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**A Companion to Byzantine Italy, ed. SALVATORE COSENTINO, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2021 [= Brill’s Companions to the Byzantine World, 8], 33 maps, 25 figures, abbreviations, notes on contributors, index, pp. XVIII, 829**

This vast volume offers a collection of essays on Byzantine Italy from the 6<sup>th</sup> up to the 11<sup>th</sup> c. It was prepared by authors from many recognized scientific centres from France, Malta, United Kingdom, USA, and above all, in the greatest number (which should not be surprising due to the topic taken up) from Italy. The volume’s editor is Salvatore Cosentino, a Professor of Byzantine Civilisation at the University of Bologna, whose main research domain is the social and economic history of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine Italy<sup>1</sup>. The volume consists of twenty-seven chapters arranged into three Parts which indicate the trajectory of the undertaken research: (1) *Society and Institutions*; (2) *Communications, Economy and Landscape*, divided into two sections: (i) *General Frameworks*; (ii) *Settlements and Landscape: Regional Morphologies*; (3) *Culture and Education*.

The volume is opened with the introduction written by Salvatore Cosentino and Enrico Zanini, entitled: *Mapping the Memory of Byzantine Italy*, which was divided into two parts: (1) *Written Memory*; (2) *Material Sources* (p. 1–25). This is not a classic introduction to this specific topic, but actually a separate and excellent essay supported by a rich bibliography. Firstly, S. Cosentino points to the status

of written documentation regarding Byzantine Italy as rich, but not homogeneous, presenting the typologies of written memory on the examples of Sicily, Peninsular Southern Italy (continental *Mezzogiorno*), Sardinia, Central (region of Rome) and Northern Italy (Ravenna and Venice), displaying sharp differences amongst them. Secondly, E. Zanini shows that Byzantine archaeology is a young discipline and as such there are many research areas in the field of Byzantine Italy, especially taking into account the diversity of its individual parts, that need to be investigated, identifying areas such as infrastructure (ports, roads, bridges, aqueducts, canals, urban water systems, etc.), circulation of money, characteristics of private buildings, patronage over public and religious buildings, the consumption of goods or the functioning of the aristocracy related to the Byzantine domination in Italy, etc.

Part 1 has the total of seven chapters, the first two of which are written by S. Cosentino. In the first chapter, the author considers the issues of policy and society related to Byzantine Italy (p. 29–67). He presents seven main topics: (1) Italy in the prism of the Justinian I’s policy of restoration and the Gothic War as the unexpected way for the Byzantine Empire to conquer the Apennine Peninsula; (2) the social, political, economic and mental changes of the Italian aristocracy in the 6<sup>th</sup> c.; (3) the role of Italy and Africa in the Byzantine imperial policy in the 7<sup>th</sup> c.; (4) a deep socio-political transformation of the Byzantine West in the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> c., through the increased militarization of the region; (5) the political situation on the Apennine Peninsula in the 8<sup>th</sup> c., i.e. the

<sup>1</sup> E.g. cf. S. COSENTINO, *Politica e fiscalità nell’Italia bizantina (secc. VI–VIII)*, [in:] *Le città italiane tra la tarda Antichità e l’alto Medioevo*, ed. A. AUGENTI, Florence 2006, p. 37–53; IDEM, *Storia dell’Italia bizantina (VI–XI secolo). Da Giustiniano ai Normanni*, Bologna 2008; IDEM, *Economia e fiscalità nei secoli oscuri: in margine alla questione dei kommerkiarioi*, [in:] *Bisanzio e le periferie dell’impero*, ed. R. GENTILE MESSINA, Rome 2011, p. 59–72.

relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Papacy, the Lombard invasion, the establishment of a cooperation between the Popes and the Franks as well as the Frankish interventions in Italy; (6) fighting against the expansion of Islam in the Western Mediterranean in the 9<sup>th</sup> c.; Southern Italy in the Byzantine Empire's policy in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> c.; and (7) the fall of Byzantine Italy in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. In the second chapter, S. Cosentino illustrates the functioning of the Church as an institution in Byzantine Italy from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (p. 68–105). Therefore, the author shows the relationships between Rome and Constantinople, an overview of the doctrinal problems and ecclesiastic debates which the local episcopate faced, and the institutional, economical and organisational framework of the Church in the territories of Byzantine Italy. In the third chapter, Enrico Morini analyzes the monastic life in Byzantine Italy and its institutional basis (p. 106–139). He looks at such phenomena as urban and suburban monasticism based on the examples of Ravenna, Rome, Constantinople, etc., the influence of Hellenophone monasticism of Asian origins on Byzantine Italy, and the interweaving of cultural currents and the patterns of monastic life between the East and the West. All the chapters discussed above, given all the issues accounted for by the contributors, create a picture of features characteristic of the Italo-Byzantine ecclesiastical history. Then, the topic is changed and Vivien Prigent's chapter describes strongly militarized Byzantine administration in Italy (p. 140–168). Starting from the viewpoint that imperial rule over Italy changed throughout the centuries, she distinguishes three main areas of Byzantine control: (1) Northern and Central Italy with a narrow stretch of land running from Gaeta to Amalfi and Sardinia; (2) Sicily and Calabria; (3) Apulia. In the outlined geographic perspective, she considers the issues of the institutional and territorial changes in the Byzantine military organization (*thema*, *doukaton*, *katepanaton*, etc.), the role of military officials (*praetor*, *strategos*, *doux*, etc.), and their relations with the civil administration, or the use of mercenaries in the army. Federico Marazzi, in the next chapter, takes matters related to the relationship between

Byzantium and the Lombards (p. 169–199). The author argues that the history of their relations is more than just a conflict of more than two centuries (from 568 to 774) marked by mutual hostility, which led to the factual end of the political and administrative unity of the Apennine Peninsula. She argues that it is also a period of coexistence, trade exchange, and finally the adaptation of Byzantine cultural patterns by the Lombard elite or political cooperation in Southern Italy from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> c. Annlie Nef's chapter presents the confrontation of the Byzantine Empire with the Islamic expansion in the central Mediterranean since the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (p. 200–224). The author shows the importance of the strategic and commercial roles played by Southern Italy, a zone of direct intercultural contact between the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world, paying attention to, i.a. the issues of modification of material culture, Islamic piracy or fighting for sea domination in the Mediterranean. The last chapter of Part 1 is written by Annick Peters-Custot, who shows the functioning of Greek-speaking communities after the Norman conquest in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (p. 225–251). Until the 13<sup>th</sup> c., the Greek population constituted a group identity of people who shared the same law, language, rite and liturgy, etc. The author brilliantly argues that in the perspective of "longue durée", starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> c., this population gradually entered the "Mezzogiorno" culture, and as a result of this process, the Greek-Byzantine heritage was finally embraced by that of Southern Italy.

Part 2 consists of twelve chapters divided into two sections. The first section has four chapters and it is devoted to the individual analytical problems related to the widely understood subject of economy and infrastructure. It is opened by Denis Sami's chapter about the network of interregional land and naval communication inherited by the Byzantine Empire from the Roman period (p. 255–278). The author presents the importance of an extensive infrastructure system, i.e. closely connected ports and land roads, which not only had economic and military significance, but also played an equally important role in the socio-cultural sphere, influencing the way people lived in that

space and the transmission of religious ideas or projections of power. Then, Jean-Marie Martin examines the rural sector of economy in Byzantine Italy from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (p. 279–299). The author highlights several issues, among which the most important was the diversification of agricultural production due to the geographical diversity of the region, the variability of agrarian structures and land ownership over time, where particular importance should be attached to the state or the Church as landowners who constituted the basis of public power. In the next chapter, Enrico Zanini analyzes non-agricultural sector of Italian economy (p. 300–327). The author shows the local production and use of everyday objects (ceramics, ornaments, etc.), the circulation of goods and their import; moreover, he locates the centres of consumption and redistribution of goods, paying attention to the huge role of the central authority in stimulating and determining the economic framework of Byzantine Italy. Vivien Prigent's chapter is devoted to the coin production and circulation (p. 328–359). She presents the minting system, the evolution of coinage, the scale of circulation and monetary production in the Apennine Peninsula from the time of Justinian I to the 11<sup>th</sup> c., showing the enormous forty-fold difference in the decline of coins' value that separates the Late Antiquity and the middle Byzantine monetary economy.

The second section of Part 2 has eight chapters, and the considerations contained therein are ranked according to geographical criteria. It is opened by Sauro Gelichi's chapter on the subject of Byzantine control over Northern Italy; it first occurred directly, through the Exarchate of Ravenna and Pentapolis at the beginning, and later indirectly through other political structures such as the Duchy of Venice (p. 360–386). The author discusses the political changes that took place in the indicated region (being an area of rivalry between the Byzantines, the Lombards and the Franks), and shows their consequences in the form of the variability of rural settlements and landscapes, and the increase in the power of Venice, which from the 9<sup>th</sup> c. began to become the only maritime power in the Adriatic Sea. Then, Alessandra Molinari examines the

case of Rome and Latium in the transformation of settlements and landscape from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages (p. 387–404)<sup>2</sup>. She claims, on the base of the stratigraphic sequences excavated in urban areas, that a demographic decline in the late 7<sup>th</sup> and late 8<sup>th</sup> c. in that region is possible. Moreover, she points out that the public role in Rome and Latium was eventually taken over by the popes, and external political factors led to the reorganization of the countryside and the Church property to the model of the *domus-cultae*. Federico Marazzi's chapter is devoted to the cases of Naples and Gaeta (p. 405–433). The author shows the rise of the political and economic (especially in the sphere of international trade) importance of these urban centres during the Middle Ages, their gradual emancipation from the Byzantine power, and their final incorporation into the Lombard principalities and the Norman Kingdom. Ghislaine Noyé analyzes an issue of Byzantine Calabria (p. 434–452). The author shows the economic and social evolution of this region, claiming that Calabria is a peculiar case in comparison to the rest of the Apennine Peninsula because of the scarcity of written sources and the uninterrupted rule of the Byzantine Empire up to the 11<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>3</sup> In the next chapter, Paul Arthur considers the changes within Byzantine Apulia (p. 453–471). The author notes that the indicated region in the Byzantine period went from the Roman model of the domination of urban culture to an agrarian society based on rural settlement, with several cities (e.g. Bari or Otranto, and, in Norman times, Lecce or Brindisi), governing local elites as well as craftsmen and merchants. The next three chapters are devoted to the Italian islands. Lucia Arcifa takes into account the case of Sicily (p. 472–495). She considers such

<sup>2</sup> Cf. C. WICKHAM, *Medieval Rome. Stability and Crisis of a City, 900–1150*, Oxford 2015 [= OSMEH].

<sup>3</sup> Further research on the circulation of slaves or captives between Byzantine Calabria and Islamic Sicily and North Africa, cf. A. CURNES, "Slavery" *outside the Slave Trade. The Movement and Status of Captives between Byzantine Calabria and the Islamic World*, [in:] *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, ed. M. IVANOVA, H. JEFFERY, Leiden–Boston 2020 [= MME, 118], p. 102–122.

issues as the decadence of the urban centres accompanied by the collapse of trade and the expansion of the villages in the period of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> c. She also discusses the military significance of Sicily in the Byzantine policy, the socio-political changes of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. such as the repopulation of the island and the Arab invasion and examines the presence of the Italic-Greek monasticism even after the fall of the Byzantine presence in Sicily. Pier Giorgio Spanu analyzes the case of Sardinia (p. 496–521). The author presents the religious and agricultural landscape of the island, characterized by a small number of urban centres in which the majority of bishopric seats were located, and the numerous presence of small rural settlements coexisting with rural villas, connected by several main routes leading to the coast. The chapter of Brunella Bruno and Nathaniel Cutajar is devoted to Byzantine Malta and Gozo (p. 522–538). The authors show that the Maltese islands, in the time of imperial domination from 533 to 879, played a role of a Byzantine frontier outpost, being a supporting base for trade and maritime activity in the Mediterranean region and served as a commercial gateway into the North African markets.

Part 3, consists of eight chapters and begins with Vera von Falkenhausen's considerations on the use of Latin and Greek in Italy from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> c. (p. 541–581). The author notes that only in the areas of Southern Italy (ancient *Magna Graecia*), the Byzantine political, religious and socio-cultural patterns had any lasting influence on the local language, which did survive the conquests of both Lombards and Normans. Then, Deborah M. Deliyannis attempts to challenge the traditional notion of the role of bishops as leaders in the historical memory of urban communities (p. 582–608). The author notes that not in each of the analyzed cases the local communities referred to saint-bishops, or saintly popes in Rome. This is exemplified by the regions of Calabria or Apulia, where relatively few saint-bishops appear and after the 9<sup>th</sup> c. most of the new saints are ascetics, possibly due to the influence of Byzantine hagiographic traditions<sup>4</sup>. Mario Re's chapter discusses the

Italo-Greek hagiography created in Byzantine Italy (p. 609–640). The author traces the changes taking place in the hagiographic literature, both in Greek and Latin, which reflect the problems of the era in which they arose: hence, scenarios and characters changed, new biographies were created, and texts from previous periods were even rewritten. Francesco D'Aiuto inspects the issues of devotional practices of worship and prayer (p. 641–668). He argues that there existed Italo-Greek forms of devotion and prayer, i.e. a ritual sacrifice of animals in front of or around a church, sleeping inside the sanctuary in San Luca the night before the annual celebration or the tradition of decorating the porches of churches and the entrances of homes with laurels on special occasions. Massimo Bernabò analyzes five artistic episodes in medieval Byzantine or Byzantine-inspired art in Italy, i.e. (1) Ravenna and the Exarchate; (2) North Italy; (3) Rome; (4) Castelseprio; (5) Southern Italy (p. 669–694). He shows that Italy should be considered a territory fragmented into minor regions, cities or even Church property with unsteady boundaries also in the sphere of art, which was influenced, to a certain extent, by Byzantine models in mosaics, frescoes, monuments, etc., depending on the political importance or cultural impact of the Empire. Then, Isabella Baldini presents a variety of the forms of Byzantine Italy's monumental architecture (p. 695–732). She highlights the enormous Byzantine influence on the architecture of Italy using the example of public administrative buildings, fortifications, palaces and residences, churches, etc., at the same time showing their role in organizing social space. Paola Degni's chapter discusses two issues: the history of literacy and book production in Byzantine Italy (p. 733–759). Through an exhaustive analysis of the individual regions of Italy, she notes, i.e., that the culture of Italo-Greek Byzantine society, in comparison to Constantinople, is characterised by giving little consideration to classical and profane literature. In the context of book production, she highlights that one of the potential outcomes of the intercultural relations between Italy and Arabic lands could have been the use of paper, which was most likely of Nilean origin. The final chapter of the volume is written

<sup>4</sup> E.g. cf. N. FERRANTE, *Santi Italogreci in Calabria*, Reggio Calabria 1981; E. FOLLIERI, *I Santi dell'Italia Greca*, RBSN 34, 1997, p. 3–36.

by Cristina Rognoni (p. 760–796). It is an analysis of the application of imperial law (e.g. *Codex Theodosianus*, *Institutiones*, *Ecloga*, *Basilici*, *Novellae* of Leo VI, etc.) in Italy; due to the political dominance and cultural impact of Constantinople, it concludes that the influence of Byzantine legal texts and juridical practices on the Apennine Peninsula is indisputable.

The presented volume introduces a critical overview of wide and multifaceted spectrum of current research to historiography and provides new insights concerning political, institutional, economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of Byzantine Italy. As a whole, the volume is of high scientific quality. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the applied methodological approach is interdisciplinary: it connects history, legal history, architecture with archaeology and art history, and the main axis that binds the volume together is the territorial and chronological framework. The great advantage of the volume is also the fact that it can be read both by specialists, as each part could be a good comparative material, and by students, as a starting point for further studies. Worth noting is that despite the detailed studies described herein, many authors postulate that further in-depth research should be carried out; this idea should be met with favourable response, hinting the authors towards the fruitful future results of their work.

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