EPISCOPIA
DOMUS IN QUA MANEBAT EPISCOPUS:
EPISCOPAL RESIDENCES IN NORTHERN ITALY
DURING LATE ANTIQUITY (4TH TO 6TH CENTURIES A.D.)

Yuri A. Marano

Abstract

This article addresses the development of three episcopal complexes in Northern Italy: at Aquileia, Milan and Parenzo-Poreč, leaving aside the very special case of Ravenna. Episcopal complexes (meaning the monumental headquarters of the bishop) initially centred on the cathedral and evidence for residence is slight in contrast, reflecting perhaps that the influence of bishops derived primarily from liturgy and their ecclesiastical status. Nevertheless, during the 5th and 6th c. A.D. monumental episcopal residences develop, that seem to reflect the rising social and political status of bishops in wider society.

Introduction

In recent decades it has been demonstrated that late antique imperial palaces, and the residences of secular and ecclesiastical functionaries (such as civil governors), can be categorised as domestic architecture. For this reason, episcopal residences cannot be considered to have constituted a particular category of buildings on their own, with recurring and specific features. Furthermore, their appearance seems to have been influenced by several different factors, including the political, financial and cultural prestige of a particular diocese, bishop, or Church. This would confirm what we know regarding the marked pragmatism demonstrated by Christian communities in their development of an urban topography focused upon religious buildings.

Consequently, the study of bishops’ residences should be undertaken alongside that of the churches and baptisteries with which they...