

book is arguably that he knows the building and its many scholarly arguments too well. His *summa* is a consistent diatribe against his many opponents and a long apologetic for his chosen solution. His adduction of relevant Theodosian parallels (although really there are no comparable mosaics) is excellent, but of course there are no parallels given for alternative explanations (some of them by no means less plausible) – turning the book into a plea for a position, rather than an objective summary of uncertain options. The problem here is that the fissile and messy uncertainty of so much of what we know about early Christian art is seen as something that needs cleaning up with positivist art-historical solutions so that a clear trajectory (for the monument in its own right and for the whole field, once one has placed the monument in its correct place) can be given. Arguably, with some exceptions about which we know more (such as Justinian's St Sophia in Constantinople), this is the wrong kind of story to tell: what is the point of clearing up the mess if you sort it out by putting the bits in all the wrong boxes? We need to embrace the mess of our evidence in its totality and to tell our stories with full empirical genuflection to how little we know. What the Rotunda's mosaic decoration offers are the sad remains of a stunning and exceptional dome programme plus the spectacular survival of a unique circle of drum images of extraordinarily high quality of execution and design, whose import, date and meanings remain singularly inaccessible, if we want precision, but whose broad significance and placement with the long development of Christian religious art between the late fourth century and the seventh are huge and unassailable.

JAS ELSENER
CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE OXFORD, UK
jas.elsner@ccc.ox.ac.uk

Medieval to Postmedieval

Dimitros E. Psarros. *To Aïβαλί και η Μικρασιατική Αιολίδα [Ayvalik and Aiolis of Asia Minor]*. pp. 627, with b/w and col. ills, 1 map in bag pocket. 2017. Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece (MIET). ISBN 978-960-250-687-5, hardback € 85.

This is a particular book, written by a refugee of second generation from Aivalik, who dedicated his life to the history of his homeland (he has studied Aivalik from 1969 till his death in 2008). An electrical engineer and architect by profession, a “technician” and not an academic or a professional writer’, as Psarros himself states (579), the author prepared a book free of the scientific constraints that sometimes academic writings possess. Although his focus was on topography, settlement evolution and architecture, the author was not afraid to enter into the field of history, and the information he includes from his numerous oral interviews enlivens the places the author describes. In fact, reading, or better, wandering through the book, one has the feeling that he meets Fotis Kontoglou’s ‘heroes’ of his *To Aïβαλί η πατρίδα μου* (Athens 1962).¹

Psarros died before completing the book (with the exception of the texts), and that entailed research into his archive for the full documentation of illustrations, maps, topographical sketches and captions by the editorial team of the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, who managed to offer to the public a wonderful edition.

The topic of the book is the town of Aivalik (Kydoniai), the adjacent Moschonisia (Cunda islands) and Genitsarochori (Küçükköy) in Aiolis in western Asia Minor. From 1773, this area – inhabited by ca. 30-40.000 souls, was granted special privileges by the Ottomans and enjoyed total autonomy and economically exploded, reaching its peak in the early 20th century. Since the 18th century the whole area of the gulf of Adramytion, as well as the island of Lesbos, was dedicated to monoculture of the olive, which was very fruitful for the inhabitants of the aforementioned areas. By contrast though to

¹ Fotis Kontoglou was born in 1895 in Aivalik and was one of the leading painters and intellectuals of 20th century Greece, master of Yiannis Tsarouchis and Nikos Eggonopoulos, founder of the Neo-Byzantine-style of painting, and winner of the Academy of Athens Prize for his book *Ekphrasis* on Orthodox Iconography.

the Lesbians, who took total control of this powerful source of wealth after the tanzimat reform of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19th century, in the area of Aivalik this happened a century earlier, due to the aforementioned privileges. Moreover, with the exception of the Ottoman officials, the area lacked of Muslim inhabitants, resulting in the creation of purely Greek orthodox settlements that not only followed the intellectual movements of the period - especially the creation of Greek nationalism - but also played a significant role in these trends. The Academy of Kydoniai, founded in 1803, was, together with the Evangelical School of Smyrna, among the primary educational Greek institutions. Among the teachers affiliated to it were significant personalities of the Modern Greek Enlightenment, such as Theophilos Kairis and Veniamin Lesvios. In fact, it is legitimate to say that this modern city-state, as Arnold Toynbee put it,² together with Smyrna and the eastern Aegean islands was the core of a 'second early modern Greece' that ran in parallel to the 'other one' that constituted the first Greek State. All these came to an end with the Greek military expedition in Asia Minor in 1919-1922 and the disastrous results - for the Greeks.

The book consists of ten chapters and 21 appendices. After the first introductory parts, chapters 5 and 6 attempt a long-term discussion from the medieval period to 1922, including the development of the settlements and the typology of the buildings in the study area. Comparisons to the adjacent areas and mainly to Lesbos help the reader to comprehend the general historical and economic circumstances, as well as the architectural trends of the north-eastern Aegean during this time span. Chapters 6 to 8 are dedicated to the three main settlements of the area under examination: Aivali, Moschonisi and Genitsarochori. After a brief historical introduction, the author presents analytically the development of the settlements from the 16th-18th century till the early 20th century. The author follows a parish per parish discussion, which is correct, given that this was the general way every neighbourhood was named and organized in the Ottoman Empire. After the presentation of the architecture of the church, the author provides a description of the main secular buildings and a very detailed topographical discussion, as well as information regarding the use, economy, society and demography of every neighbourhood. Chapter 10 is dedicated to the countryside of the area. It discusses the monasteries, chapels, as well as the surrounding islets. Finally the 21 appendices

include a variety of historical, archaeological, or even folkloric information. Some, for example, are dedicated to the protestant missionaries visiting Aivali, to the architecture of the Academy of Kydoniai, or to the building techniques in the area of Aiolis. I highlight the appendix that gathers the demographic evidence for Aivali, Moschonisi and Genitsarochori from 1600 till 1922, accompanied by illuminating graphs.

The volume includes ca. 800 photographs, maps, topographical and architectural sketches and tables, taken, collected or executed by the author during his numerous visits to the area. Some of the photos (especially those of the early 20th century) are invaluable as they present monuments that are lost today. Moreover, the maps and drawings that accompany the textual wandering through the three settlements, help the reader to navigate and actually make this 'tour' very enjoyable.

A significant element of the book is the typological analysis of the houses and churches (basilicas) in the area. The author identifies some particular characteristics that permit him to classify them as of a local type. The discussion includes comparisons to the very similar basilicas of Mytilene, and as such, the volume contains essentially a comprehensive investigation of the church architecture of the northeastern Aegean.

What is lacking in the book, however, is a deeper historical investigation regarding especially the 16th-18th centuries, as well as the consideration of the Ottoman archives, something that was beyond the possibilities of the author. Despite these weaknesses, Psarros made an optimal use of the sources at his disposal and created a very good background for further historical analyses. Actually, one could argue that he did the difficult job, namely the fieldwork documentation that permitted a wonderful visual presentation of Aivalik; and this is the major advantage of the book. In fact, while in recent years historical research has made significant progress in the study of towns during the Ottoman period (I am referring here to the area of modern Greece), and individual monuments appear in numerous architectural studies (thankfully not only churches but also mosques and other Ottoman monuments), synthetic publications that visualize the urban development of the towns are very few.

Psarros' book is an ideal work that illuminates a barely known, but very important area, that delves not only into the local historical and economic conditions, but also into the dynamic intellectual trends and their material expressions that took

² A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, v. 2, London: Oxford University Press, note in p. 40.

place in the Aegean during the early modern era. This book will be useful to every scholar of Hellenic studies.

MICHALIS KARAMBINIS
NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION
INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH
mkaram@eie.gr

Multiperiod

Giorgos Vavouranakis, Konstantinos Kopanias and Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos (eds). *Popular Religion and Ritual in Prehistoric and Ancient Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean*. pp. xviii + 170, with col. and b/w ill. 2018. Oxford: Archaeopress. ISBN 978-1-78969-045-3, paperback £32.

Popular religion falls under the wider field of popular culture, and has only recently been recognised as an independent subject for historical investigation.¹ This volume concerns popular religion and ritual in prehistoric and ancient Greece and the eastern Mediterranean, and is the result of a conference held in December 2012 at the National Kapodistrian University of Athens.

In the introductory chapter, Vavouranakis (pp. vii-xiii) offers a brief historiography of the theme, outlining also the content of the volume. This is a significant contribution introducing the theoretical and methodological issues around the subject. As the author manifests, popular religion refers to the aspects of religion and ritual, beliefs and practices shared by a large group of people, and usually by the lower tiers of society, but there is a lack of developed theoretical frameworks in Mediterranean archaeology for understanding its material expression. A clear boundary between 'official' or 'institutionalised' and 'popular' religion should be avoided. I also share the view that binary oppositions are not helpful when studying the Humanities. Thus, the term 'popular religion' may include traditional and changing beliefs and ritual practices of all social classes that relate to a world beyond the straightforwardly pragmatic, as well as personal, private, domestic, folk religion, and 'magic'; in other words, popular religion existed both independently of official (usually state-sponsored) religion and in symbiosis with it.² Ordinary people usually follow official cult, but, at the same time, they tend to produce their own versions of it, other types of ritual activity, or even their own systems of belief and practice, maintaining them outside of elite control. Thus, building on a Marxist perspective, popular religion may have a twin contradictory role: the securing of social subordination and at the same time the potential for comforting people,

¹ Briggs 2011.

² Baines and Waraksa 2017.