
JOANITA VROOM, *Feeding the Byzantine City. The Archaeology of Consumption in the Eastern Mediterranean, ca. 500–1500 (Medieval and Post-Medieval Mediterranean Archaeology 5)*. Turnhout: Brepols 2023. 350 pp., 157 figures. – ISBN 978-2-503-60566-1

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The ten chronologically ordered chapters in this volume consider the question of consumption in Byzantium. A wide-ranging introductory essay by ARCHIBALD DUNN is followed by seven contributions on pottery, one about carved marbles (PHILIPP NIEWÖHNER), and a theoretical examination of the nature of consumption (MYRTO VEIKOU). The authors' overall thesis that the simple model of a city and its supporting hinterland should be replaced by a wider concept of production and consumption is ably supported by the evidence they present.

DUNN's chapter, which underpins the other ones, points out that previous work on the Byzantine economy has depended too much on a single text, the so-called *Book of the Eparch*. This tenth-century source is relevant only to Constantinople, so that extrapolation from it to commercial practices and regulation in provincial cities is not valid. DUNN details known examples of consumption in cities other than the capital, and offers data from Ottoman sources as a more accurate reflection of practices in the Byzantine provinces.

The pottery studies begin with VESNA BIKIĆ's ceramics from Justiniana Prima, an important assemblage because of the city's short period of habitation from the early sixth to early seventh centuries. BIKIĆ tells us that although what might be termed 'international' wares were not present, the locally made pottery follows their forms and finishes, leading to a high degree of standardization. Her claim that the pottery from Justiniana Prima is a good reference collection for the sixth century in Mediterranean contexts seems justified, but we await full presentation of the coin evidence for the end of the city's life.

NATALIA POULOU's case study introduces consumption under foreign (non-Byzantine) rule, an interesting and innovative approach. She investigates ceramic production on the island of Crete during the Islamic period,

that is, from the seventh to ninth centuries, concluding that the amount of locally produced wares far surpasses the ceramics imported from the broader Islamic world.

MARIA TODOROVA presents a classification of the numerous Byzantine amphoras in Bulgarian museums, approaching consumption through one of the most plentiful categories of archaeological evidence for trade in transported goods. After identifying the caveats associated with her approach, she goes on to demonstrate a pattern between the appearance of Günsenin I amphoras along the Black Sea coast and lower Danube between 950–1050 and Byzantine military activity. She also shows that Günsenin II, III, and IV amphoras appear exclusively in areas ruled by Byzantium.

Two of the pottery articles are centred on the Euboian city of Chalkis, which functioned as the port of inland Thebes, as a Byzantine naval garrison, and as a generally important staging post between the western Mediterranean and Constantinople. A greater awareness of the significant role of this region in the wider Mediterranean is developing, instigated by archaeological work. STEFANIA SKARTSIS and NIKOS KONTOGIANNIS consider the cities of Thebes and Chalkis together. They delineate chronologically the ceramics found at Chalkis, noting that Glazed White Wares were imported from Constantinople until the twelfth century, when Chalkis became a major producer and exporter of both glazed ceramics and amphoras with their concomitant contents. The authors make the important connection between the famous silk production at Thebes and significant deposits of shellfish associated with dye-making at nearby Thisvi. They conclude that historical events led to the falling away of the international contacts of Thebes in the late Byzantine period, while the prosperity of Chalkis grew. Their article is impressively illustrated with finds of different categories from both cities.

A second Chalkis paper by JOANITA VROOM, ELLI TZAVELLA, and GIANNIS VAXEVANIS presents the preliminary results of a study of some 66,000 sherds excavated from a tenth-century bath that in its later life became a rubbish pit. The pottery was studied by students in summer schools. That Chalkis was a major site of ceramic production of all types cannot be doubted, and the presence of slag and wasters also indicate iron and glass production. A substantial proportion of the ceramics are Günsenin III, produced locally, and the majority of the pottery finds date to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

TZAVELLA examines the degree to which households in rural and urban sites had access to higher quality ceramics, arguing that ‘conspicuous’ con-

sumption is as strong a selling point as affordability. As exemplars of higher quality ceramics, she compares glazed table wares from the little monastery of Agios Nikolaos with pottery from the Athenian agora, showing that similar wares were being consumed at both sites. From this she concludes that imported or highly decorated glazed ceramics were not necessarily luxuries.

VEIKOU outlines theories of consumption before presenting a detailed tabulation of products, local and imported, into western Greece. She makes the important observation that it is not just evidence from texts and archaeology that will develop our knowledge of consumption, but that the data needs to be integrated into historical, economic, and cultural frameworks to produce a holistic picture.

NIEWÖHNER presents interesting observations about the presence of carved marble plaques in Anatolia – from a few, large workshops in Late Antiquity to local production in the middle Byzantine period. The quantity of carved marble church ornament on rural village sites leads him to conclude that consumption should not be seen as an urban versus rural phenomenon.

The final paper by VROOM summarises the history of ceramics from the seventh to fifteen centuries and attempts to trace patterns in the movement of ceramic wares, noting that ceramics are rarely looked at in terms of consumption. She has important observations about changes in the form and sizes of pottery being associated with changing dining habits and changing food tastes.

Feeding the Byzantine City had its origins in a roundtable at the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade in 2016, so that the authors benefitted from what must have been stimulating discussion. Marshalling the papers into this volume has been a worthwhile and positive exercise. It motivates us to think more widely about the nature of consumption in Byzantium.

Keywords

Byzantine economic history; pottery; stone sculpture