L'IDOMENEO
Idomeneo (2023), n. 36, 141-156
ISSN 2038-0313
DOI 10.1285/i20380313v36p141
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2023 Università del Salento

Raising the High Cross: missionaries, monks and menhirs from Ireland to Italy**

*Paul Arthur**

Abstract. *This article discusses aspects of evangelization in early medieval Italy, focusing on the possible role of high crosses, the so-called menhirs, that are characteristic of the landscape of the Terra d'Otranto.*

Riassunto. *Questo articolo esamina alcuni aspetti dell'evangelizzazione nell'Italia altomedievale, concentrandosi sul possibile ruolo delle alte croci, i cosiddetti menhir, che caratterizzano il paesaggio della Terra d'Otranto.*

Based on the archaeological evidence accumulated over the years, it is now clear that contacts between the Atlantic, the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa continued until around AD 640/650, well after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (Fernández Fernández, 2014). These also involved south-west England and Ireland to a fairly significant extent, at least, in part, for the procurement of tin and silver. The spread of both monasticism and the Justinianic plague also bear witness to continued relations as far as the Emerald Isle. In the context of long-distance contacts during the early Middle Ages, the unique monolith from Penmachno in North Wales, now on display in the British Museum, is often cited. It bears an engraved date that seems to refer to the consular years of the Byzantine emperor Justin II (567-579) (Green, 2016). A little later, at the end of the century, St. John the Almsgiver, patriarch of Alexandria, provided a merchant with a boat full of bushels of wheat to trade with Britain, a commodity that was probably exchanged for tin (Dawes, Baynes, 1948). Overseas Mediterranean-Atlantic contacts apparently rarefied during the second half of the 7th century, until they largely ended with the conquest of North Africa by the Arabs and their eventual crossing over the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain in 711. This certainly did not put an end to all relations between the British Isles and the Mediterranean world. Land routes certainly remained open. Regardless of any political or economic issues, it must be remembered that for many living in Western Europe, the Holy Land was a constant attraction during the Middle Ages, even if access was sometimes hindered by the Arab occupation of Jerusalem.

Saint Columbanus was born in Leinster, south-east Ireland, around 540. In 590 he left the island to go to the continent as a missionary (Richter, 2008). He was only the first of a host of Irish monks and clerics to reach England and eventually

*Università del Salento, *paul.arthur@unisalento.it*

** *This paper was prepared for the 2nd Convegno di Studi Greco Salentini at Sternatia held in June 2023. It builds upon previous studies by the author (esp. Arthur, 2004; 2008) and was written in the context of the PRIN project 'The Byzantine Heritage of Southern Italy: Settlements, Economy and Resilience of Changing Territorial and Landscape Contexts' (Call for Papers 2017 Prot. 2017M93ABL), financed by the Italian Ministry of Universities*.

cross over to mainland Europe and eventually reach the Mediterranean via France, Germany and Switzerland. He was also one of the most influential. Some monks ultimately reached southern Italy, where the main ports to the Holy Land were located. Through their teachings in monasteries from Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, to St. Gall or Bobbio, the latter founded by Columbanus himself in 614, they contributed to European cultural and religious development, helping to lay the foundations of the Carolingian Renaissance (Schmuki, 2018).

Those who were willing or able to do so ventured far beyond Italy to the Holy Land, a pilgrim's most coveted destination. An apocryphal text, probably of Norman times, relates how, in 685, St. Catald or Cathal, an Irish monk, died in Longobard Taranto, an important port in the early Middle Ages (Carducci, 1986). He had stopped in the city on his way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He was elected archbishop of Taranto, a role he held until his death, was buried in the cathedral and was subsequently nominated patron saint of the city. Despite its legendary nature, the tale of an Irish monk travelling to the Holy Land and back was evidently considered plausible, so much so that his figure was painted on a column in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem toward the mid 12th century (Hunt, 1991, 77).

Almost a hundred years later than Catald's supposed journey, the monk Willibald of Wessex also stopped in Taranto on his way back from his journey to the Holy Land (Holder-Egger, 1887). But he did not stop there, and began his return journey to Eichstãtt in Bavaria, where he was proclaimed bishop and died around 787.

It is not known who later reached the south of the Italian peninsula, but from Ireland and other parts of the British Isles monks such as 9th century St. Donatus of Fiesole and others travellers continued to arrive in Italy. Of course, Columbanus, Willibald and Donatus are pilgrims for whom we have written documentation, compared to many others who are probably not mentioned in the sources. Just as their names may have escaped us, so have many of their actions and influences on the religious and cultural life of the time.

Of the various things that strike me when I visit Ireland, I find the high crosses to be among the most intriguing (e.g. Harbison, 1992). As their name implies, they consist of crosses mounted on a tall pillar or column, generally made of stone (fig. 1), even if there is reason to believe that wooden examples also once existed, perhaps predating the appearance of the stone ones. The earliest known stone high crosses, dating from the 8th century, appear to be those in the territory of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, which was converted to Christianity by Irish missionaries. Of course, there is no need to illustrate the power of the cross in Christianity, as from the 4th century it became the most established symbol of the faith (Garipzanov, 2018, ch. 3). The tall stone crosses, generally erected from the 8th and 9th centuries onwards, were intended to mark Christian sites as missionaries and monasteries gradually evangelised the land. As stated in a caption of a British high cross preserved in the British Museum, "they acted as beacons of faith in the landscape, marking places where people could gather to hear Christian preaching". This function was of enormous importance, especially when churches were

few and far between, as in the early medieval countryside, and the Church was in the process of proselytising and consolidating its influence over the population.

Monuments of this type are not only common in Ireland. High crosses once existed throughout the British Isles and some are also known from Scandinavia, where their influence may have spread through Viking raids. However, the examples that exist today may be the survivors of others that have since been destroyed for the reuse of stone or other reasons, even decomposed if made of wood. Indeed, the 9th century Lancaster cross in the British Museum, with its skeumorphic decoration carved in stone that appears to represent nailed copper or bronze plates, supports the idea that some examples may have been made of wood, and sometimes plated with metal (Richardson, Scarry, 1990, 17). In Ireland, at the monastery of St. Ciaran in Clonmacnoise, early 10th century stone high crosses appear to have been preceded by wooden crosses (King, 1997). Others, however, may have been carved or simply painted.

The Salento, on the other hand, is locally known for the so-called menhirs, carved from the local limestone, variously dated by scholars and laymen between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age (Palumbo, 1955; 1958; Malagrinò, 1982). But were they ever prehistoric? Their rigorous geometric lines with right angles, the mortice or tenon joints at the top and their contexts, often associated with early medieval burials or settlements, later churches or located at road junctions, remind me so much of the high crosses of Ireland that I find it very difficult to consider them of earlier date. Indeed, given their characteristics and contexts, I would find it equally hard to believe that they were Christianised over time, as some local opinion holds. Moreover, it is far more common to find menhirs close to medieval remains than to recognised settlements or even scatters of artefacts of much earlier date. They are often very carefully cut in a single block and usually exceed three metres in height. The menhir Staurotomèa or Croce Grande, at Carpignano Salentino, was believed to be 4.10m high, although it is now broken (Bandiera, 1984, 12), whilst menhir Croce di Sant'Antonio at Muro Leccese measures 4.20m (fig. 2). They are generally rectangular in cross-section, although very few examples, perhaps actually from prehistoric times, are roughly hewn stones (e.g. a monolith near S. Giovanni Malcantone, Uggiano la Chiesa). As mentioned, most have rectangular protuberances or dowel holes at the top, presumably for the purpose of affixing an object (see below). A fair number are located in prominent positions, either on protruding natural bedrock (e.g. San Paolo, Giurdignano), or on a base of dressed stone. Some rest on a three-stepped base of limestone blocks, recalling representations of the cross of Calvary (e.g. the menhir Sant'Antonio, Muro Leccese).

Ruth Whitehouse (1967, 359) noted that they are generally aligned N-S, or rather, their long sides face E-W, perhaps towards the rising and setting of the sun. This orientation is, of course, found in both pagan and Christian contexts, the latter often repeated in both church and burial orientations. While we have verified some orientations, we have also found that many have been removed from their original position, often because they obstructed traffic, and whose current orientation may thus be spurious. However, their frequent presence along communication routes may be telling in itself.

These so-called menhirs in Apulia also have an interesting variety of names, many of which refer to the settlement or locality in which they are found. Some bear the name of abandoned medieval villages, such as the menhirs Anfiano, Palanzano, Quattro Macine or Vicinanze I and II, and are found on or near the sites of such villages, as already noted by Cosimo De Giorgi (1888, 279). Others refer to surviving settlements, such as Giurdignano (LE), where their concentration is surprising. The vanished menhir Pozzelle (fig. 3) in the territory of Zollino signalled a natural and artificial water reservoir that was used by the inhabitants of the deserted medieval village of Apigliano (Tinelli, 2009; Chiga, 2017, 8-9).

If the one that I have seen reused to bridge an irrigation channel at the edge of the early medieval settlement at loc. Scorpo, Supersano, is to be dated to the same period as the abandoned site, then it would be between the later 7th and 9th century (Arthur et al., 2011). Other menhirs seem to be associated with early medieval burials, such as at Anfiano (Cannole: Tinelli, 2003), Ussano/Ossano (San Donato: Bruno, Guacci, 2019) and the example that stands near the church of S. Marina in Muro Leccese. The menhir of San Paolo in Giurdignano, besides being in the midst of a small number of early medieval burials, is located above a cave-chapel decorated with a post-medieval fresco depicting St. Paul, the Madonna and the tarantula with its web. St. Paul was the protector of people who had been bitten by the spider, and the combination of diverse expressions of faith at this site is quite remarkable.

Menhirs are frequently visible near churches, often, apparently, by those in villages that were not abandoned at the end of the Middle Ages. Archaeological excavations may reveal other examples, as happened in the case of the abandoned medieval village of Anfiano, where excavation revealed the foundations of a church a few metres from the standing menhir and a group of early medieval graves. To my mind, all this suggests that the menhirs were part of a chronological progression from primitive high cross to church and cemetery, as was observed in Britain well over a hundred years ago (Brown, 1903, 254-266). Indeed, in more than one case, menhirs appear to have preceded the construction of churches. In England, for instance, John Hurst (1976, 39) has suggested that at the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy in Yorkshire, in Anglo-Saxon times, a free-standing cross probably preceded a small wooden church, that was later rebuilt in stone.

Absolute dating of the Salento menhirs is, of course, extremely difficult on the basis of current evidence, although we can hope that sooner or later scientific dating will come to our aid. One possibility would be radiocarbon dating of lichen growth. However, as I suggested above, although stratigraphic dating is still lacking, the general associations, contexts and similarities suggest that they can be assigned to the early Middle Ages. A further dating element could be provided by their very distribution (fig. 4). All but a very few appear in the Salento, within the boundaries of what was Byzantine territory until its expansion following the reconquest of southern Italy by Emperor Basil I from 876. If this is due to the fact that they were erected during the early Middle Ages, but before the Byzantine territorial expansion by Emperor Basil I, then they should largely be placed in a time span be-

tween the 7th and later 9th centuries. It could also be noted that the somewhat similar distribution of Byzantine artefacts such as the common kitchen pots with a convex base known as the Mitello type (Arthur, Leo Imperiale, 2015, 36-37, fig. 20, nos. 1-5), could also indicate that they all largely predate the Byzantine reconquest.

Further indications may perhaps help reveal how the Salento menhirs were considered and used in the past. A fallen specimen, near the abandoned medieval village of Quattro Macine, is known as the 'fallen cross'. Crocemuzza, near Maglie (LE), is the 'croce mozza' or 'broken cross', while the Fausa menhir, once above a cave in Giurdignano (De Giorgi, 1888, 279), probably derives from the local term 'croce fausa' or false cross, a term that also applies to a mason's square shaped like a broken cross or half cross (De Pascalis, 2001).

One of the most characteristic technical elements of Irish high crosses is the presence of a mortise or tenon joint at the top of the pillar, which often served to fix a removable cross or a representation of the House of God. These recall the ones also found at the top of most of the menhirs in southern Apulia, which presumably served a similar purpose.

Last, but not least, there is no evidence for differential erosion or lichen growth on parts of the menhirs, as one would expect if prehistoric menhirs had been adapted for some other purpose much later in time.

A visit to the 13th-century Church of Santa Maria del Casale near the airport at Brindisi is perhaps instructive in contextualising the Apulian menhirs. Now inside the nave, in the corner to the right of the entrance, is a typical Byzantine column in Proconnesian marble from the Sea of Marmara, dating from around the 6th century. Besides an original cross carved on the column shaft, it bears a cross carved in local limestone on the top. Before being moved to the church, the column and the cross stood on a hillock in the surrounding fields (fig. 5). Until 1923, it was the subject of a sacred procession starting from the cathedral on Palm Sunday and quoting the Gospel in Greek, recalling a tradition that had existed since at least 1650 (Carito, 1993). For this reason, like some menhirs and other post-medieval monoliths, it was known as Sanna or Hosanna, from the Hebrew word *Hosanna*, meaning 'save us', cried out when Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:10).

It recalls a series of similar monuments, particularly in Bologna (Paltrinieri, 2022). One of them, in the church of San Giovanni in Monte, is composed of a column resting on a Corinthian capital (Zucchini, 1914, 74). The column is surmounted by a stone cross with an inscription that dates it to the year 801, during the bishopric of Vitus. The inscription, which reads 'INDINO RENOVA CRUX TEM PORIBUS DOM VITALE EPS', thus informs us that the cross replaced an earlier one.

Some, although few, of the Salento menhirs are cruciform. A 2.95 m high cross is carved from a single block of limestone; it was placed in the locality of Capore in the countryside of Trepuzzi (LE), near a road to the north-east of the town. I have no doubt that it is part of the Salento menhirs, whilst a more typical example, therefore without a cross at its summit, was found in the nearby town of Campi

Salentina (LE), less than 5 km away. Outside of the main distribution of menhirs in Apulia is the example at Modugno (BA), known as the Monaco (= monk) menhir, which appears to bear an arm of a broken cross. The Visitazione menhir in Gemini (LE) still bears a small removable limestone cross on its top, although there is no mortise or tenon joint. Finally, the local historian Palumbo recalls that the Mater Domini menhir in Vernole, located in a square between the churches of Mater Domini and S. Severino, the latter possibly dating back to the 12th century, "kept at the top until a few years ago the slab that served as the base for the cross added to the monument during the common era" (Palumbo, 1955). Although no menhirs or high crosses are clearly mentioned in medieval written sources, it is tempting to read a reference to one in a document from 1092 that, in describing the property boundary of the monastic dependency of S. Pietro in Bevagna (TA), mentions a *"locum ubi est petra signata cum Cruce"* (*Regii Neapolitani Archivii Monumenta* ed. ac ill., V, 153).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of many of the high crosses in the British Isles is the presence of sculptural adornment which, in some cases, required considerable skilled labour. Such decoration does not appear on the Apulian specimens, which, alternatively, may sometimes have been painted, and it might be worthwhile to attempt a microanalysis of the surfaces for traces of paint. In any case, this difference between sculpted and non-sculpted decoration could be due to economic factors, as the painting would have been less laborious and expensive than the sculpture. A possible indication of a painted menhir is the example now preserved in the church of Parabita. One side of the stone bears a post-medieval painting of the Madonna and Child, while the other three sides bear typical Byzantine crosses and rinceau decoration that may also be late in date, but that may have replaced an original scheme. A further monolith, found embedded in the wall of the Church of Our Lady of Constantinople in Morciano di Leuca (LE), also bears a post-medieval painting of the Madonna and Child, but this time on a roughly hewn stone, not typical of the Salento menhirs. It is one of the few Salento menhirs that, to my mind, might be prehistoric in date and later Christianised.

It might further be suggested that most of these local Salento menhirs come from a single quarry, although petrological analyses would be desirable, even if perhaps difficult, in an attempt to prove or disprove the hypothesis. The distribution of menhirs might itself indicate a common provenance, as the majority are concentrated inland from Otranto, with a small concentration near S. Maria di Leuca and a fair number south and south-east of Lecce, while they are almost non-existent towards the western side of the peninsula (Palumbo, 1955). There are also very few anomalous specimens, such as the one found much further north at Modugno (BA). There were clearly many more menhirs in the past, although several have been destroyed or stolen. At the end of the 19th century, for example, there were apparently four menhirs known in the area of Martano (De Giorgi, 1916, 17), of which only the so-called Teofilo menhir survives today.

Given the context of early medieval religious mobility mentioned at the begin-

ning of this work, it would not be too far-fetched to believe that the so-called menhirs of the Salento were directly influenced by the high crosses of Ireland and the British Isles, to which they appear to be closely related. It is interesting to note that similar stone crosses also appear in other areas during the Middle Ages, such as the khachkars of Armenia (Azarian, Manoukian, 1969; Petrosyan, 2012), or examples from the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey (Özbek, 2008). Evandros Bexis kindly tells me of a few monoliths in Greece that recall the Salento menhirs, including two well-cut, but eroded, examples at Pelekanos in Western Macedonia (Μουτσόπουλος, 1995). All are territories that may have witnessed migratory flows to Byzantine southern Italy (Charanis, 1961). Thus, although the Salento examples seem most likely influenced by the high crosses in the British Isles, the actual use of such monuments was relatively widespread in Christendom.

So, if we are to accept the Apulian menhirs as early medieval high crosses, how can we best imagine their original use?

Regarding the use of menhirs, perhaps the most logical hypothesis is that, in the centuries following the end of the Roman empire in the West, when resources were limited but Christianity was gradually gaining ground, they were placed in the countryside during a planned process of evangelisation. This practice must have been initiated by an institution such as the diocese of Otranto or an important monastery in its hinterland, as it is difficult to imagine anyone else with the power, resources or vested interest to take on such a task at the time. The crosses could therefore serve as landmarks to represent the Church in the countryside, fulfilling some of its functions, both religious and social. Indeed, it is worth remembering that in much of Europe, and the Salento is no exception, before the year 1000, built churches in the countryside or within villages seem to have been rare, perhaps particularly for economic reasons. Situated at strategic points in the landscape, such as crossroads or significant communication routes, some of the 'menhirs' may have gradually acted as a lure for budding settlement, as meeting places for people who, at first, lived in scattered settlements. In this way, they would have favoured the enucleation and appearance of the villages, for which we have concrete evidence from the 8th century onwards, if not shortly before (Arthur, 2012). By the beginning of the second millennium, economic growth, led to thier replacment by churches and the creation of rural parishes.

Indeed, one can see how many of the modern settlements in the Salento, founded during the early Middle Ages, actually have their own menhirs, while others are located in the areas of abandoned medieval villages.

An indication of the process hypothesised above may be found in a foundation legend of the town of Parabita (LE), in whose church the previously described painted menhir stands today (Barone, De Giorgi, 2002, 37-50; Ruppi, Romano, 2015, 45-51). According to the story, while a farmer was ploughing nearby fields with his oxen, the animals stopped in front of a large stone and refused to proceed. Amazed, the farmer noticed that an image of the Virgin Mary was depicted on the stone and ran to his village to announce the strange discovery. A crowd of people rushed to visit the place and discovered a monolith, which they carried in proces-

sion to the main church. The next day, however, wonder of wonders, the monolith had disappeared. Miraculously, it was found in its original place in the middle of the fields. The locals thus realised that the Madonna wanted to stay in the country and gave her the name Madonna della Coltura, devoutly erecting a chapel on the spot. Although there are no longer any traces of the alleged medieval chapel, what is said to be the original monolith now adorns the high altar of the church in Parabita, which is part of a shrine that, according to tradition, stands on the site of its original discovery.

I conclude by referring to Baker and Brookes (2015): "Early Medieval meeting-places (in England) were often distant from the main areas of settlement, but at recognizable points in the landscape. Place-names emphasize their connection with naturally distinctive topography, trees, or vegetation; or in other cases human-made monuments like mounds or crosses. Some of these features may have had a functional utility for the proceedings carried out, but in most cases they appear to be signposts to specific locations in the landscape". As time passed, they may have become catalysts in the formation of a new agglomerated rural settlement pattern.

If my thesis is in any way correct, we are witnessing a specific example of how, against the more general backdrop of the decline and revival of the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean, individual human action may have had a profound effect on far-flung landscapes and thoughts that project the concept of connectivity far beyond the limits of the Mediterranean.

Bibliography

ARTHUR, P., "I menhir del Salento", in G. BERTELLI (ed.), *Puglia Preromanica*, Milano, Jaca Book, 2004, pp. 289-291.

ARTHUR, P., "Menhir nel Salento", in A. PRANZO (ed.), *Salento architetture antiche e siti archeologici,* Edizioni del Grifo, 2008, pp. 44-47.

ARTHUR, P., "Villages, communities, landscapes, in the Byzantine and medieval Salento", in P. GALETTI (ed.), *Paesaggi, comunità, villaggi medievali, Atti del convegno internazionale di studio, Bologna, 14-16 gennaio 2010*, Spoleto, Centro Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012, pp. 547-563.

ARTHUR, P., FIORENTINO, G., LEO IMPERIALE, M., GRASSO, A.M. (eds.), *La Storia nel Pozzo. Ambiente ed economia di un villaggio bizantino in Terra d'Otranto - Supersano 2007*, Unisalento Press, 2011.

ARTHUR, P., LEO IMPERIALE, M. "Le ceramiche di età bizantina (tardo VII-XI secolo)", in P. ARTHUR, M. LEO IMPERIALE, M. TINELLI (eds.), *Apigliano*. *Un villaggio bizantino e medievale in Terra d'Otranto. I Reperti,* Progetto In-Cul.Tu.Re., Lecce, Editrice Salentina, 2015, pp. 35-46.

AZARIAN, L., MANOUKIAN, A., *Khatchkar,* Documenti di Architettura Armena, Milano, Edizioni Ares, 1969.

BAKER, J., BROOKES, S.J., "Identifying outdoor assembly sites in early medieval England", *Journal of Field Archaeology* 40.1, 2015, pp. 3-21.

BANDIERA, E., *Carpignano Salentino, centro, frazione, casali,* Cavallino di Lecce, Capone editore, 1984.

BARONE, M., DE GIORGI, M., *Sulle tracce di Maria. Il culto mariano nella zona delle serre salentine,* Alezio (LE), Tipografia Corsano, 2002.

BROWN, G.B., *The arts in early England. Vol. 1. The life of Saxon England in its relation to the arts,* London, John Murray, 1903.

BRUNO, B., GUACCI, P., "I nuclei funerari in località Ussano (Cavallino, LE)", *Siris* 19, 2019, pp. 99-111.

CARDUCCI, A., "*La cripta e la leggenda agiografica di San Cataldo",* in C. D'ANGELA (ed.), *La cripta della Cattedrale di Taranto*, Taranto, Scorpione editore, 1986, pp. 83-98.

CARITO, G. 1993, *Brindisi nuova guida*, Brindisi, Edizione Prima.

CHARANIS, P., "The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 3.2, 1961, pp. 140-154.

CHIGA, A., "Ta freata: il miracolo della conservazione dell'acqua in una 'terra assetata'", in A. CHIGA, P. DURANTE, S. GIAMMARUCO (eds.) 2017, *Conservare l'Acqua. Le Pozzelle di Zollino tra memoria storica e indagini scientifiche,* Galatina (LE), Editrice Salentina, 2017, pp. 8-11.

DAWES, E., BAYNES, N.H., *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, London, 1948.

DE GIORGI, C., *La Provincia di Lecce. Bozzetti di viaggio*, vol. II, 1888, Galatina (LE), Congedo, (reprint 1975).

DE GIORGI, C., "I Menhir della provincia di Lecce", *Rivista Storica Salentina* XI (Nov.-Dic. 1916), 1916, pp. 45-87.

DE PASCALIS, D.G., *L'Arte di Fabricare e i fabbricatori. Tecniche costruttive in Terra d'Otranto dal XV al XIX sec.,* Nardò (LE), Besa Ed., 2001.

FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ, A., *El comercio tardoantiguo (ss. IV-VI) en el noroeste peninsualar a través del registro ceramico de la Ria de Vigo*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2014, pp. 443-452.

GARIPZANOV, I., *Graphic Signs of Authority in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 300-900,* Oxford University Press, 2018.

GREEN, C., "Britain, the Byzantine Empire, and the concept of an Anglo-Saxon 'Heptarchy': Harun ibn Yahya's ninth-century Arabic description of Britain", https://www.caitlingreen.org/, 2016.

HARBISON, P., *The High Crosses of Ireland. An iconographical and photographic survey*, Bonn, Dr. Rudolph Habelt GMBH, 1992.

HOLDER-EGGER, W. (ed), *Vitae Willibaldi et Wynnebaldi auctore sanctimoniali Heidenheimensi*, in *MGH, Scriptores* xv, 1887, pp. 80-117.

HUNT, L.-A., "Art and Colonialism: The Mosaics of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1169) and the Problem of "Crusader" Art", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 45,1991, pp. 69-85.

HURST, J., "Wharram Percy: St Martin's *Church*", in P.V. ADDYMAN, R. MORRIS

(a cura di), *The Archaeological study of churches,* CBA *Research* Report No 13, 1976, pp. 36-39.

KING, H.A., "Burials and High Crosses at Clonmacnoise (Ireland)", in G. DE BOE, F. VERHAEGE (a cura di), *Death and Burial in Medieval Europe, Papers of the 'Medieval Europe Brugge 1997' Conference*, vol. 2, Zellik, 1997, pp. 127-131.

MALAGRINÒ, P., *Dolmen e menhir di Puglia,* Fasano (BR), Schena Ed., 1982.

Μουτσόπουλος, Ν.Κ., "Νεολιθικό Ακιδογράφημα στις όχθες της Χειμαδίτιδας λίμνης και το δίδυμο μενχίρ του Πελεκάνου", *Αρχαιολογία & Τέχνες* 56, 1995, pp. 42-45.

ÖZBEK, O., "Menhirs in the Graveyards: Fact or fiction? A Reconsideration of Erected Stone Monuments of Gallipoli Peninsula", in O. ÖZBEK (ed.), *Funeral Rites, Rituals and Ceremonies from Prehistory to Antiquity,* Proceedings of the International Workshop "Troas and Its Neighbours": Çanakkale and Ören 2-6 October 2006, Istanbul, 2008, pp. 83-96.

PALTRINIERI, G., *Le quattro croci nella Basilica di San Petronio e altre croci medievali a Bologna*, Bologna, Basilica di San Petronio, 2022.

PALUMBO, G., "Inventario delle pietrefitte salentine", in *Rivista di scienze preistoriche* X, fasc. 1-4, 1955, pp. 86-146.

PALUMBO, G., "*Pseudo - pietrefitte* in Terra d'Otranto e l'evoluzione degli "«Osanna» o «Sannà»", *Studi Salentini* III, 5-6, 1958, pp. 169-177.

PETROSYAN, H., "Similarities between the early Christian Armenian monuments and Irish high crosses in the light of new discoveries", in M. Fomin, A. Jivanyan, S. Mac Mathúna (eds.), *Ireland and Armenia: Studies in Language, History and Narrative*, Washington D.C., Institute for the Study of Man, 2012, pp. 169-180.

RICHARDSON, H., SCARRY, J., *An Introduction to Irish High Crosses,* Dublin, The Mercier Press Ltd, 1990.

RICHTER, M., *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages: The Abiding Legacy of Columbanus*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2008.

RUPPI, F., ROMANO, S., *In cammino con Maria. Il culto mariano nelle Serre Salentine,* Lecce, Il Raggio Verde Edizioni, 2015.

SCHMUKI, K. 2018, 'Guests and teachers from Ireland at the Abbey of St Gall', in C. DORA, F. SCHNOOR (eds.), *The Cradle of European Culture: Early Medieval Irish Book Art*, St Gallen, 2018, pp. 96-107.

TINELLI, M., *Cannole – Anfiano. Saggio di scavo in località Anfiano* (relazione di scavo inedita), 2003.

TINELLI, M., "Le pozzelle", in P. ARTHUR, B. BRUNO (eds.), *Apigliano. Un villaggio bizantino e medievale in Terra d'Otranto. L'ambiente, il villaggio, la popolazione*, Galatina (LE), Arti Grafiche Panico, 2009, pp. 57-60.

WHITEHOUSE, R.D., "The megalithic monuments of south-east Italy", *Man* 2, 1967, pp. 352-365.

ZUCCHINI, G., *La chiesa di San Giovanni in Monte di Bologna,* Bologna, Azzoguidi, 1914.

Figures

Fig. 1. Cloncha cross and church near Culdaff, County Donegal, Ireland (copyright Radosław Botev).

Fig. 2. Menhir Croce di Sant'Antonio, Muro Leccese (photo Mauro Rizzo).

Fig. 3. Menhir Pozzelle, Zollino, behind another standing stone, which is possibly of pre-Classical date (photo Giuseppe Palumbo, 1908, Fondo Giuseppe Chiriatti, Biblioteca Comunale Maniglio, Zollino).

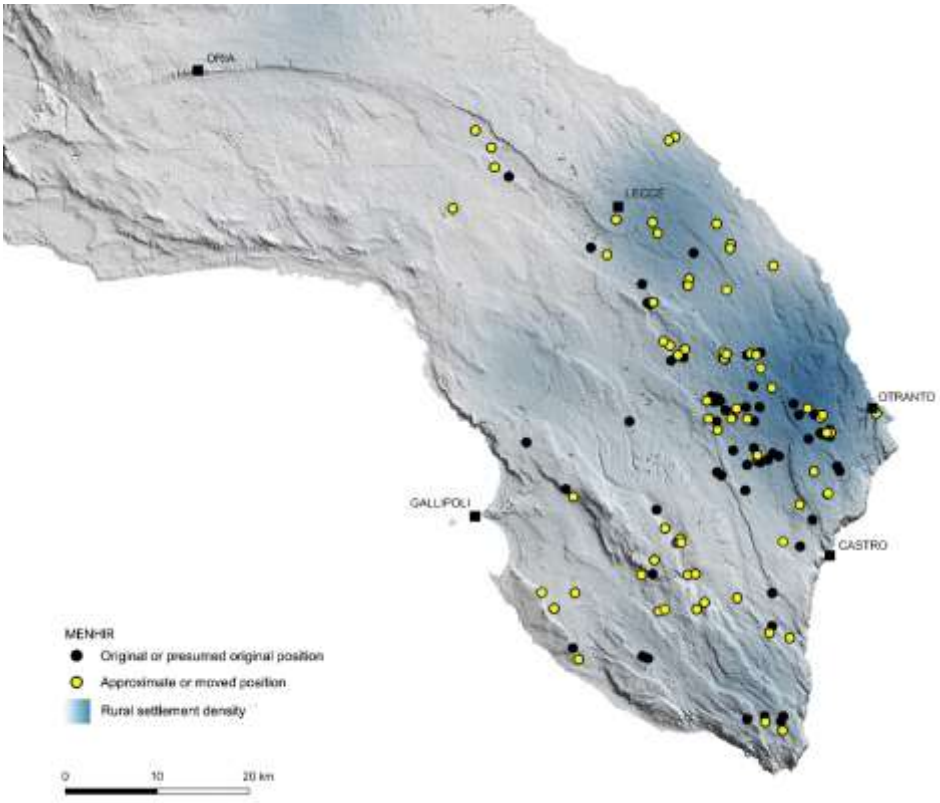

Fig. 4. Distribution of the Salento menhirs against the recognized Byzantine settlement pattern of the 7th to 10th centuries. The borderland with Lombard territory between the late 7th and late 9th centuries ran just to the south of Oria.

Fig. 5. S. Maria del Casale, Brindisi, early in the twentieth century (S.A. Magazzini Standa, Brindisi).