

Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 24, No 1 (2014)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 24



Book Review: P. A. GIANNOPOULOS - A. G.K. SAVVIDES, Μεσαιωνική Πελοπόννησος. Βυζάντιο, Λατινοκρατία, Πρώιμη Τουρκοκρατία, Herodotos Publications, Athens, 2013, pp. 610, ISBN 978-960-485-048-8

Maria LEONTSINI

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.1207](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.1207)

Copyright © 2015, Maria LEONTSINI



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

LEONTSINI, M. (2015). Book Review: P. A. GIANNOPOULOS - A. G.K. SAVVIDES, Μεσαιωνική Πελοπόννησος. Βυζάντιο, Λατινοκρατία, Πρώιμη Τουρκοκρατία, Herodotos Publications, Athens, 2013, pp. 610, ISBN 978-960-485-048-8. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 24(1), 417-421. <https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.1207>

P. A. GIANNOPOULOS – A. G. K. SAVVIDES, *Μεσαιωνική Πελοπόννησος. Βυζάντιο, Λατινοκρατία, Πρώιμη Τουρκοκρατία*, Herodotos Publications, Athens 2013, pp. 610. ISBN 978-960-485-048-8

The twenty five studies collected in this volume represent the gist of research on the Medieval Peloponnese, with topics dedicated to its political and ecclesiastical structures, institutional framework and military operations. Challenges, initiatives and transactions of prominent clerics, secular officials and the literary elite are presented in detail through an intensive survey of mainly historiographical sources and hagiographical texts. A comparative analysis of information provided by Byzantine sources, combined with data from historical writings of Arab and Western (Latin, Frankish, etc.) origin; archival texts and sigillography, exposes eloquently the oxymoron of the Medieval Peloponnese's territorial dependence and relative isolation from central imperial authorities in Constantinople.

The reprinting of these specialized studies does not substitute a monograph, as also mentioned in the editorial note; however, the authors' dynamic arguments and systematic approaches may serve as an incentive for further analysis of the historical conditions in the Peloponnese during the Byzantine era and the subsequent transitional period, from the creation of the Latin states to the early stages of the Ottoman conquest; although there exist updates on the recent bibliography for this very prolonged historical period (some of which are mentioned in the introductory note), the authors' list could be further enriched. Moreover, recent publications in new fields that emanate mostly from the interdisciplinary study of archaeological findings have raised new questions, on issues beyond prosopography and historical geography, producing new answers on the role of the environment and the natural conditions for the expansion or shrinking of Peloponnesian urban centers; the development of smaller settlements; and the function of areas of sparse population.

Such new trends, recently brought to the forefront of research with the aim of exploring in detail a limited geographical territory, cannot, however, diminish the value of the studies reprinted in this volume, which deal with aspects relating to local ecclesiastical, civil and military administration influenced by conditions, situations and policies formulated in centers of authority situated at a great distance (in Constantinople and, later, in other major centers, such as Italian cities or the early sultanates in Asia Minor). For all these reasons, the papers included in this volume constitute significant contributions that elucidate obscure and ambiguous references; thus, filling gaps in sources, usually referring to the Peloponnese in a fragmentary and elliptical way.

The Peloponnese is the focal point of all the studies reprinted in this volume, with the exception of one (no. IX), published here for the first time and referring to the island of Kythera. The harmonious coexistence of these small and larger articles in a single volume offers the advantage of every similar collection of scattered publications. The first essay, by P. A. Giannopoulos (no. I: «Ο επισκοπικός κατάλογος του βυζαντινού Άργους», *Πρακτικά του Ε' Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών, Άργος-Ναύπλιο, 6-10 Σεπτεμβρίου 1995*, Athens 1998, vol. II, 361-368), as also two more studies by the same author (no. VIII: “Métropoles du Péloponnèse méso-byzantin: un souvenir des invasions avaro-slaves”, *Byz* 63 [1993], 388-400; and no. XIII: «Η περιστασιακή επισκοπή Ναυπλίου κατά τον Θ' και Ι' αιώνα», *Ναυπλιακά Ανάλεκτα* 3 [1998], 20-42), address problems of sources concerning the ecclesiastical administration of the Peloponnese and alter the existing impression of the development of the ecclesiastical regime, leading to new conclusions on the rank of the bishoprics of Argos and Nauplion and their mutual relations. These studies constitute an ideal infrastructure for a further study of the role of Peloponnesian cities as ecclesiastical centers, and are particularly useful for an assessment of the peninsula's hagiography, published by P. A. Giannopoulos at a later date and also included in this volume (nos. VI, VII and XI). Another article by the same scholar (no. II: “La pénétration slave en Argolide”, *Études argiennes, Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, supplément VI*, 1980, 323-371), ranks among the pioneer studies that have tackled the issue of the Slavic settlement; since its first appearance respective questions have been dealt with mainly through a re-evaluation of data according to the dating of new findings resulting from archaeological research. However it still remains useful, particularly because of its exemplary commentary of relevant written evidence.

The two subsequent studies by A.G.K. Savvides refer to the administrative history, economic conditions and monuments of Nauplion (no. III: “Nauplion in the Byzantine and Frankish periods”, *Πελοποννησιακά* 19 [1993], 286-302; and no. IV: «Τα προβλήματα σχετικά με το βυζαντινό Ναύπλιο», *Βυζαντιανά* 14 [1994], 357-374), while study no. V (by the same author, under the title: “On Pylos – Navarino – Zonklon in the Byzantine period (late 6th – 13th centuries)”, *Βυζαντινά* 16 [1992-1993], 335-338) traces the history and changes in urban planning resulting from adaptations to new administrative or military needs that altered the profile of the area of Pylos, as outlined by topographical data listed in Byzantine and Frankish sources. Study no. VI, by P. A. Giannopoulos, examines the ports of Argolis and the naval activities of the Arab Emirate of Crete («Δύο αργολικά τοπωνύμια αραβικής ετυμολογίας», originally published under the title: “Deux toponymes d’etymologie arabe en Argolide”, *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 17 [2008], 1-6). The following two essays by P. A. Giannopoulos, that is no. VII («Ιστορικές πληροφορίες του Θεοδώρου Νικαίας για την Αργολίδα», *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 10-11 [1999-2000], 149-162); and no. XI («Ο Ναυπλιεύς Θεόδωρος Νικαίας», *Ναυπλιακά Ανάλεκτα* 4 [2000], 117-169), deal with prosopographical issues transcending the boundaries of the Peloponnese and relating to the affairs of Constantinople. These articles allow an insight into the life of Theodore of Nicaea, a clergyman and intellectual of the Macedonian Renaissance who originated from Argolis and whose career culminated in Constantinople. His letters, commented upon by P. A. Giannopoulos, provide further evidence on the delicate conditions prevailing in the bishoprics of Corinth and Argos, as well as in the Patriarchate of Constantinople and among the members of the imperial court. The next three studies, by P. A. Giannopoulos, offer a broad view of the history of the island of Kythera and relevant aspects concerning the city of Patras and the region of Elis during the Middle Byzantine period (no. IX: «Τα μεσοβυζαντινά Κύθηρα. Μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση των πηγών και ιστορική πραγματικότητα», *Γ’ Επιστημονικό Συνέδριο, Επιστημονική Έρευνα και Διδακτική της Ιστορίας, Κύθηρα, 18-21 Σεπτεμβρίου 2008*, 201-218; no. X: «Η Πάτρα στον 9ο αιώνα», translated from the original French, under the title: “Patras durant le IXe siècle byzantin”, *Revue Belgo-Hellénique et Paneuropéenne* 30-33 [January 1980-June 1981], 23-25; and no. XII: «Η Ηλεία κατά την μεσοβυζαντινήν περίοδο», *Επετηρίς της Εταιρείας Ηλειακών Μελετών* 1 [1982], 185-202). The activities of two known saints in the Peloponnese are the subject of two more publications by P. A. Giannopoulos (no. XIV: “Hosios Théodose le Jeune: Personnage historique ou légendaire?”, *Byz* 76 [2006], 372-401; no. XV: “La Grèce

dans la *Vie de S. Élie le Jeune* et dans celle de *S. Élie le Spéléote*“, *Byz* 64 [1994], 193-221).

Aspects of the history of the Peloponnese during the Middle and Late Byzantine periods are examined in some other publications by A.G.K. Savvides presented here (nos. XVI - XXV). Three of them focus on respectively high-profile figures, members of the aristocracy and active dignitaries that originated from prominent local families towards the end of the Middle Byzantine period in the Peloponnese (no. XVI: «Ο Λάκων Ιωάννης Άρατος και οι Ιουδαίοι της Σπάρτης στα τέλη του 10ου μ. Χ. αιώνα», *Βυζαντινά Μελέται* 6 [1995], 123-140; no. XVIII: “A note on the death of Leo Sgurus in A.D. 1208”, *BMGS* 12 [1988], 289-295; and no. XIX: A.G.K. Savvides, «Τα προβλήματα σχετικά με τον Λέοντα Χαμάρετο», *Βυζαντινά Μελέται* 3 [1991], 350-383).

The naval rivalry between the Byzantines and Muslims and the consequences of the wider changes involving control of the Mediterranean are exemplified by the presentation of a series of raids and naval confrontations in the ports and seas around the Peloponnese in the study no. XVII («Πελοπόννησος και μουσουλμάνοι: Οι αραβικές επιδρομές και οι πληροφορίες των Αράβων συγγραφέων (8ος-13ος αιώνες)», *Βυζαντινά Μελέται* 4 [1992], 370-384) by A.G.K. Savvides. Likewise, the change in the balance of power in the Mediterranean (following the significant growth of the navy of certain western states, that is, mainly the Italian maritime republics) and the role assumed by the Peloponnese (particularly its two new centers of power, Mystras and Navarino), are analyzed in the next two studies by A.G.K. Savvides (no. XXII: “Notes on Navarino in the Frankish, Venetian and early Ottoman periods”, *Εκκλησιαστικός Φάρος* 74, νέα σειρά 3 [1992], 68-72, and no. XXIV: “From Latin and Late Byzantine Mistra/Mystras to Ottoman Mezistre/Mizistre. Some notes”, *Πρακτικά του Ε΄ Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών, Άργος-Ναύπλιο, 6-10 Σεπτεμβρίου 1995*, Athens 1998, vol. IV, 387-398). A.G.K. Savvides, a specialist in the transitional period during which the Peloponnese was subject to successive pressures, as the local population was forced to deal initially with Franks and later with Turkish raids, examines in two other studies the catalytic activities of Turkish speaking contingents: firstly, those identified as Turcoples (that is, Christianised Turkish mercenaries) who were active in the Peloponnese initially as allies of the Byzantine sovereigns; and, secondly, of another Turkic auxiliary corps of Turkoman origin, invited by the Franks (no. XX: «Η προ-οθωμανική τουρκική παρουσία στην Πελοπόννησο», *Βυζαντινά Μελέται* 5 [1993], 59-68; no. XXI: «Η προέλευση και ο ρόλος των τουρκοφώνων

μισθοφόρων στον Μορέα κατά τον βυζαντινοφραγκικό πόλεμο του 1263-1264», *Πρακτικά του Δ' Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών, Κόρινθος, 9-16 Σεπτεμβρίου 1990*, Athens 1992, vol. I, 165-188). Naval operations near Megara, in 1359-60, and the halting of Ottoman incursions and overland raids before the conquest of the Peloponnese, are described in a subsequent article (no. XXIII: "Notes on the Turkish raids in the Mystras area from c. 1360 to the Ottoman conquest of 1460", *ΕΕΒΣ* 48 [1990-1991], 45-51). The last study of the volume, by the same author, re-evaluates bibliography relating to Peloponnesian history, categorizing it according to particular topics, such as the raids of Visigoths and Vandals; Slavonic and Muslim incursions; commercial and economic conditions; with some additional works on local history (no. XXV: A.G.K Savvides, "Peloponnesus Mediaevalis. A review essay a propos of a new collective manual on the medieval Morea", *Byz* 70 [2000], 309-330).

The collection of such rich material in a single volume is a beneficial venture, which conveys a coherent picture of the historical evolution of the Peloponnese as a micro-region shaped by complex processes and shifts in local and general context.

MARIA LEONTSINI
IHR/NHRF