

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

detail, showing how he acted as an Arabic translator in Famagusta and was heavily engaged in the export of illegal war materials to the Mamluk sultanate which allowed him to grow rich and consequently raise his social standing within the town. Notarial records also form the base of the next chapter by Nicholas Coureas (pp. 69-75) who focuses on the apprenticeships recorded by the notaries Lamberto de Sambuceto and Giovanni da Rocha from 1296-1310. These mostly concern maritime professions such as masters of sailors, adzes and caulkers and testify to the economic expansion of the port at this time. Michel Balard's chapter (pp. 77-90) is the last of the micro-histories. It examines the mercenaries employed during the Genoese occupation of Famagusta, using a selection of the account books of the Genoese colony from 1407-1461. His meticulous study sheds light on the names, professions and motivations of some of these recruits, arguing that many were from Liguria and were craftsmen undertaking short periods of service in defence of the city. The article by Benjamin Arbel (pp. 91-103) is the last in the first part of the book. It takes a step back from the micro-histories in order to survey maritime trade in Famagusta during the Venetian period, from 1474-1571. At this time Famagusta was never able to regain the prominence it had enjoyed in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but Arbel shows that it was able to operate as an important 'advanced information centre' for Venetian galleys travelling to Beirut (p. 103). Moreover, although Saline (Larnaca) had become more important as a base for larger Venetian merchant vessels at this time, Famagusta remained a thriving port for regional trade undertaken on smaller craft between Syria and Cyprus.

Part two of the book, on material culture, begins with Ulrike Ritzerfeld's fascinating study into the provenance of so-called 'Veneto-Saracenic' metal ware of the fourteenth-century, in particular a selection of luxury metal basins that combined Mamluk and western styles and were commissioned by Hugh IV of Cyprus (pp. 107-33). It has been suggested that these items were produced in the famous workshops of Cairo and Damascus, but Ritzerfeld argues that this would have been difficult as tensions between the Mamluks and the west were especially high at this time, and the papal embargo restricted the export of metal to the Mamluk sultanate. Instead the author suggests that they may have been produced by Mamluk artisans in Famagusta, possibly in a workshop owned by the famous craftsman Muhammad Ibn al-Zayn. The following chapter by Maria Paschali (pp. 135-44), also focuses on the fourteenth century and the reigns of Hugh IV and Peter I, but instead on crusader ideology and propaganda found in the art of the Carmelite church in Famagusta (St Mary of the

Carmelites). She argues that the representation of St Helena, along with coats of arms and other motifs represented 'the newly asserted crusader authority of the kingdom of Cyprus in the fourteenth century' (p. 144). Michele Bacci continues the analysis of fourteenth-century mural paintings, but this time in the 'Nestorian' church of St George Exorinos in Famagusta (pp. 145-58). Bacci analyses a group of murals produced in c. 1300 probably by a refugee from the Syrian coast, working for the Syriac-rite community that had settled in Famagusta. Allan Langdale's contribution (pp. 159-67) studies the use of spolia by the Venetian authorities during their governorship of Famagusta from 1489-1571. He argues that the Venetians used spolia not only to signify their inheritance of the island and to parallel their own empire with that of ancient Greece and Rome, but also to act as a place for punishment, where Venetian civil justice was meted out. There are many examples of spolia being used in this manner in Venice and Langdale convincingly shows how the spolia in Famagusta could have been used in a similar manner. The final chapter of the book, by Thomas Kaffenberger (pp. 169-90), is a reconstruction of one of the most important sites of medieval Famagusta, the church complex of St Epiphaios (dating from at least the turn of the first millennium) and St Georgios (the monumental fourteenth-century Orthodox cathedral). Kaffenberger's aim is simple: to reconstruct how the churches looked at various times in their history through a synthesis of the available material remains and written and pictorial evidence. He succeeds in outlining the numerous changes and renovations that transformed the original modest chapel into one of the largest Orthodox church complexes in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In their introduction the editors write that they and the contributors hope this book will 'underpin the urgency of saving [Famagusta's] valuable heritage' (p. 12). In this they have undoubtedly succeeded. The volume brings to light the fascinating history of Cyprus, and Famagusta in particular, during the later Middle Ages. A real strength is its combination of micro and macro histories drawn from a wealth of material, ranging from archives to architecture. It is the view of this reviewer that the academic market is currently oversaturated by conference proceedings and edited volumes which lack coherence and necessity. This volume does not fit into this category. It serves a real purpose and thanks to its very specific time-frame and focus on Famagusta, it has a coherency and rationale that makes it an interesting read for any scholar of the eastern Mediterranean.

Norris, S., M. Walsh and T. Kaffenberger 2014. Visualising Famagusta: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of the Orthodox Cathedral of Saint George of the Greeks in Famagusta, Cyprus. *Archives and Manuscripts* 42: 48-60.

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**Jonathan Harris. *The lost world of Byzantium*. pp. 298+16 b/w illustrations. 2016. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. ISBN 978-0-30017-857-9 hardcover £25.00.**

*The lost world of Byzantium* is a rather agile and engaging read covering the history of the Byzantine Empire from the foundation of Constantinople to its fall by the hands of Sultan Mehmet II in 1453. The principle aim, as part of the wider scope of the work, is 'to investigate why Byzantium lasted for so long, in spite of all the upheavals and invasions that threatened its existence' (preface, p. x). The ten chapters dedicated to this purpose are structured chronologically; each chapter starts with an excerpt from a written source, a hint on the main lens through which the historical facts are to be examined. The history of Byzantium is recounted by those prominent figures that directly acted to make the empire great, or that brought it to its collapse. It is a history, then, made by emperors, generals, courtiers, and patriarchs, described from the centre (Constantinople), and where the middle and lower classes are mentioned rarely, if at all.

The narrative is purposefully selective, 'personal', and reflects the interests of the writer. Besides the unavoidable references to famous buildings, such as, for example, the Theodosian walls or the Hagia Sophia, the book delves rarely into the archaeological record, which has recently begun to provide different perspectives to the historical narrative given by written sources; for example, the results of classical excavations that have been instrumental in shedding light on the 'Dark Ages' of Byzantium, *in primis* Amorium, go unnoticed. Written sources dominate the scene and rule supreme, as it often happens in accounts of the history of Byzantium. In the first chapter, Harris rightly warns the reader of the difficulties in dealing with such biased sources, reporting as an example the contrasting accounts of the life of Constantine: first by Zosimus, who recorded the emperor to have been 'the

product of a one-night stand with an innkeeper's daughter' (p. 8), and secondly by Eusebius who, in contrast, praises his virtuous character. This selective narrative approach means that a number of important historical threads are left unexplored. Further to this, the general reader with little or no previous knowledge on the topic might feel at first slightly overwhelmed by the impressive amount of information on events, dates, places and historical figures covered in each chapter; the account proceeds quickly and steadily from the beginning to the end. There is little space for criticism by the reader though. Recounting the history of an empire that lasted for over one thousand years, and that spanned the area between the North African coasts to the Armenian borderlands, in less than 250 pages is a rather difficult task that justifies fully such a selective approach.

The narrative flow has been carefully crafted in order to keep the attention of the reader whilst delivering on the intricacies of Byzantine history. There is much to keep him or her constantly engaged. Indeed, the cycles of plots and counter-plots that animated the history of Byzantium and the gruesome accounts of the written sources on the accession to power of certain emperors give the writer more than enough material to work with. In addition, the abundance of Byzantine sources provides opportunities for more curious episodes in the book. For example, when Heraclius, who won a spectacular victory over the Persians but failed to save the empire from the incoming Arabs, developed such a terror of water that brought him to live in his palace at Hieria and not enter the capital; Harris explains that a ship bridge was set crossing the Golden Horn to allow Heraclius access to Constantinople, with thick lines of high trees installed along both sides of the bridge that would have hidden the sight of the sea to the eye of the emperor. It is true that the history is recounted (see above). However, Harris tries hard to tear down the emperors from their ivory towers: where, for example, the mosaic at San Vitale in Ravenna is used to show that Justinian 'was nothing remarkable to look at' (p. 37), and where an amusing anecdote tells the reader that before taking power, Constantine VIII 'had ample scope for hunting, bathing and his favorite hobby of cookery' (p. 161).

Overall, the work is addressed to a broad audience as opposed to a specialized readership. Besides the easy-to-follow narrative and the addition of anecdotes, the decision not to include in-text or foot-noted references enhances the readability of the text. Five chapters are complemented with a map showing the extension of the empire at a certain point of its history and the book ends with a chronology