoration around the year 1900.” His learned and highly engaging presentation placed Frómista’s restoration within the context of work done in Europe in the late nineteenth century, showing various examples of the excessive (to our eyes) repairs then being done on medieval architecture. He was followed by José Luis Hernando Garrido of the Escuela Superior de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales de Madrid, whose talk was entitled “The Social, Political, and Cultural Context of the Intervention at San Martín de Frómista.” Hernando Garrido looked beyond the question of architecture to recreate the historical moment within which Frómista’s restoration was undertaken, focusing particularly on the interactions of political and religious figures who promoted the restoration. Finally, Pedro Luis Gallego Fernández of the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Valladolid closed the symposium with “Aníbal Alvarez and the Restoration of San Martín de Frómista” with a close examination of the surviving documentary evidence. He reviewed early groundplans and the little that is known of Alvarez’s notes, and he drew conclusions from the changes evident in a comparison of Parcerisa’s nineteenth-century engraving of the monastery with early twentieth-century photographs.

Following each set of presentations, there were lively discussions among the speakers and symposium attendees, summaries of which are to be included in the publication of the proceedings. The international audience included scholars and graduate students from Spain, Germany, the United States, and Italy, along with residents of Frómista who were curious to see what the speakers would make of their beloved local monument. There was much conviviality among the speakers and organizers of the symposium, at which meals were an important venue for continuing discussions of the often controversial conclusions of the presentations. In the end, all agreed that San Martín is ripe for further study, and especially urgent is the need to determine which sculptural and architectural elements are original and which are the result of the restoration. The afternoons brought visits to San Martín itself, and to the nearby churches of San Hipólito de Támara and San Zoilo de Carrión de los Condes, the former undergoing restoration, and the latter closely related to San Martín de Frómista in the twelfth century.

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