

selection and arrangement of source-material, that itself is testimony to the enduring legacy of Hercules in a complex age in which old and new traditions co-existed and eventually were reconciled, and so also to the magnitude of the task that E. set herself.

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Medieval

Michael Dekker. *The Byzantine Dark Ages*. pp. 246, 3 maps, 17 figures. 2016. London: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 978-1-47253-606-8. paperback £20.99; hardback £70.

This is one of a series of small volumes in the *Debates in Archaeology* series from this publisher, a very useful production focussing on special foci of scholarship at the presentday. As this volume covers the Early Medieval period in the Byzantine Eastern Mediterranean, it is a useful complement to the magisterial overview of Italy over the same but also a longer period by Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village* (2003) in the same series. Michael Dekker has already published extensively on Late Antiquity and Byzantium but this slim but rich volume allows him to concentrate on issues and problems of the pathway from the unified Roman Empire to the smaller and weaker successor state of Byzantium which reached its heyday at the end of the 1st millennium AD.

The period of 'Dark Ages' is here defined as the mid-7th to 9th century AD, and Dekker accepts the periodisation now favoured by most archaeologists and historians by paralleling this to the Early Byzantine era, with the Late Roman – Late Antiquity era covering the period from around 400 AD to the early 7th century. Why he retains Dark Ages however is not clearly argued for, and he acknowledges that the current tendency is to avoid this tendentious term, not on the basis of historical sources, for these indeed are poor for these centuries, but rather because the archaeological evidence is becoming quite plentiful. Indeed despite the book's appearance in 2016, there are already many more sites and ceramic forms that can be assigned to this period since the author penned this synthesis.

After a brief Introduction, the book has a coherent and logical structure. First comes an historical overview of the period, which is a good place for the reader to understand the divergent schools of thought on the decline of Rome and the transition into the mature Byzantine world. Next comes a brief presentation on the types of ceramics and other forms of material culture available for archaeological study in this period. Then follow chapters on cities, the rural world and then the economy. A final chapter looks ahead to where this field is moving. The text is succinct, up to date and allows different opinions their due airing.

In general, the author finds himself agreeing with the pessimistic school, that the Early Byzantine

era so defined saw severe urban decline apart from the most important regional centres, and a parallel major reduction in activity in the countryside. For the towns, Dekker concurs with Liebeschuetz (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 2001), that radical transformations were already starting from the 5th century AD, after which we increasingly see cities depart from their preceding classical infrastructures and monumental appearances.

Throughout, however, Dekker allows us to be aware of contrasted views so we can follow-up the debates, and admits that future scholarship may indeed offer a more positive view of the period to emerge, without altering the still overall impression of a general decline in human activity.

The figures are generally helpful, except for the map of Byzantine Constantinople (Fig.1) and the map of the 8th century Byzantine Empire (Fig.2) which are so absurdly small that their content is totally illegible.

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Michael J. Walsh, Tamás Kiss and Nicholas S.H. Coureas (eds) *The Harbour of all this Sea and Realm: Crusader to Venetian Famagusta* (CEU Medievalia 17). pp. 272, including 50 colour plates. 2014. Budapest and New York: Central European University Press. ISBN 978-615-5225-96-3 \$70 / €55 / £45.

This volume derives from the editors' desire to stimulate interest in the fascinating medieval town of Famagusta, located on the east coast of Cyprus, and to underpin the urgency in saving its valuable heritage. The book begins with a three-part multi-authored introduction by Michael Walsh, Tamás Kiss and Nicholas Coureas. Walsh's section (pp. 3-8) highlights the precarious state of the walled city of Famagusta and the problems faced in preserving it. In 2008 it was placed on the international Watch List of Endangered Sites by the World Monuments Fund and the city remains ineligible to apply for UNESCO World Heritage Site status because of the current political situation. However, as Walsh highlights, the book is not only meant to draw attention to the perilous state of Famagusta, but also to demonstrate that the city is not a lost-cause. Indeed, the volume derives from a meeting Historic Famagusta: A Millennium in Words and

Images, held in Budapest in 2012, which served to keep the debate on Famagusta's history alive. Since then several projects have materialised that give a tantalising glimpse into how Famagusta's heritage can be preserved, including a mural stabilisation project of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the Church of St Peter and Paul, a 3D modelling of the Orthodox cathedral of St George and the stabilisation of endangered frescoes in the Armenian church of Famagusta. The second part of the introduction, written by Kiss (pp. 9-12), provides a traditional overview of the contents of the book, which consists of eleven chapters, split into two parts: Part 1. 'History', containing contributions by Trélat, Claverie, Jacoby, Coureas, Balard and Arbel, and Part 2. 'Material Culture', containing those by Ritzerfeld, Paschali, Bacci, Langdale and Kaffenberger. The contributions from the first part can be further divided into 'ground level' micro-histories based on archival records (Claverie, Jacoby, Coureas and Balard) and broader historical surveys (Trélat and Arbel). The introduction finishes with a very useful bibliography of medieval Famagusta compiled by Coureas (pp. 13-18).

The first chapter in the volume, by Philippe Trélat (pp. 21-39), traces the complex relationship between Famagusta and Nicosia, the capital of medieval Cyprus. The author emphasises the importance of the royal residence in defining the status of the capital, where the Lusignan monarchs held coronations, concentrated their administration and organised courtly life. Although Famagusta enjoyed enormous commercial significance, and was even made the site of the coronation of the kings of Jerusalem, Trélat argues that it could never acquire the 'legitimising character' of Nicosia (p. 39). This was reflected by the Latin merchant communities who maintained commercial and consular representatives in Nicosia, despite carrying out most of their trading activities in Famagusta. The following chapter, by Pierre Vincent Claverie (pp. 41-52), the first of four micro-histories of Famagusta, is a detailed study of Stephen Mezel of Claremont, the bishop of Famagusta from 1244 until his assassination in 1259. Claverie's investigation sheds wider light on the prominence of families from Claremont in the high clergy of the island. The contribution by David Jacoby (pp. 53-67) follows in a similar vein. He uses the acts of the Genoese notary Lamberto de Sambuceto, to reconstruct the identities of several refugees who fled to Famagusta after the fall of Acre to the Mamluks in 1291. Jacoby highlights the problems in identifying such individuals but also provides a fascinating insight into their lives once they had settled on the island. One of these merchants, Viviano de Ginnebaldo, is particularly interesting. Jacoby traces Ginnebaldo's activities in